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Shifts in Thinking and Practice: Reflecting on an Applied Learning Programme

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Abstract

The implementation of the first iteration of a curriculum for an applied learning programme for police trainers received a hostile response from participants. It was perceived as irrelevant and supplanting, rather than augmenting, trainers’ fixed and untested training practices. This paper presents the reflections on my journey as a non-police person straddling an outsider-insider position while challenging that which is taken-for-granted and introducing an educative intent, as opposed to a doctrinal, technical intent, to police training. On a daily basis I simultaneously work within and against the prevailing D/discourses and dominant subcultures, while establishing and nurturing relationships with police trainers: being teacher, coach and ‘critical friend’. The response to the second and now third iterations of the learning programme has been increasingly positive, revealing shifts in trainers’ thinking and practice.

Keywords: Applied learning, learning and assessment design, police training

Introduction

These are my reflections as a state service employee designing and implementing a curriculum for an applied learning programme in learning and assessment design for police trainers. A central point of my reflections is the ‘discourse-practice’ (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.1) framework of policing, underscored by dominant subcultures, prevailing D/discourses (language, symbols, beliefs, tools), and resultant ‘power-knowledge relations’ (Foucault 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292). In writing this paper, I am keen to position myself within the context: the ‘roles’ I adopt and the ‘institutional constraints’ and ‘rules’ I choose to engage with or challenge and resist (Tamboukou & Ball, 2003, p.16). In doing this, I will provide insights to the context focusing on the nature of police training, models of policing, and the prevailing D/discourses and subcultures that influence thinking and practice. I will apply various theories to an examination of the applied learning programme within the ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins, 2002, p.85) of policing, with particular emphasis on the trainers’ responses to the programme, moving from resistance and hostility to participation and a sense of value and worth.

Situating Myself

I have been in this role for eight years and, for most of that time, I have described myself as a token insider: different, not fully accepted, yet tolerated. However, in the past three years I have experienced a shift in how I am perceived and the nature of relationships I have established. In part, this is due to my tenacity in working within and against the ‘power-knowledge relations’ (Foucault 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292), establishing relationships, and maintaining a commitment to bringing an educative intent, as opposed to a doctrinal, technical intent, to training. Crucial to this is
the attitude and practices of a new manager; a female who adopts an inclusive and collaborative approach, who values learning, and who supports changes to learning and training. I now describe myself as part insider: different, partly accepted, and of some value.

On a daily basis I simultaneously work within and against the prevailing D/discourses and dominant subcultures (i.e., the ‘discourse-practice’ framework of policing) while adopting the roles of teacher, coach and critical friend. As an ‘outsider-insider’ I need to be ‘able and willing to question organizational assumptions...’ (Klein, 2004, p.176). To do this effectively, I reflect on my practice, keep a journal, and regularly meet for professional supervision with a critical friend. I am a PhD candidate, conducting research with police, examining reflective practice and critical thinking as tools in developing professional practice. I regularly share my challenges and learning with my PhD supervisor. I have deliberately created opportunities to critically reflect on the cultural, organisational and individual assumptions, practices and thinking that challenge my professional and personal values and how I question that which is taken-for-granted whilst working with the opportunities and constraints of the culture (Klein, 2004).

A number of theories provide a scaffold for my critical reflections in general, and, in particular, the implementation of the applied learning programme. Fundamental to my reflections are D/discourses that represent the interplay of language and symbols, tools, beliefs, and the power of D/discourses to produce realities and truths and prescribe and/or constrain subjectivities and identities (Foucault, cited in Cherryholmes, 1988; cited in Smith, 2005). Gee (2004, pp.40-41) describes D/discourse as:

…a way of using not just words, but words, deeds, objects, tools, and so forth to enact a certain sort of socially situated identity, and…cultural models (taken-for-granted stories)...to construct certain sorts of situated meanings.

