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Journal article

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Abstract

The discourse emerging from the professionalisation agenda focuses on a drive for new knowledge. The introduction of the Direct Entry (DE) scheme in England and Wales is one practice that attempts to facilitate this. Controversial debates about credible operational experience and an over reliance on classroom-based learning, have become routine. By drawing on qualitative data from the Police Federation Pay and Morale Survey which explored perceptions of College of Policing initiatives, this paper reviews officer views on the DE scheme. The paper discusses the negativity surrounding the scheme and the consequences on both the scheme itself and the professional identity of frontline officers. The authors conclude that without further engagement with frontline staff and a shift in what is viewed as credible knowledge, negative perceptions will prevail. Moreover, evidence suggests that officers' distance the new skills bought in through the Des and reaffirm their own competence through processes of 'othering'.

Keywords: Direct Entry, Policing, Organisational Justice, Procedural Fairness, Distributive Justice, Othering

1 Introduction

Entry methods into the police are facing unprecedented change. The longstanding ideology of internal recruitment (Wall, 1994) which sought to ensure the attainment of tacit 'on the job' police knowledge throughout the journey of a police career has been penetrated by a discourse of legitimisation for external recruitment at certain ranks. Much of the narrative relates to a drive for new and diverse forms of knowledge which might encourage innovation and creativity within an environment facing a multitude of new challenges and demands.

The authors here argue that this 'new knowledge' held by direct entrants can negate the value of professional knowledge held by the existing workforce within promotion processes and opportunities for development. The paper argues that officers perceive a need for extra operational resilience to compensate for direct entrants limited experience and this can compound a them and us mentality within the organisation. The lack of recognition this discretionary effort receives from supervisors and the organisation influences a sense of organisational injustice amongst these officers.

The professionalisation agenda, being heralded by the College of Policing (CoP), has introduced the need for academic qualifications on entry to the service. This change has become synonymous with conversations about diversity of thinking, problem solving and reflective practice within the complex policing field. Direct Entry (DE), whilst not directly aligned with the professionalisation agenda is linked with these aspirations of 'new knowledge'. However, such models of police reform and discussions about police professionalisation based on the promotion and inclusion of new knowledge are not new (Holdaway, 2017). As Brogden and Shearing argued (1993:108), specialised knowledge is perceived as offering an 'alternative set of goals, means and values to those of the occupational culture'. Therefore, the integration of such knowledge seeks to move practitioners from a perceived over-reliance on cultural or recipe knowledge (Sackmann, 1991) and encourage them to shift their thinking from 'what has always been done' to a willingness to accept other dimensions of knowledge. This argument is key within this paper.

Eraut (2000) makes the distinction between 'personal' and 'codified' knowledge. He refers to the former as informal knowledge, learnt whilst doing the job, and the latter to more formal knowledge types, often derived outside of the working practices of a profession. Indeed, it is the question of what counts as credible knowledge in policing (Williams and Cockcroft, 2019;

Sklansky, 2014) that has featured as one of the strongest challenges to the DE Scheme. Chan (1997) claims that codified forms of knowledge in policing can assist officers in their attainment of social capital as opposed to the achievement of academic qualifications. Considering knowledge as a hierarchy, it is experience that has traditionally held more esteem within the policing environment (Williams and Cockcroft, 2019). Indeed, as Chan argues (1997) in Australia, on entry in to the organisation from the academy the taught knowledge the recruits had received was considered as secondary to the stories and narratives provided by their longer term serving colleagues. The argument that credible knowledge, in terms of officers' perceptions, is viewed in experiential terms is central to this paper.

Silvestri (2005: 70) describes the traditional one entry point into policing as a 'linear organisational career'. As Cockcroft (2019) argues traditional methods of progression within the police meant all officers have worked at patrol level – the 'cultural locus of policing' (p. 226). However historically there are examples where individuals have entered the police organisational from outside at more senior levels. Whilst there is not time to review these previous routes in to the police here (see Wall, 1994 for full discussion), understanding and revisiting this historical context is critical when problematising the discourses of legitimisation for the current Direct Entry scheme. Criticisms of the previous schemes are not dissimilar to those that feature in current direct entry debates (Scott and Williams, 2019). They included questions about the candidates political and social associations with the authorities, lack of experience, over qualification, militaristic style and the reduced opportunity for those officers already serving to obtain promotion and progression (Wall, 1994). This latter issue, within the context of this research, is critical to current officers concerns about the limitations direct entry presents to their career options. Juxtaposed with factors relating to the hierarchy of credible knowledge operating within the policing milieu, the relevance of organisational justice theory and notions of procedural fairness within this context are clear.

