

‘Doing a Maslow’: humanistic education and the problem with diversity in police trainer training

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Introduction

The Police Service in England and Wales (CRE 2005) is merely the latest in a plethora of reports which seek to address real concerns for diversity in British policing (HMIC 1993, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2002; Macpherson 1999; PRU 2000; ACPO 2000; Morris 2004). These reports raise many important questions; such as, does anyone in the police service ever read them? Considering the frequency with which the themes of sexism, racism and managerial incompetence reappear, it must seem as if they do not.

This paper is inspired by a different theme to emerge from a review of this literature. In seeking to address diversity issues, it is difficult to overstate the degree of emphasis placed on the role of *training*. From the Scarman Report 1981 to the CRE Report 2005, virtually every response by the British police service to allegations of unfair treatment in all its forms has included, in some measure, the issue of training. As the preamble to *Diversity Matters* (HMIC 2002) makes clear, ‘training is key in equipping staff with the skills necessary to handle effectively both the external and internal aspects of diversity’ (p.11). Indeed, this report focused specifically on training and examined a wide range of areas such as policy, curriculum and delivery.

However, in spite of all this work an important area of police training methodology remains largely unexplored. None of the literature has examined the *underpinning* theories of adult learning used in police training, from the perspective of their own diversity credentials. To begin to address this gap this paper will focus on one particular, but influential course: the Police Trainer Development Programme (TDP). There are three reasons why this programme is the prime suspect here. First, the theories of adult learning promoted on this course have long informed the pedagogic approach of police training in Britain. Second, despite the importance of the TDP for police training, this

programme has received little academic attention. Finally, the TDP is built on a number of underpinning principles, the first of which is to ‘promote diversity’.

However, my research suggests that what is being promoted is a very specific and prescriptive methodology. This methodology is broadly based on the principles of humanistic education and psychology. Whilst humanism remains an influential tradition within lifelong learning, it has been roundly criticised for its latent individualism (Usher and Edwards 1994; Pearson and Podeschi 1999) and lack of attention to diversity (Tisdell 1998). This paper posits a contradiction, between a training programme which aims to promote diversity, promoting adult learning theories which are questionable, from a diversity perspective.

Background and methodological orientation

My interest in this topic began in 1998 when I completed the Trainer Programme. Previously I had never been a trainer, or for that matter, thought much about training methodology. For ten years I had been an operational police officer and my academic background was in politics and sociology. However, even as a student trainer I felt that we were being taught a ‘universalised’ approach to adult learning and that from the perspective of promoting diversity, this was questionable. In 2002 with the aim of researching police training I embarked on a Doctorate at the University of Leeds. My research is focused on a study of training methods at a large police training school. This paper reports on some of the emerging findings from this study but with a specific focus on trainer training.

The Police Trainer Development Programme

Centrex is the working name of the Central Police Training and Development Authority, a non-departmental public body (NDPB), which is responsible for a range of national police training provision. One such area of claimed expertise is the training of trainers, which is delivered predominantly through the TDP. Despite the importance of the TDP for police training the programme has received little academic attention. A recent literature search reveals no published work and only two relevant Masters Theses (Turnbull 2002; Bateman 1989) in this area. The origins of the programme, however, can

be traced back to a research project conducted by the University of East Anglia 1986. The subsequent report recommended that police training should emphasise the more ‘humanistic elements’ and the first such Police Trainers Course was introduced that year.

In its present format the TDP is a modular competence based training programme for police officers and police staff. Since 1986 thousands of police trainers have completed this course and as such, its influence in defining ‘best’ pedagogical practice within police training nationally, cannot be overstated. In brief, the programme is composed of a distance learning phase, a classroom learning phase and finally, teaching practice. Teaching assessment is competence based and to be awarded the Trainers Certificate, competence must be demonstrated in seven specified unit standards. It is essential to note that only six of these are national units which form part of a level 3 NVQ in Learning and Development. The seventh is a ‘Centrex specific TDP unit’.

Central to the TDP are a number of theories of learning, many of which are familiar in the adult learning literature. My research suggests that these are not taught as *examples* of the many competing theories of adult learning; rather they are taught as *the* theories of adult learning. In police training discourse, they are universally referred to as ‘the models’, and they inform every phase of the programme, from inclusion in the distance learning material, to their required use in teaching practice. A useful way into these models will be to outline their inclusion in the Centrex specific TDP Assessment Unit. This will serve to identify the key models, as well as to demonstrate how the new trainers are locked into their use.