I view identity as a ‘process of “being” or “becoming”’ (Jenkins, 2008, p.172) and acknowledge the capacity of organisations to construct ‘individual and collective identities’ (Webb, 2006, cited in Jenkins, 2008, p.170). Integral to identity is the question of how free and able people are to ‘create and re-create’ themselves (Hall, 2004; McNay, 2000) and their capacity for ‘agentic action’ (Billett & Pavlova, 2005, p.196). Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68), ‘capital’ (Jenkins, 2002, p.85) and ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.52-53; Jenkins, 2002, p.75) provide a framework upon which to position and analyse my experience of implementing an applied learning programme with police trainers.

**Police Training**

The police training environment in which I work is predominantly focused on vocational training, which is typical of the definition and application of competence in Australia: ‘functional, workplace-focused and task oriented’ (Guthrie, 2009, p.18). A tertiary pathway operates alongside the vocational in recruit training and one qualification pathway in the promotion process. The introduction of tertiary pathways alongside vocational training is driven, in part, by an agenda among Australian and New Zealand police jurisdictions to professionalise policing. This also prompts discussions and comparisons of police training (i.e., vocational skills and knowledge) and police education (i.e., theoretical and analytical learning), the extent of their application and integration, and how these can effectively meet the diverse and complex expectations and demands of policing in the 21st century (Birzer, 2003; Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; Kratcoski, 2004; McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004).
Kratcoski (2004) reviewed Australian and international police training and found that it concentrates on the rudimentary aspects of law enforcement at the cost of the higher-order conceptual skills. These findings are supported by studies of police training, which reveal the predominance of a pedagogical, as opposed to an andragogical, approach to training (Birzer, 2003; Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004). The authors of these studies identify concerns about police training: the doctrinal versus educative intent and value. A pedagogical approach represents a narrow focus on content and behavioural learning that ‘reflects a search for certainty and control of knowledge and behavior’ (McLaren, 2007, p.196), rather than developing students’ depth and breadth of knowledge. Hence, a focus on the ‘micro objectives’ versus ‘macro objectives’ of learning (Giroux, cited in McLaren, 2007, p.196). Such an approach does not guarantee the development of skills in decision making, problem-solving, and critical thinking (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; Ortmeier, 1997, cited in McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004; White, 2006), and supports features of the traditional model of policing. White (2006) argues that the formulaic and prescriptive way that police training is generally conducted is justified on the basis of: the need for skill acquisition and proficiency for specific job roles (i.e., a vocational focus), the need to have particular knowledge, and to demonstrate particular behaviour. However, this justification of and approach to training produces ‘compliance and conformity and a reliance on experts to do the thinking’, rather than producing critical thinkers and problem-solvers (White, 2006, p.396).

**Police Culture and Models of Policing**

Police culture is dynamic; being continuously produced and reproduced (Chan, 1996 & 1997; Chan, Devery & Doran, 2003; Foster, 2003; Sackmann, 1991; Reiner, 2000). Shearing and Ericson (1991, p.487) define police culture as ‘figurative logic’ whereby culture is not literal. Instead, it is symbolic, rhetorical, and metaphorical: it is the product of narratives and ‘war stories’ that justify action. This conception of police culture resonates with the notion of D/discourses as ‘a set of ideas and practices which condition our way of relating to, and acting upon, particular phenomena…’ (Knights & Morgan, 1991, p.253). The literature on police work, culture, leadership and models of policing reveals common characteristics that are inherently interrelated and dynamic.

Policing is regularly characterised as an ‘authoritarian’, ‘quasi-military’, ‘insular and defensive culture’, which operates as ‘a craft/trade’ with emphasis on ‘physical attributes’ (Lewis, 2007, p.149) rather than a professional, ‘open and consultative culture’ that values a ‘democratic management style’ with emphasis on ‘problem-solving’ and ‘intelligence’ (Lewis, 2007, p.149). These are features of firstly the traditional (‘command and control’) and secondly, the contemporary (‘community policing’) models of policing. There is incongruity between theory and practice. In theory, a paradigmatic shift from a traditional to contemporary model of policing is proposed as an imperative, but in practice, Murray (2005) questions the jurisdictions’ commitment to a contemporary model, and suggests that a traditional model with emphasis on command and control has been ever-present. It has just resurfaced with legitimacy post 9/11.