The management of current talent is central within the narrative that challenges direct entry processes (Williams and Norman, 2017). In this paper it relates to the problematic nature of what and whose talent and experience is recognised within policing (see Silvestri 2018 for wider discussion). Given the discourse of legitimisation around the scheme, Smith (2015) claims that identifying talent and managing it effectively within direct entrants should be about identifying those who offer a real change to culture through the integration of new ideas and perspectives within the service. Tansley et al, (cited in Smith, 2015:163) defines talented individuals as those 'who can make a difference to organisational performance'. Arguably, this further problematises notions of 'talent' and highlights the subjectivity of the term itself. The primary reasoning for the scheme is about new policing styles and problem solving and yet police organisations continue to use methods of evaluation focused on narrow managerialist notions of performance, driven by new public management (Fleming, 2008). Such methods can reinforce a transactional style of police leadership focused largely on the maintenance of numerical targets that current professionalisation reforms are attempting to move away from (de Maillard and Savage, 2018). As Smith (2015) argues we need to consider direct entrants as offering something different to policing, not 'better'. How this difference will be formally recognised within an organisation which has historically failed to recognise difference within its performance structures is yet to be established. However, as Norman and Williams (2017) found, current serving officers are rarely recognised for innovation and new ideas. Therefore, formally recognising direct entrants for diversity of thinking is challenging and might be perceived as discriminatory to serving officers who have tried over time to do the same (Williams and Norman, 2017).

A fundamental part of understanding organisational justice relates to the fairness of both internal procedures and the distribution of outputs (Moorman, 1991). Myhill and Bradford (2012) have successfully applied notions of organisational justice to policing environments.

They argue that an officer's sense of alignment with their environment and their willingness to support new policies and strategic priorities relates to them having a sense of procedural justice from both the wider organisation and their direct supervisory team. Cockcroft and Williams (2019) have taken these ideas and applied them to the concept of police knowledge. Whilst their work considered the knowledge hierarchy in relation to the evidence based policing debate (p. 133), the authors here expand on this notion in the context of direct entry in to the police.

The extant literature in relation to DE and the professionalisation agenda indicates that there are some challenges to the acceptance and use of new forms of knowledge in policing and indeed, the type of individual being recruited through the DE process. The authors here extend on this existing evidence base by analysing the views of rank-and-file officers on the scheme and, more critically, the impact they feel this is having on their development and professional identity.

1.1 Methods

The findings in this paper are based on the qualitative analysis of responses gathered from the Police Federation Pay and Morale Survey disseminated to police officers of federated ranks in 2017. The data is not publicly available, and the Police Federation acted as a gatekeeper to the researchers involved in the analysis. The qualitative questions added to the survey were analysed to explore the respondents' perceptions on various CoP initiatives being introduced at the time of the survey. Whilst other areas of the CoP agenda were mentioned by respondents, this paper specifically focuses on officers' perceptions of the Direct Entry (DE) Scheme.

In total, the survey gleaned 3626 qualitative responses. These were coded and thematically analysed using NVivo. Thematic analysis is a useful analytical method to identify patterns and relationships within qualitative data (Bryman, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The findings reported in this paper are based on 2626 responses as the analysis reached saturation point after this number of free text comments had been analysed. At this point, no new emergent information was being identified through the coding process, this signified that coding could cease and analysis could commence (Birks and Mills, 2015; Urquhart, 2013),

The sample consisted of responses from officers from federated ranks consisting of 42 Chief Inspectors, 240 Inspectors, 725 Sergeants and 2619 Constables from variety of the 43 forces across England and Wales. There were 2654 male respondents and 861 females (the remaining 111 was missing data). Of all the respondents, just 292 had less than five years' service.

At the time of the survey (2017), the DE Scheme was aimed at Inspector and Superintendent ranks. The DE Scheme has since been extended to other roles in policing. Therefore, it is important to state from the outset the opinions gleaned from the qualitative responses are related to the DE Scheme and at the time of the research, this referred to officers who directly entered the organisation at the rank of Inspector and Superintendent¹.

2 Discussions

The findings presented in this article outline the key themes from the research. These issues are not mutually exclusive and are multi-faceted. The views of the respondents are much

¹ For full role profiles of the ranks here:

<https://profdev.college.police.uk/professional-profiles/profiles/national-level-policing/>

aligned to what has previously been discussed in the current literature with regards to policing as a craft and officers' sense of organisational justice with regard to promotion and development opportunities. However, an additional theme around operational resilience also came out within the analysis. This area and the impact it is having on perceptions of DE officers has not yet been given coverage within the existing discourse on DE schemes.