- How to incorporate the principles of ‘**Maslows Hierarchy of Needs**’ in to lesson planning (1.1.3)
- How to use the **nine principles of adult learning** to enhance learning outcomes (1.1. 5)
- **Use the Experiential Learning Cycle** (1.2 .a)
- Identify at what stage of development your group is at any particular time Using **Tuckmans group development theory** (1.1. 2)
- How to make links to the **Adult Learning Cycle** when a learner is showing signs of disorientation (1.2 .6)

- How to use ice breakers, opening and closing exercises to contribute towards a **safe learning** environment (1.1.1)
- Link your lesson plan to the models and theories used in the Trainers Development Programme (1.1.g)

In his recent study of *Ethics in Police Trainer Training*, Turnbull (2002) touched on the methodology of the TDP. Although he does not make the link with humanistic education, Turnbull argued that the overarching methodological approach was based on the principles of andragogy (p.13). Andragogy has been described as a ‘leading brand’ in adult education theory (Atherton 2003) and is predominantly associated with the work of Knowles (1970, 1975, 1984). My own research confirms Turnbull’s assessment. Returning to the TDP unit above, the criterion (1.1.5) ‘use the nine principles of adult learning’ are taken from Knowles’ (1970) work *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*. These principles of andragogy are a common theme throughout the whole of the programme literature and as noted, the student trainers must demonstrate competence in using them in teaching practice. Some of the principles stand as part of the andragogical model, whilst others have links with other humanistic models and concepts such as experiential learning, student-centred learning, self-directed learning and the ‘safe’ learning environment.

Humanistic psychology and education

The term humanistic education is generally used to describe a range of educational theories and practices that are committed to the world view and ethical stance of humanism. Broadly, this view holds sacred the dignity and autonomy of human beings as the ultimate end of all human thought and action. As Elias and Merriam (1995) outline ‘as a philosophy, humanism is as old human civilization and as modern as the twentieth century. Its roots can be traced back to classical China, Greece and Rome: historically it has found expression in religion, education and psychology’ (p.109).

However, in the early twentieth century the discipline of psychology was dominated by the schools of behaviourism and psychoanalysis. Behaviourist psychologists study overt behaviour and believe that individuals can be ‘conditioned’ to

act in certain ways through punishment and reward. According to behaviourists, all behaviour is learned through conditioning and association of one kind or another and this behaviour can be ‘unlearned’ or changed through external manipulation. Despite strong criticism behaviourism remains an influential approach in both psychology and education. In the present context, its influence can be detected in the spread of competence based education and training.

By the late 1950s however, humanism emerged as a different approach in the discipline of psychology. As Merriam and Cafarella (1999) argue, ‘despite Freud’s focus on personality, humanists reject the view of human nature implied by both behaviourists and Freudian psychoanalysts. Identifying their orientation as a “third force”, humanists refuse to accept the notion that behaviour is determined by either the environment or ones own unconsciousness’ (p.257).

Rather, the humanistic psychologists emphasised the independent and individual dignity of human beings and their *conscious* capacity to develop personal competence and self respect. At bottom, individuals are seen as being internally directed as well as ‘motivated’ to fulfil their human potential.

Although numerous theorists have contributed to the growth of humanistic psychology and education the two most prominent are Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Maslow, considered by many to be the founder of humanistic psychology, put forward a well known theory of human motivation based on a ‘hierarchy of needs’ (1954). Carl Rogers made his impact on humanistic psychology in its application to education. In *Freedom to Learn* (1969) Rogers developed the concepts of student-centred learning, facilitative teaching and significant learning. Undoubtedly these ideas have been influential. It seems clear that Rogers’ principles of significant learning and Maslow’s views have been integrated into much of adult learning theory (Merriam and Caffarella 1999). Notably, Knowles’ theory of andragogy with its assumptions about the adult learner, as well as much of the research and writing on self-directed learning have their roots in humanistic learning theories. As Elias and Merriam (1995) contend, ‘Malcolm Knowles is indeed a humanistic adult educator. For him, the learning process involves the whole person, emotional, psychological and intellectual. It is the mission of adult educators to assist adults in developing their full potential in becoming self-actualized

and mature adults. Andragogy is a methodology for bringing about these humanistic ideals' (p.138).

Limitations of police training

At first blush the revelation that the police service recommends a humanistic andragogical approach to its trainers seems laudable. Considering its popularity within mainstream adult education, andragogy would seem to offer an approach which is both tested and progressive. After all, police training has historically centred on the provision of 'instruction' in legislation and on military style drill (Rowe and Garland 2003). According to Birzer (2003), the move to a student-centred andragogical model in North American police training represents a clear advance on previous behaviourist strategies. Marenin (2004) goes as far as to argue that andragogy offers, 'the best way to prepare officers for policing based on democratic values' (p.107). Whilst these arguments have merit, my research suggests that in the context of British police training there are some limitations and problems with the andragogical model which are previously unconsidered.

First, there are clear organisational limits as to how far andragogical principles such as student-centred and self-directed learning can be incorporated into an organisation such as a police force. At bottom, the British police service is a hierarchical, disciplined organisation which has clear organisational rules goals and constraints. Most police training courses have fairly ridged curricula and clear aims and objectives linked to National Occupational Standards (NOS). In police training the focus of the learning will never really be on the needs of the student but always on the *needs of the organisation*.