**Prevailing D/discourses and Subcultures**

I distinguished three prevailing D/discourses in researching vocational recruit training for my Masters, and three dominant subcultures: family-relationships, command and control, and “real” police work.
I have incorporated features of the subcultures into the descriptions of the D/discourses, and in explaining these D/discourses, statements of some of the recruits and trainers are included to illuminate the nature of the D/discourses.

**Warrior D/discourse**

*Female*  
“Males are always believed to be the stronger and tougher sex.”

*Male*  
“At some stage throughout the course ALL the females have been emotional (upset, crying) and no males have.”

*Male*  
“Being tough, strong and aggressive.”

Gender and the body as a political object (Foucault, 1977; Westmarland, 2001) are at the heart of the “Warrior D/discourse” (Ryan, 2008a, pp.9-11; 2008b, p.40). Whilst many types of masculinity can exist simultaneously, one type can dominate (Hearn & Collinson, 2006) and become “culturally exalted” (Connell, 1995, p.110). Underscoring this D/discourse are the “command and control” and “‘real’ police work” subcultures (Ryan, pp.6-8). The former is founded on the paramilitary ethos and strict hierarchical command structure (Bonifacio, 1991; Heidensohn, 1992; Heidensohn, 2003; Cain, 2002; Fleming & Lafferty, 2003; Kappeler, Sluder & Alpert, 2001; Palmer, 1994; Panzarella, 2003; Waddington, 1999a) which represent a “punishment-centred bureaucracy” (Waddington, 1999b, p.301). The “‘real’ police work” subculture (2008a, pp.6-8; 2008b, p.40) signifies: “crime-fighting” and a “sense of mission” (Reiner, 2000, p.89); state power and the legitimate use of force; physical strength, power and ability to take control; and authority and compliance (Silvestri, 2003; Westmarland, 2001). A consequence of the Warrior D/discourse is that gender becomes a powerful resource, a “rationale” and an “outcome” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.126) for both females and males. The representation of policing as an essentially masculine occupation through D/discourse and images permits gender and other differences to be constructed and maintained (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000; Heidensohn, 2003; Garcia, 2003; Silvestri, 2003; Westmarland, 2001).

**Tough-love family D/discourse**

*Male*  
“Team, loyalty, strength, unity.” versus “Look after mates, gossip, and bitchiness.”

*Female*  
“It’s a huge gossip factory – if you don’t hear your own name, you must be doing OK.”

The “Tough-love family D/discourse” (Ryan, 2008a, pp.11-12; 2008b, pp.40-41) is about internal relationships, conformity, membership, and identification. It coalesces with the “family-relationships” subculture (Ryan 2008a, pp.6-8: 2008b, pp.40-41) characterised by solidarity, a common identity provided by peers (family) and the organisation (parent) (Bonifacio, 1991; Fielding, 1994; Neyroud & Beckley, 2001; Prenzler, 1998; Reiner, 1992, cited in Shanahan, 2000; Waddington, 1999b), and tempered by support and punishment (Bonifacio, 1991). The Tough-love family D/discourse is both a product and resource of the dominant culture, the power relations inherent within it, and hence circumscribes individuals’ subjectivity and agency. It is about membership and acceptance within an organisation, occupation, and a peer group, and how one is “Othered” by others (Hall, 2004) on the basis of gender, sexuality and lack of conformity.

**Perfect self D/discourse**

*Male*  
“It’s us (police) versus them (general public).”

*Female*  
“Insular, us and them mentality, and elitist.”