This notion of resilience related to both individuals and the organisation, in terms of operational policing. At an individual level, there was a feeling that an organisational expectation existed for regular officers to provide support in mentoring new DE officers. This created a sense of frustration as the perceived on-the-job training was being given, invariably, to someone who was more senior to them. This is an anathema to the current cultural logic operating within the police. Participants questioned the extent to which DE officers had the legitimate authority to 'pull rank' credibly and to make effective decisions without the sufficient experience of the role. From an organisational perspective, the DE Scheme (at the time of the research) was only aligned with the most senior roles. There was strong resistance to this within the analysis. This is important as participants questioned the operational legitimacy of the DE Scheme as a whole. Indeed, it challenges the very ethos of the traditional police hierarchy and focus on experience and commitment to the job (Silvestri, 2018). This led to feelings of inequality and unfairness towards the organisation as participants felt a lack of recognition for their contribution.

2.1 The importance of craft knowledge

The argument that DE Schemes can incorporate new perspectives into organisations forms a significant part of the legitimisation discourse surrounding the DE within the policing field (Smith, 2015). However, the findings from this research illustrate nuanced and controversial opinions about the scheme which was primarily considered an unpopular option for policing amongst the officers who participated in this survey.

Most of the respondents perceived the DE scheme negatively. Whilst limited positivity existed about the scheme these were juxtaposed with notions of 'othering' which were primarily linked to credible police knowledge and experience. Previous policy literature discusses the professed benefits of DE to organisational thinking and diversifying conversations by bringing in new talent to shift the existing culture and practice (CoP, 2014; Winsor, 2012). The findings outlined in this paper hint at similar perceived advantages when recruiting new officers through the DE Scheme. Indeed, some respondents considered the scheme to be an innovative approach to modernising the police and described benefits that direct entrants could contribute to the workforce. The potential for new ideas and the development of existing procedures within police organisations were highlighted. However, the positive views offered by respondents were often combined with a broader sense of disillusionment with current work practices. As one respondent stated:

"...They can't do any worse than those already in position..." (Constable, 16-20 years service)

The quotes below demonstrate some support for the DE Scheme. However, these perceptions are grounded in officers' existing frustrations within the work environment or are linked to entrenched negative personal perceptions of the current 'state of policing':

"...Perhaps DE at higher ranks when officers fail to be police officers and become managers will have a positive impact as these people will bring fresh ideas and might even stop nepotism...!" (Constable, 6-10 years service)

“...new blood is required in the police force to change the piss poor decisions being made daily. Direct entry I believe will resolve this especially at Chief level...”
(Constable, 11-15 years service)

Where participants recognised the benefits of bringing in independent, external experience through the scheme, they did not necessarily feel that the roles of direct entrants were appropriately aligned with police officer roles. These participants recognised and welcomed the value that DE officers can bring to the organisation, particularly in the context of business skills but rather than naturally aligning them to the operational police function, they felt that direct entrants should join the civilian structure within management, such as Human Resources and Finance roles. For example:

“...Though direct entry from senior corporate management from another company to high ranks is considered desirable, there is no way of comparison between a senior say high ranking engineer and that of a senior police officer who has skills earned and learned through policing, fixing an "engineering" problem or a HR problem is not the same as resolving issues and problems within the police or the public...”
(Constable, 26-30 years service)

“...People in senior ranks do not need to be police officers. They spend money but don't understand how or where to spend it. People from the private sector who are used to managing large budgets would be able to bring in more efficiencies, which in turn would reduce the budget of the constabulary....” (Constable, 6-10 years service)

Rowe (2006) suggests that officers generally hold cynical views about senior officers, arguing that the frontline are pessimistic about their lack of engagement with the ‘streets’ and proper police work. Furthermore, he posits that senior officers are seen as driving reform agendas for efficiency, money saving and to highlight their own professional prowess. However, these quotes above indicate that DE features the worst fractions of these perspectives but without the sections that do influence any credibility in senior ranks - time and experience. That of experience and time in the job. This concept of ‘us and them’ is a returning feature within this research. Lister (2004: 101) defines the process of ‘othering’ as ‘a process of differentiation and demarcation, by which the line is drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – between the more and the less powerful – and through which social distance is established and maintained’. The quote above demonstrates the problematic nature of accepting the scheme within the rank and file police structure, particularly in the context of what counts as a proper policing skill. A wealth of previous literature has highlighted the problematic nature of knowledge and experience in policing and how it impacts on professional identity within the current workforce (Williams et al., 2019). This research suggests that officers negotiate a sense of accepting the DE officers by defining their skill set as something outside of the core police role. As Jensen (2011) suggests, othering can highlight perceived inferior characteristics, in this case the different skill set present within the direct entrants, and reinforce the strength of the powerful within that specific context. This can ‘affirm the legitimacy and superiority of the powerful’ (p. 65). Therefore, in terms of being credible police officers the direct entrants are deemed as inferior. This quote from a Sergeant evidences this:

“...Understanding of the demands of a police officer can only be gained from job experience. To manage an organisation, the individual needs to have a full understanding for the people and their roles. Policing is a complex area of work in which experience, knowledge and understanding is built over an officer's service....”
(Sergeant, 21-25 years service)

Both formal and informal socialisation processes have been found to exist in policing. These are central to the formation of the occupational culture (Van Maanen, 1973, Fielding, 1988 and Chan, 1997). Moreover, such processes facilitate the progression of movement for a police outsider to achieve insider status (Charman, 2017). The discourse presented via the narratives in support of the DE Scheme suggest that DE officers will disrupt the socialisation process and shift the dominant culture within policing (Scott and Williams, 2019). Conversely, rather than influencing a change to culture such processes of othering reinforce and reaffirm current internal 'theories of action' (Sackmann, 1991: 41). The proposals that their skill set is more suited to the civilian structure suggests that participants are actively resisting of this change and actively re-categorise DE officers as differentiated from themselves. Instead of embracing the DE Scheme as progressive, officers appear to be reverting to the status quo in relation to the value of experience and what are perceived to be legitimate policing skills. Indeed, this may immobilise the direct entrants when attempting to shift from an outsider to an insider status holder within the organisation.

The capital and credibility placed on operational experience was also considered a key driver in the process of effective decision-making. Respondents felt the DE scheme devalued the importance of real-life experience gained by *doing* the job and personal notions of police identity and professionalism. Respondents considered the lack of experience compromised direct entrants' decision making as leaders. Within the public arena Bradford et al, (2013: 81) describe this as the police having a sense of legitimate authority. Respondents questioned the legitimacy of direct entrants' ability to undertake procedurally fair policing as they lack the core experience required to understand the complexity of this granted authority in any depth. These factors were described as unique to policing:

"...The fact the government believes anyone can perform any role within the Police without any prior experiencing or training devalues the training and experience of our officers. We are a specialist service provider..." (Chief Inspector, 21-25 years service)

Experiential learning is described as the long term embedding of informal, 'tacit' knowledge compared to 'codified' knowledge which is taught off the shelf (Eraut, 2000). Essentially, the former typology of knowledge and how it is garnered influences officers' ability to achieve acceptance from peers and prove that they have made a credible contribution to 'good' police work (Wall, 1994; Silverstri, 2018).

Christopher (2015) argues that policing is unique from other occupations due to the unpredictable and complex nature of society. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999, cited in Charman, 2017) consider how occupational ideals form narratives amongst workers help to define their social identity. They suggest that specific conditions exist within occupations that can create subcultures to formulate occupational identities, including a presence of danger within the role, irregular working patterns and socialisation. Charman (2017) proposes that these conditions can be applied to policing along with other unique characteristics which arise from the occupation being described as "no day is ever the same" (p52). Indeed, this research found views from respondents about the complexity of policing not being naturally translatable to anyone who had come into the police directly from the private sector. Consequently, respondents' expressed concerns about the skills gap present in the direct entrants as a result of them not having walked the streets and gathered the required skills to understand the nuances and complexities of being a police officer. As the following two officers articulated:

"...You MUST serve in each and every role to understand the complexities of policing and the unique job that you do as a police officer...." (Constable, 6-10 years service)

“...You can't learn policing from a book. It is inherently dangerous to allocate persons to senior policing positions without them learning their craft first. Totally folly...”
(Inspector, 21-25 years service)

In line with the view of policing as distinct from other industries, respondents felt that a deeper understanding of the complexities of policing and core knowledge of the risk and danger involved was imperative. Similarly, to Wall (1994), this research identified a number of particular factors that respondents felt formulated tacit knowledge and informed the police craft which could not be taught in abstract. For example:

“...With reference to direct entry I believe policing is a unique vocation / career and it is essential to have the necessary experience to be able to empathise and understand the viewpoint of the officers of lower ranks in order to make balanced and correct decisions...” (Sergeant, 11-15 years service)

“...You cannot beat experience, managing police is not like managing Tesco...”
(Sergeant, 16-20 years service)

The above quotes demonstrate how respondents' feel craft skills are undermined and undervalued by the core aims of the DE Scheme. Williams and Cockcroft (2019) suggest that experience has traditionally been recognised as prized police knowledge and this is enhanced by the capital and credibility of having time in the job (Chan, 1997). Indeed, here the respondents felt that experience provided them with credibility and quantified their 'on the job' knowledge as a recognition of their talent and ability as a professional police officer. The criticality of time in post to craft their talent is problematised and undermined by the DE Scheme as officers are perceived as being parachuted into to higher ranking positions without the operational grounding valued so highly in policing. Such narratives of difference are indicative of officers using a dichotomy about what is and is not valued police skill. Indeed, as other research has found (Williams et al., 2019), abstract notions of professionalism can undermine individual professionalism. The narratives presented here suggest that officers are resisting the DE scheme and are, in a sense, capitalising on difference as a form of agency (Jensen, 2011) to inflate the critical nature of learnt policing skills.