Second, because of these limitations the police trainers usually end up with a diluted version of these theories. For example, taken to its logical conclusion the criterion (1.1.3) 'incorporate the principles of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in to lesson planning' should mean incorporating *all* of Maslow's principles, with the primary goal of individual 'self actualization'. In reality this rarely means anything of the sort and Maslow's theory of motivation is often reduced to little more than a health, safety and administrative 'checklist' at the start of each lesson (hence the police training term 'doing a Maslow').

Third, there is a view in education that one can judge the underpinning philosophy of a programme not by how the students are taught, but by how they are *assessed*. In the TDP the assessment approach could not be more clearly defined even if written on tablets of stone. The whole TDP is bolted together by a consistently applied competence-based assessment framework. This paper is not the place to discuss the philosophy or merits of competence-based education. However, in brief, its genesis can be traced back to the behavioural objectives movement and further still to the rise of Taylorism in management (Bates 1997). From this perspective the TDP can be regarded as a mix of two potentially ‘opposing’ psychological traditions; humanism and behaviourism¹.

Diversity

In recent years criticism of elements of humanism in general and andragogy in particular has grown in the lifelong learning literature reflecting movements such as feminist theory, critical pedagogy, multicultural education and postmodernism. Although these debates have seemingly bypassed police training policy makers, one common area of critique which should not be ignored, centres on the issue of diversity. As noted, humanistic education is dripping with ideas of individualism, though at first sight it seems difficult to criticize such views. Surely the concept of diversity is all about treating people *as* individuals! If these individuals are self motivated then so much the better. If they are capable of self direction then what could be wrong with that? From the perspective of diversity there are, in fact, a few things wrong here.

Central to this critique is the argument that humanistic discourse (Usher and Edwards 1994) represents a particular ‘western’ perspective of individuals in society. Put another way, ideas of individualism and autonomy are particularly valued in Anglo American society and, as such, far from representing a ‘universal’ view of human nature, humanism is in fact culturally bound. Such arguments are rarely mentioned in the training literature which is replete with assumptions about the ‘generic’ learner. As Tisdell (1998) explains, ‘the underlying assumption about this generic adult learner seems to be that the learner is white, middle to upper class, and male because as Flannery (1994) notes, the emphasis on individualism and autonomy in learning reflects the values of what is typically western and white’ (p.40). Flannery is not one to pull her punches and

accuses mainstream adult education of supporting ‘racism and sexism’. In *Changing Dominant Understandings of Adults as Learners* (1994) Flannery explains how Maslow’s theory of human motivation was based predominantly on studies of males; where male characteristic and values became ‘the norm’. According to Flannery ‘at one point, Maslow acknowledged that self-actualization was not a characteristic of women. However, he encouraged women to reach for their feminine fulfilments, and then if they could manage, to reach further for self-actualization’ (p.21).

Malcolm Knowles’ theory of andragogy is wide open to similar critique. In *Andragogy and Foreign Born Learners* (2003), Lee explains how Knowles drew his assumptions about adult learners from a specific, (white male, educated and middle class) section of the American population in the 1960’s and 70’s. As Lee reminds us ‘ what has been left out from his theoretical framework are women, people of colour, working-class adults, adult immigrant learners, and other marginalized groups whose experiences are often ignored in adult learning settings’ (p.12).

Finally, andragogy has also been charged with theorising a ‘de-contextualised’ account of the adult learning process. In other words, adults are assumed to be self motivated, self directed individuals who function in the learning settings *apart* from the constraints and impediments of their individual circumstances. As Pratt (1993) argues, ‘we are presented with a portrait of adult learners largely separate from their cultural and historical contexts, capable of controlling and directing their learning and expected to develop according to their own idiosyncratic paths or potential’ (p.17).

Conclusion

In recent years diversity has been a subject of much interest and concern in British Policing. In seeking to address diversity issues the police service has placed a lot of its eggs in the training basket. As the service strives to meet its targets for the recruitment of a more diverse workforce (Home Office 2001) it becomes increasingly important that such training is inclusive. This paper has shown that police training in Britain is influenced by a prescriptive and specific set of learning theories which stem from the Centrex TDP; a programme which aims to ‘promote diversity’ as its first objective. However, learning theories are *not* neutral from a diversity perspective, but usually

reflect culturally specific beliefs and assumptions about adults as learners. Models of learning on this programme are culturally bound and can be criticised for their lack of attention to diversity. Further research and work is needed to develop a more inclusive underpinning methodology for police training.

The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author. All correspondence please to Richard Heslop, Email: r.heslop@tiscali.co.uk

Notes

¹ Tennant (1997) has made the same point in relation to andragogy, arguing that Knowles draws from both humanistic and behaviouristic traditions, making his own theoretical perspective somewhat incompatible.

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