*Male*  
“Must not allow the public to get under your skin and change your course of action.”
Image, discipline, separateness, the ability to handle self (Westmarland, 2001) and a sense of superiority underlie the “Perfect self D/discourse” (Ryan, 2008a, pp.13-14; 2008b, p.41) and combine with the “‘real’ police work” and the “family-relationships” subcultures (Ryan, 2008a, pp.6-8; 2008b, p.41). The family-relationships subculture is built upon the need to be or be seen to be perfect (Bonifacio, 1991; Neyroud & Beckley, 2001; Shanahan, 2000; Waddington, 1999a; 1999b). This supports the “real” police work subculture which is grounded in operational policing and political and legal sanctions to control society (Manning, 1977). The Perfect self D/discourse and complementary subcultures support the development of particular thinking styles that maintain culture, D/discourses, and power and gender relations. Central to this D/discourse is an elitist identity. Adlam (2002, pp.27-28) refers to the “socio-biological elitist rationality”, built on the notions of legitimate power and authority (Silvestri, 2003), the belief that police “know best” (Adlam, 2002, pp.27-28), and an obligation to “look the part” (Frewin & Tuffin, 1998, pp.178-181). The elitist identity and maintenance of image and reputation bring into play the “we/they [police/public] paradox” (Perez, 1997, cited in Garcia, 2003, p.68).

**Applied Learning: Resistance**

The ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins 2002, p.85) in which the applied learning programme occurs defines the ‘discourse-practice’ (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.1) framework of policing that represents a complex set of ‘power-knowledge relations’ (Foucault, 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292), the sources of which are the prevailing D/discourses and dominant subcultures. The ‘power-knowledge relations’ (Foucault, 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292) produce and establish the value of specific capital: ‘cultural’ (‘knowledge’ and truth), ‘symbolic’ (status and respect) and ‘social’ (relationships, power, gender) (Jenkins, 2002, p.85). The source of the truths inherent in the ‘cultural’ capital is the Warrior D/discourse and the command and control and “real” police work subcultures. These emphasise policing as an essentially masculine occupation and establish gender and the body as capital (Foucault, 1977; Westmarland, 2001). The emphasis therefore is on physical strength, power, authority, compliance and acting and doing, rather than thinking and feeling. Underscoring the ‘symbolic’ capital are characteristics of the Perfect self D/discourse and family-relationships and “real” police work subcultures with image, reputation, discipline, the need to be perfect, an elitist, police ‘know best’ (Adlam, 2002, pp.27-28) identity, and the ‘we/they [police/public] paradox’ (Perez, 1997, cited in Garcia, 2003, p.68). Internal relationships built on reliability, conformity, solidarity, membership and acceptance and difference are at the forefront of ‘social’ capital and are drawn from the Tough-love family D/discourse and family-relationships subculture.

Within this ‘field’, a colleague and I designed the first iteration of the curriculum for the applied learning programme in 2006. We did so in response to an organisational culture of not seeing training as a specialist area and, instead, seeing ‘expertise’ and reputation in policing as the primary attributes of a trainer. This typifies the perception of police trainers as ‘…law enforcement officers and not educators’ (McCoy, 2006, p.88). Due to inadequate, sporadic training prior to 2001 and then a complete lack of training between 2002 and 2005, the trainers based their practice on their own experiences of learning: a pedagogical approach with a doctrinal intent (Birzer, 2003; Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004). The reason for the lack of training for trainers was that senior management did not see the need for training. Further impetus for the learning programme was the realisation that Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was inadequate in meeting the organisation’s and trainers’ needs in their dual roles of teaching and coordinating courses.
The learning programme started with modest, but significant ambitions, given the context. At an individual level (i.e., trainer) it aimed to develop professional practice by: introducing concepts and practices, fundamental to instruction and assessment, yet, new to the trainers; establishing a common understanding and language; encouraging reflection on practice; comparing pedagogical (i.e., didactic, teacher-centred) and andragogical (i.e., adult learning, student-centred) approaches to training and learning; modelling an adult learning (andragogical) approach; and using workplace tasks and experiences to contextualise the learning. A supplementary outcome of this was the acquisition of necessary documentation and resources to support the various curricula (i.e., lesson plans, assessment tools and briefings). The learning programme essentially focused on ‘concrete experience’, ‘reflection’, and ‘the development of new understandings and concepts’…’ (Blake, 2007, p.58).

Within the context of the policing community, the aims of developing trainers’ practice to fulfil their roles, included: improving the standard of training facilitated and the learning outcomes achieved; enhancing policing practices within the field; and benefitting the service provided to the broader community. A range of methods was used to facilitate learning within the programme: self-paced, class-based, and on-the-job coaching.