2.2 Organisational Justice and unfairness

The extent of the negativity surrounding the DE scheme is evident here and furthermore, the significance of how this can foster unconstructive, 'us and them' opinion. This is perhaps largely related to a lack of clarity and communication about the value added by the DE officers. The professional and personal qualities of individual direct entrants were recognised positively by some respondents as a result of them working closely with an individual direct entry individual. However, the majority of respondents questioned the value added and this related to a lack of understanding about the aims of the DE Scheme. The following quote illustrates the concerns raised:

“...I do not agree with Direct entry - I have worked with officers brought in, they are mentored and developed by officers who want promotion themselves and haven't been able to get through the process. They move around quickly to see different departments, they show no commitment to the response team that they work alongside as they only want to get an overview and then move on. They get very little experience and there is no substitute for experience and understanding, in relation to both criminal investigations and supporting staff in their roles. Understanding the pressures / risks to staff / work involved sometimes in what seems like a small task, e.g. interview, DASH [Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence] risk

assessments, statements etc. I appreciate that new skills are always useful and this can sometimes be helpful when we need to work differently to achieve goals, however I believe we have enough excellent staff within our ranks that with development / support and training would be able to outclass direct entry candidates. This would give better morale and support the skills of current staff we have...” (Sergeant, 16-20 years service)

As part of the DE Scheme, entrants are posted to a range of operational roles that are regularly rotated to provide them with experiences in their early service. As a result of this working pattern and the short-term nature of placements, time for direct entrants to establish meaningful relationships with teams or to gain an established understanding of team requirements is limited. These are perhaps indirect negative consequences of the scheme itself in terms of officers being able to access socialisation routes into becoming and accepted insider within that team. Additionally, officers voiced concerns about direct entrants making incorrect operational decisions which may have detrimental consequences. Some, who had experience of working with direct entrants, reported that they had witnessed mistakes in post which, at times, had resulted in breaches of regulations. For example:

“...people have spent years gaining knowledge and experience to get to the ranks they have. The direct entry system is laughable. I know of a Superintendent who came in direct entry. In the first year they have lost property and breached a number of regulations that a PC would have been kicked out the job for. They still hold this rank today...” (Constable, 6-10 years service)

The lack of experience and the inability for direct entrants to always make appropriate decisions was problematic for respondents. Consequently, respondents could feel vulnerable and at risk when on duty with direct entrants. In order to overcome this sense of vulnerability, respondents reported they felt obligated to provide resilience and support to direct entrants so that they developed a sense of confidence in their role. This specifically related to their trust in operational decision making. This further impacted on the levels of respect the frontline had for these officers. Therefore, respondents felt that the onus was placed on them as more experienced frontline staff to support direct entrants in providing operational resilience. The provision of resilience around workloads created a sense of injustice and further frustration about the DE Scheme in general. Moreover, it reinforces the distinction between them and regular officers.

Respondents felt strongly that there was an organisational expectation that current frontline officers should support direct entrants in their role due to their lack of knowledge and experience at an operational level. This led to feelings of frustration amongst respondents. The quotes below illustrate this point:

“...worst idea ever to put someone with no policing experience in a senior position. All officers who have put time, heart and hard work into progressing their careers will be pushed aside for someone who does not have a clue what it is like to work on the front line. I would not respect them or want to be directed by them in a riot or serious incident....” (Constable, 11-15 years service)

“...It amazes me that despite their frequent mistakes and their changes (which often make things considerably worse - see the education sector) - that they then seek to impose this absurd notion of little to no experience in a role makes you a suitable leader. I see no benefit whatsoever of taking people with no experience of policing and dumping them into command positions - it's people like me who'll be bailing them out when they can't make a decision due to lack of knowledge and experience....” (Constable, 6-10 years service)