It was challenging to implement the curriculum. On the one hand the trainers operated from an established and essentially untested set of values and practices (Foley, 2000). On the other hand, introducing concepts and practices that were new and different from current practices was perceived as an attempt to have trainers ‘reject…existing erroneous conceptions in favour of new, more accurate conceptions’ (Åkerlind, 2008, p.636). Therefore, the trainers saw the learning as ‘supplantive’ (replacing or threatening current knowledge and skills) rather than ‘additive’ (augmenting knowledge and skills) (Atherton, 1999, p.78). Their behaviour of ‘objecting to the material’, ‘failing to perform…in exercises and assessments’, and overt hostility towards myself and a colleague and various learning and assessment activities, was indicative of such a perception (Atherton, 1999, p.77).

In hindsight, the learning programme challenged the trainers’ ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, cited in Jenkins, 2002, p.75) and their ‘discourse-practice’ (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.1) framework of policing: their individual and collective self-concept; their ways of seeing and doing things; their reality and what they knew to be true. One trainer commented that it was “Not structured to my regimented learning style.” Others saw it as, “a waste of time” because “police training is different.” This notion of difference and separateness stems from the ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.112-113; Jenkins, 2002, p.85) and what Adlam (2002, pp.27-28) refers to as the ‘socio-biological elitist rationality’; the belief that police ‘know best’ (Adlam, 2002, pp.27-28), and the ‘we/they [police/public] paradox’ (Perez, 1997, cited in Garcia, 2003, p.68). These combine to construct outsiders (Fairclough, 1995, p.52) and particular concepts and practices (i.e., adult learning and training) as antithetical to policing. An additional consequence of this capital and its D/discourse is that change will be limited or unlikely.

On reflection, my subjectivity and agency had been circumscribed by the ‘power-knowledge relations’ (Foucault, 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292) of the ‘cultural’ and ‘social’ capital (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.124-125, pp.108-110; Jenkins, 2002, p.85). I was an outsider-insider, an “Other”, and a female. I compounded my circumscribed position by attempting to endorse a different or alternative approach to learning and training. My actions were seen as essentially judging their identity. The trainers function as ‘bounded networks of people… doing things together in inter-related and institutionalised ways’ (Jenkins, 2008, p.169, emphasis in original), thereby establishing powerful
collective identities’ (Webb, 2006, cited in Jenkins, 2008, p.170). Their reaction, therefore, typifies the power of organisations to construct the individual’s stance towards ‘outsiders’ (Fairclough, 1995, p.52). My actions also questioned their established truths and untested practices. Underpinning these practices is a perception, based on experience, of training as a technical, procedural, simple process involving instruction (Birzer, 2003; Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; Foley, 2000; McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004; White, 2006), and a discourse about training that emphasises instruction with assessment an after-thought or not mentioned. Trainers’ comments preferring a focus on “presentation skills rather than on assessment tools and lesson plans” and “more on how to use power point” highlight this perception.

Even though the programme was designed for police officers who had a training role and/or were making the transition from front-line policing to training, their behaviour and comments revealed a lack of identification, or unwillingness to identify, with the role and responsibilities of a trainer: “We’re police officers undertaking instructional duties”. Their identity as police officers seemed to be all-consuming, leaving little or no scope for any other identity. It signifies the power of the ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins, 2002, p.85) to establish and legitimise the meaning of particular ‘cultural’, ‘symbolic’ and ‘social capital (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.124-125, pp.112-113, pp.108-110; Jenkins, 2002, p.85). The concern is police officers’ agency and how free and able they are to ‘create and re-create’ themselves ‘at will’ when they are given such a ‘narrow range of options’ (Hall, 2004, p.1) from which to choose. They have little choice in determining their subjectivity, which limits their ‘ability to fully comprehend [their] identity’ (Hall, 2004, p.3), and engenders inflexibility in blending identities or crossing boundaries between identities (e.g., police officer and trainer). By thinking, seeing and acting in prescriptive ways (Jenkins, 2008, p.169), police officers’ sense and degree of agency reflects the ‘negative paradigm’ (McNay, 2000, pp.2-5) characterised by passivity and compliance, as opposed to an agency that generates creativity and the capacity to challenge that which is taken-for-granted.