Officers' concerns about direct entrants' lack of knowledge and the impact this might have on potentially dangerous decisions being made meant that some bridged this void by 'bailing-out direct entrants' and providing quality decision-making to support the interests of the public. This resilience provision lead to more frustration, and respondents questioned why they should support direct entrants in this way. Work by Davies (2018) found that more senior officers of rank were perceived as 'trusted and skilled decision-makers' (p.7). Making operational decisions at a more senior level was believed to provide 'a sense of protection and reassurance, referred to by police officers as 'top cover' (p8). Direct entry schemes appear to problematise this notion as these DE senior officers are not assigned the respect that regular route senior officers command as they are not considered to have legitimate authority to pull rank credibly. This is primarily related to their lack of both policing experience and a legitimate responsibility to make effective decisions. These more senior officers have not 'achieved their position through accruing experience and a demonstration of competence'. Given the existing hierarchy of decision making within the police this finding indicates that the protection offered to lower ranking officers through the seniority of decisions is eroded when officers question decision making of their DE superiors.

"...with regards to persons coming in and going straight in to senior ranking jobs due to experience in management is completely different to that of senior management within the police force. The inexperience of not knowing how to react to certain incidents would place officers on the ground in danger..." (Constable, 6-10 years service)

Work undertaken on the concept of distributive justice suggests that increased stress on employees is experienced if outcomes and processes are deemed as unfair in organisations. In their study on prison officers, Lambert et al., (2007) identified that if officers perceived their workload to be more demanding than others and yet pay remains the same, the levels of injustice create 'job-related anger and frustration' (cited in Brough, et al., 2016: 24). The analysis presented here evidences strong emergence of resentment of the DE Scheme. Respondents feel that leadership roles should be taken by people with the experience of policing and who have worked their way up the ranks in the traditional manner. Without access to this practical learning the perception amongst the frontline is that there is a serious and risky lack of understanding about the complex workloads and decisions that officers face. The lack of 'craft' knowledge is perceived as having a detrimental impact on operational decision making.

Furthermore, the multitude of these factors impact negatively on levels of morale and there was a sense that the scheme has had a divisive impact on the workforce. Given that research suggests that morale in policing is currently very low and that officers feel fundamentally disengaged from strategic decisions and change (Boag-Munroe, 2016) this is a critical finding. Furthermore, such factors are linked to well-being, levels of productivity, organisational health and discretionary effort (Hesketh and Williams, 2017). Despite the level of discretionary effort that respondents were inputting into their day job in order to provide the extra level of resilience, they did not feel personally valued or recognised for their assistance. Respondents described feeling demoralised and not incentivised to maintain the support they were providing.

"Direct entry to ranks is a kick in the teeth to good officers who already have degrees and relevant training who would like to seek promotion but are put back due to direct entry. Policing is often about learning through experience and common sense not just about what qualifications you have. Also direct entry may work in the short term but these officers are likely to become despondent with the role quickly and seek to move on to the private sector to earn more money." (Constable, 16-20 years service)

Such issues were compounded by the perception that the DE Scheme can block career progression opportunities and that existing internal performance development reviews (PDRs) and promotion processes were meaningless.

The sense of unfairness and injustice created as a result of DE officers bypassing formal promotion processes and PDRs impacted on the presence of low morale amongst officers. This is largely linked to the participants own sense of commitment and investment they have made to their police role and their personal professional development over time. Many viewed the ignorance of formal promotion processes and PDRs as insulting or patronising and believed it was creating a divisive two-tier 'us and them' system which they viewed as demoralising.

"...The government is sending out mixed messages. On the one hand they state that they are trying to professionalise the service and on the other they are parachuting people into senior ranks. It is a bit like making someone a senior surgeon when they have no medical experience or a judge without legal experience...." (Inspector; 26-30 years service)

Respondents considered the DE Scheme to present an immediate barrier that compromised their own progression with promotion opportunities being taken from them as a result of the DE candidates. This enhanced their perceptions of unfairness and a divide in the workforce. As Smith (2016) found the consensus has been, over time, that to justifiably achieve rank a thorough understanding of the nature and craft of policing needs to be evident. Therefore, for officers who had worked hard over time to enhance their profile of professional development access to promotion was a major factor in their feelings on the scheme. As this Sergeant stated:

"...There are plenty of officers with wasted skills and knowledge who are ready for promotion in forces, but are blocked by the solid culture of negative attitudes and poor people development in force. HR do not develop people and the PDR process does not recognize those ripe for development. Introducing external candidates at middle management levels further blocks development opportunities and closes doors for promotion in force. Unfortunately, skills other than Police-trained skills are not recognized as being of value and individuals therefore stagnate and feel undervalued leading to low morale...." (Sergeant, 16-20 years service)

More acceptance and support for DE Schemes can be fostered if those aligned to the programme are seen by the work force as *different* rather than *better* (Smith, 2015). However, this is complicated. Kernaghan (2013:11) claims that one of the selling points of recruiting DE superintendents was due to candidates clearly evidencing exceptional management skills from their previous careers. Indeed, marketing of the roles was focused on skills that would impact on effectiveness and efficiency within policing (Scott and Williams, 2019). This terminology is very much aligned with models of new public management which in many ways contradict the current professionalism mantra around diverse thinking and innovation. Indeed, as Noordegraaf (Cited in Cockcroft, 2019: 222) states, seeing professional as efficiency and cost effectiveness can result in the development of 'new types of control to de-professionalise, proletarianise, bureaucratise or corporatize professionals'. Indeed, such methods may confirm the concerns of the respondents here by supporting a move from traditional notions of professional knowledge to a more 'generic neoliberal conception of effectiveness' (Cockcroft, 2019: 222).

Interesting as noted above, these skills set are not seen as traditional abilities aligned to police roles. This raises questions and contradictions about what will be required for officers to be successful in their progress – professionalism in the traditional sense or effective

management skills. As Frostenson (2015) argues, this could result in a loss of perceived power amongst the current workforce as they feel their own professional identity is questioned. This is particularly pertinent in relation to 'the organisation of work roles, procedural issue and training' (Cockcroft, 2019: 223).

Myhill and Bradford (2012) have written extensively about the concept of organisational justice and procedural fairness in policing. They argue that a sense of procedural fairness from both individual supervisors and the wider organisation is critical for officers to identify with their organisation's values and priorities. The outcomes of perceived fairness are beneficial to the organisation and to the individual officer as they link to officer productivity and a personal sense of empowerment. Given this, it is likely that officers not only perceive the process for DE and access to promotion as unfair but it further emphasises the use of their own agency 'other' DE officers and resist the skills they offer the policing organisation.

Organisational justice relates to an individuals' sense of fairness in relation to internal processes and outputs (Moorman, 1991). Respondents' opinions about the DE scheme being prejudicial to their own progression related to their access to existing internal processes within the workplace. Their descriptions of current process as meaningless in the context of this scheme has resulted in them positioning their own talents and skills as unrecognised by the organisation. The following two quotes relate to the current promotion process, and how this should focus on internal promotion, rather than recruiting externally:

"...There are enough people already in the police service who aspire to rising up the ranks. Why should people with no experience be able to have direct entry at a level above that of Sgt [sergeant]? There are already a large number of officers (myself included) who have plenty of management experience from previous employment. Why not look at what you already have first rather than employ people who know nothing/have no experience of policing ??..." (Constable, 11-15 years service)

"...The service has the wrong promotion process in place as it fails to promote good leaders who care for and work towards improving the service to the public. If this were changed there would be no need to employ persons from outside the service in higher ranks. Change the promotion process to one which attracts and promotes good leaders who care for their staff and the public not getting onto the next rung of the ladder..." (Constable, 11-15 years service)

Furthermore, there were also concerns raised about existing PDR process and how this could become more effective at recognising individual skills with a focus on development and promotion, as well as identifying weak performance that needs addressing and support.

"...The service need to focus hard on personal development. These systems create have and have nots. It is a sticking plaster. Focus on staff individually. ...There is a very substantial pot of talented knowledgeable professionals to take promotion at every rank. No one has ever explained a tangible benefit for direct entry that stands up to scrutiny. Practical experience says a bad idea and unfair..." (Sergeant, 21-25 years service)

"...You should be able to show competence in your role and have a PDR system that accurately reflects your capability. If you aren't performing action should be taken. No action seems to be taken with lazy officers / inefficient officers in my Force, we just let them carry on or recommend them for a job to move the problem elsewhere..." (Constable, 21-25 years service)

This would allow talent from within police organisations to be recognised, as well as those underperforming to be challenged. Rowe (2006) found a similar attitude towards officers on accelerated process schemes which was similarly linked with operational competence and credible skill. The DE Scheme is perceived to disregard and devalue the PDR system and confirms the impression that existing talents within police organisation are being overlooked.