Applied Learning: Participation

This experience strengthened my commitment to learning that transforms and to bring an educative intent to training. My commitment and the evaluation of various learning programmes informed the second and now third iteration of the curriculum. My aim was to develop trainers’ professional practice in learning and assessment design, adopting a learner-centred approach, and supporting them to develop an identity as trainers. Two considerations underscore my aim. The first is the ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins, 2002, p.85) of policing and its impact on the ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.52-53; Jenkins 2002, p.75) of trainers, and how training is perceived and conducted. The second is my appreciation of practice as multi-dimensional, incorporating individual, social and ‘reflexive’ dimensions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p.587). Practice encompasses much more than knowledge, skills and values at the level of the individual: the ‘technical reasoning’ that guides processes (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p.583). It is ‘socially structured, shaped by discourses and traditions’ (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p.587), and ‘socially-, historically- and discursively constituted by human agency and social action’ (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p.587). My expectations and ambitions were still modest, but I was essentially hoping to engender a sense of agency. Supporting them to expand their avenues of practice beyond what currently exists and to realise alternative subjectivities and identities available to them. Rather than attempting to substitute ‘one system of beliefs or concepts with another’ (Åkerlind, 2008, p.636), I was aiming to expand trainers’ ‘awareness of the phenomenon’ of learning, training and assessment (Åkerlind, 2008, p.637).
In designing the curriculum, I drew on Cheetham and Chivers’s (1996; 1998) set of competencies because I saw them offering a more holistic and integrated foundation upon which to build personal agency and professional practice. They have the potential to generate a focus beyond ‘functional competence’ (skills, doing) to a more substantial notion of ‘cognitive competence’ (knowledge and understanding), ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing why’ (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996, pp.267-270; Chivers, 2007, p.642). But, importantly, they incorporate and emphasise the essential ingredients of effective professional practice through the development of ‘personal competence’ (values and knowing how to behave), ‘ethical competence’ (professional practice), and ‘meta-cognitive competence’ (learning how to learn and reflection) (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996, pp. 25-28; 1998, pp.267-270; Chivers, 2007, p.642). In implementing the curriculum, I adopted a ‘phenomenographic approach’ by ‘optimising opportunities for [them] to experience variation in aspects, or features, of the phenomenon that they currently take for granted’ (Marton & Tsui, 2004, cited in Åkerlind, 2008, p.637).

I see the applied learning programme offering alternative forms of capital to those currently in the ‘field’ of police training. Within the ‘field’ of the applied learning, the ‘cultural capital’ comprises knowledge about learning and its value, teaching, adult learning, andragogy and a learner-centred approach, practice issues, and training that has an educative intent. Understanding professional practice, having a positive, confident self-concept, as a credible trainer and a level of emotional intelligence, are central to the ‘symbolic capital’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.112-113; Jenkins, 2002, p.85). Representing ‘social capital’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.108-110; Jenkins, 2002, p.85) are an appreciation of and ability to establish and maintain respectful learner-teacher relationships, awareness of adult learners’ needs, and a commitment to facilitating and sharing learning.

The emphasis in the applied learning programme on professional practice, developing identities, using integrated, holistic competencies, and essentially offering alternative capital, goes towards addressing concerns about police training generally and, specifically, inadequate training for police trainers. In particular, given the nature and functions of the ‘field’ of policing, police training that relies on standard processes and procedures, is likely to inhibit information sharing, resist change, and to view thinking reflectively or critically as a weakness (Bonifacio, 1991). Such practices are not conducive to the requirements of professional practice and developing ‘personal’, ‘ethical’ and ‘meta-cognitive’ competencies (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996, pp.25-28; 1998, pp.267-270; Chivers, 2007, p.642). White (2006, p.400) argues that, ‘personal and unexamined morality’ is inadequate in equipping police officers to use discretion, make ‘moral choices’ and to ‘account for others’ needs and expectations’ (White, 2006, p.400). This also has implications for trainers and their identity and practice. A heightened level of self-awareness would enable police trainers to establish a professional training standpoint, to comprehend ethical issues in training, and to reflect upon and learn from their practice (McCoy, 2006). Elias and Merriam (1995, cited in McCoy, 2006, p.89) assert that, ‘Experience alone does not make a person a professional adult educator…’, however, the ability of trainers to reflect upon their practice and experience is imperative because:

True professionals know not only what they are to do, but are also aware of the principles and the reasons for acting... The person must also be able to reflect deeply upon the experience he or she has had.