"There is a wealth of diverse talent in the police service who would be capable of performing exceptionally at all ranks should the relevant training be available"
(Inspector, 11-15 years service)

Therefore, the sense of unfairness in relation to the DE Scheme and how this inhibits promotion opportunities for officers is multifaceted. It is related to the DE Scheme recruiting new officers at more senior levels, hence overriding the opportunities for existing officers. However, this is further compounded by the commitments made by the existing workforce to future proof their career and promotion options by gathering a bank of experience to draw upon to prove their competency. There is no requirement for DE officers to demonstrate such specific experience and therefore the lack of fairness with the development and promotion processes within forces is clear. The new knowledge provided by direct entrants overrides professional knowledge of those existing officers who have developed this over time. Respondents therefore questioned the organisational commitment to developing existing talents within the policing environment. Smith (2015) suggested that a clear understanding of 'talent' within organisations (including policing) is crucial in the successful ability to retain and support employees. Ideally, this definition should feed into a wider talent management strategy. However, Smith proposes that measuring talent management is complex as the drive for the scheme is centred around changing the culture and improving efficiency. The former is complex to quantify. As Tansley et al (1997) posit, much of the focus on talent relates to the attainment of performance in the context of organisational outcomes. Therefore, in order to manage the performance of new DE officers the organisation needs to clarify what outcomes are required and how officers will evidence their role in any improved service delivery.

3 Conclusions

Smith (2015: 171) suggests that 'the power of the apathy towards direct entry should not be underestimated'. The findings within this research demonstrate that rather than apathy the overwhelming sense of negativity and unfairness of the DE Scheme from respondents is influencing alternative methods of resilience to achieve the sense of empowerment that officers feel is lacking from the organisation. The power of individual agency within the current workforce to exploit the differences present in the DE officers and reassert their own professional capital should not be underestimated. The lack of the DEs learnt craft skills so commonly present in traditional officers is being capitalised on to reassert the critical nature of learnt tacit knowledge within policing. This is a potential risk in relation to the embedding of the new type of knowledge being heralded by the Police Education Qualification Framework² and professionalisation agenda which condones a taught, systematic knowledge base in policing (Gundhus, 2012).

Arguably the clear sense of injustice has further enhanced the othering of DE officers. Current officers' access to craft knowledge and the cultural capital this brings amongst their peers is used as a method of authorising their own legitimacy as competent professional cops in a way they cannot with regular officers who are more senior to them. In turn their operational legitimacy is confirmed through the provision of operational resilience when

² For details on the Police Education Qualification Framework see here:

https://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Learning/Policing-Education-Qualifications-Framework/Documents/On_a_page_-_PEQF.pdf

regular officers are working alongside the DE officers who are often more senior than them. This finding offers interesting additions to the current debate about the DE scheme and introduces new insights about how officers can further their own self-legitimacy and police identity through this process of resilience provision.

Moreover, the othering of the perceived management skill set present in DE cohorts indicates that officers are acutely aware through their working experiences of the nuances and complex demands police officers face. Organisational efficiency and managerialism is predicated on results driven management styles which conflicts with notions of professional characteristics such as 'self-directed workers, trust driven authority and the underlying value of quality' (Cockcroft, 2019:223). Wood and Williams (2016) argue that these two systems contradict each other, undermine the quality of service aspect of police work and are in fact in direct opposition to each other. Indeed, if officers place DEs outside of the normal remit of policing there is a risk of a two tiered process driving towards differing outcomes. Policing is not a homogenous occupation and nor are the issues officers deal with in their working day. Encouraging and promoting a skill set based on narrow definitions of professionalism can neglect some of the qualitative skills associated with the social contract the police have with the public such as dealing with vulnerability as opposed to enforcing the law (Charman, 2017), engagement and the importance of procedural fairness. Indeed, as Cockcroft (2019) opines rather than this encouraging the diversity of thought required in policing, management models enable rationality, homogeneity and sameness. Currently officers are actively resisting this by reaffirming the individual nature of the nuanced craft skills so vital in the context specific situations they experience daily.

3.1 Limitations

The authors accept there are some limitations of the data. The survey asked participants about their perceptions of the CoP initiatives more broadly. Consequently, some of the negativity towards DE Scheme could be aligned with the broader antipathy towards the CoP, rather than any one scheme in particular. The survey did not ask specifically if participants had direct personal experience of working with DE Superintendents and Inspectors. The authors suppose that given the numbers on the DE Scheme at the time of the research, the majority of participants would not have had direct experience of working with DE officers. Therefore, most of the "won't work" comments are based on supposition rather than actual experience of working DE officers. However, where examples of personal experience were offered, this was used in the analysis to understand the notion of providing operational resilience. Finally, there were varying levels of richness provided within the freetext comments offered by participants. Some comments were very short, some were comprehensive. However, the authors believe that given the richness of this data and that it represents the perceptions from frontline officers of federated ranks, these voices are integral to include as new routes into policing are designed and delivered.

On a final note, the findings discussed in this article identify the impact and the implications that DE has had on the participants surveyed. The authors here identify the importance of continued research as DE extends to other roles and ranks across policing. An avenue for future research could involve exploring the impact that these prevailing views of rank-and-file officers might have on the DE officers themselves in terms of their own sense of legitimacy and social identity.

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