With this in mind, a range of methods have been used in facilitating the applied learning programme. These methods provide opportunities to expand and advance thinking and practice by introducing trainers to the ‘phenomenon’ of learning, training and assessment (Åkerlind, 2008, p.637).
In most instances, but especially when working with specialist units, I facilitate the learning programme with subject-matter “experts”. Greater emphasis is placed on self-paced learning through the completion of a workbook with staged, themed readings interspersed with questions to check and expand comprehension. The workbook and an assignment on key concepts of workplace learning relevant to policing and dimensions of competence are completed prior to the class-based phase. The class-based learning alternates between theory and practice and facilitates “conversations” and learner-led sessions that draw and expand upon the material in the workbook. Trainers’ comments in response to this approach have been positive: “I have better methods to use to improve assessments and assessment tools.” “I now know how to give feedback.” “I have realised the importance of developing knowledge gradually and then providing opportunities to practise skills.”

The class-based phase of the programme also provides opportunities to assist individuals to explore and develop their ‘personal’ and ‘meta-cognitive’ competencies (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996, pp.25-28; 1998, pp.267-270; Chivers, 2007, p.642) through reflecting on their feelings, thoughts, concerns, perceived strengths, their own and the organisation’s expectations, and anticipated learning goals. For example, a recent group of operational skills trainers talked openly and in an animated manner about their feelings of apprehension, nervousness, and eagerness to learn. This was a pleasant yet unexpected response from a group of 17 males and two females whose focus was on equipment used in violent or potentially violent and threatening circumstances (i.e., firearms, baton, handcuffs). These exercises and discussions have proven to be extremely productive and engaging as indicated by trainers’ comments: “I enjoyed the reflection exercises.” “The exercises really got me thinking.”

In order to focus trainers’ attention and learning on their ‘ethical’ and ‘personal’ competencies (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996, pp.25-28; 1998, pp. 267-270; Chivers, 2007, p.642), a number of practice issues or situations, appropriately contextualised, are analysed and discussed in small groups. Questions are provided to guide analysis: identifying underlying assumptions and feelings of the trainers and learners within the situations, and strategies to minimise and mitigate these issues. The practice issues are sequenced from general (e.g., addressing the needs of adult learners) to more complex issues with an ethical flavour (e.g., learner-teacher interactions and relationships, inappropriate assessment decisions). As with the reflection exercises, these have proven to be constructive; generating robust discussion and debate within class. Trainers’ comments highlight increased self confidence, “It has enabled me to be more confident with students.” “It reinforced professionalism required in training, and I will train with greater professionalism.” Building on this, a summative assessment task requiring trainers to individually reflect upon and analyse a professional practice issue is incorporated into a suite of assessments to be completed after the class-based phase.

Throughout the applied learning programme, the trainers receive feedback from subject matter “experts”, their peers and me in response to their application of theory to planning and facilitating lessons, assessment briefings, and assessment tasks. Overall, the trainers seem to be enjoying the programme and learning from it: “An ideal learning environment.” “I really enjoyed the format.” “I thoroughly enjoyed the programme. We were able to take the subjects on board.” “I now have the necessary knowledge and skills to be a trainer.”

**Shifts in Thinking and Practice**
Shifts in the trainers’ perception and attitude towards the applied learning programme and their thinking and practice are evident. I’ll explore two avenues in endeavouring to explain these shifts. Firstly, I have just had the experience of designing and facilitating an applied learning programme for operational skills trainers with two male police officers, both of whom had been hostile and negative towards the first applied learning programme in 2006, but who are passionate and highly skilled and respected operational skills trainers. Their major shift was their realisation that the theory and techniques they initially rejected but later adopted had enhanced their training and the depth and breadth of learning they can now achieve. In discussing their strategies, they highlight a focus on the learner and her/his needs, feelings, emotions and thoughts, and the importance of non-judgemental, respectful teacher-learner relationships based upon the provision of positive, timely formative feedback. They are now advocates for developing other trainers’ self-concept and practice and are keen to emphasise, “Learning to think, feel and see as an operational skills trainer versus just being able to do.” Their actions represent a ‘generative’ agency (McNay, 2000, pp.2-5). These two trainers have embraced alternative capital and used it to create different identities, and their credibility as operational skills trainers makes them ideal role models and change agents.

Secondly, the words of one trainer who participated in one of the applied learning programmes provide another perspective from which to reflect on the trainers’ move from resistance and hostility to participation and a sense of value or worth. His first statement – “A very enjoyable course” – is similar to other trainers’ positive comments. Police have a tendency to be critical rather than give praise or compliment. A feature of the family-relationships subculture is that mistakes are noted and often punished, but good work rarely receives comment or praise (Bonifacio, 1991). In addition, as an outsider-insider, an “Other”, it is rare to receive positive feedback.

His second sentence – “It did not hurt as much as I thought it would :))” – accompanied by an SMS “smile” is very interesting. Implicit in this is the assumption that the applied learning programme could or would “hurt”. The trainer might well have expected it to be too challenging and demanding, and require too much work. This response to training, let alone learning, is the product of the doctrinal, pedagogical approach to training in the academy that has created passive learners. Police regularly attend training to “tick a box”, “get what I need”, while expecting to remain passive and to have the requisite knowledge and skills bestowed upon them; with little if any effort on their part. So, this statement indicates there was some “hurt” involved, some effort was required on the part of the learner, but it seems it was neither too painful nor onerous.

Implicit in his third statement – “Nice to see things changing” – is an appreciation of the need for change and a positive perception of the applied learning programme in achieving relevant change. Given the power of the ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins 2002, p.85) of policing and the pedagogical approach to police training, this is significant and reassuring to hear.

The applied learning programme in learning and assessment design had modest, but significant ambitions to introduce trainers to new concepts and practices, encourage reflection on practice, and model an andragogical (adult learning) approach to training and learning. Based on the trainers’ feedback, what I observe, and the conversations I have now with many of the trainers, we share a common understanding and language, which makes working together more fruitful and meaningful. It also provides a solid foundation for me as a ‘critical friend’ and an on-the-job coach.

Conclusion
This experience has been pivotal for me. I have gained further insights to the ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.67-68; Jenkins 2002, p.85) of policing and police training, the ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.52-53; Jenkins, 2002, p.75) of the police officers, and my position within the ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins, 2002, p.85). My role and my circumscribed subjectivity and agency require me to question and, to varying degrees, resist the ‘power-knowledge relations’ (Foucault, 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292). Crucial to my agency is how I construe the situation or context, my level of energy, and my personal and professional commitment to my work (Billett, 2007, p.62).

I encounter trainers who are products of a very powerful ‘field’ (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67-68; Jenkins, 2002, p.85), but I also engage with trainers who are passionate about particular areas of policing, and have developed a genuine interest in learning for themselves and others. The shifts in trainers’ thinking and practice represent a paradigmatic shift in how learning and training are perceived by some police officers. These shifts establish a significant juncture from which to continue to review and reconfigure the applied learning programme as a means of progressing thinking and practice and consolidating change. They also provide a platform upon which to influence change at an organisational level. I believe this is possible with the support of the current manager, the potential influence of the trainers whose thinking and practice has changed, the relationships I have established, and the ways in which I work with and alongside others. Crucial to the trainers’ agency is how the applied learning programme in learning and assessment design continues to provide opportunities to expand their thinking and practice, moving them to a position that enables them to access and engage with alternative forms of ‘capital’ (Jenkins, 2002, p.85) and to enact other identities.
References


