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GENERALIST VS SPECIALIST CONCEPT
OF POLICE DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

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ABSTRACT

As the police community moves toward Community Oriented Policing the generalist concept is timely in that it fits the structure of the modern police agency looking to fulfill the needs of the community. The major problem which the paper deals with is the resistance to change.

The intended audience is present and future police and government administrators. The outcome of this writing will hopefully show administrators a modern alternative to the traditional approach to law enforcement.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to study the advantages of adopting the generalist concept of police department structure. As the police community moves toward Community Oriented Policing the generalist concept is timely in that it fits the structure of the modern police agency looking tofulfilll the needs of the community.

The problems of issues to be examined will be changed from traditions. Administratorss are comfortable with structure as tradition has dictated, as are line officers. The resistance to change is the greatest obstacle to modernization.

The intended audience of this writing is present and future police and government administrators. These persons should have authority to restructure a department, and should be made aware of the advantages of such a change.

The sources of this research will be timely literaturee, and my personal experiences of the past 16 years of working in both types of organizations. This has given me a unique perspective in evaluating both the generalist and the specialist perspectives.

The outcome of this writing is to show administrators an efficient, modern change in organizational structure allowing for a successful transition with the cultivation of leaders as police officers. Also, to give policy writers the information needed to write comprehensive policies for any agency on the change.

HISTORY

Historically, the type of training administered to police officers has been, "what to do when:. Most training is geared towards specialists because most departments are structured to have specialists. Although this mode of working has some advantages, it also has many disadvantages.

A late 70's writing produced the following" "Police work is kept from being a profession by the time spent enforcing social regulations and local control. The minor traffic infractions which occupy so much time are seldom the act of real criminals. If the police could be relieved of this responsibility they could concentrate on improving services to the rest of society. Police work of the future should see greater education, greater development of specialists, and greater use of scientific methods and a team approach" (Huber abstract). An early 70's writing suggests, "Routine patrolmen are taught how to manage and observe crime scenes until investigator specialists arrive" (Mc Creedy abstract).

"Many college-education police would have liked to implement suggestions by the Task Force on Law Enforcement to the National Commission on Violence (Campbell, Sahid, and Stang 1970:300), but civil service regulations and the rigid traditionalism of most command structures stopped them" (Thibault 392).

"One area regarding the continued efforts to professionalize law enforcement addresses permanent specialized assignments vs. Assignment rotation. These four are stagnation, elitism, cliquism, and citizen's perception of corruption brought about by sensational cases and the television or movie media" (Meese 2). "When an officer has mastered his current assignment, he

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begins to feel that the position holds little challenge, causing a reduction in job satisfaction, complacent with assignments, which is reflected in the quality and quantity of work produced" (Kleinknecht).

RELEVANT ISSUES

The relevant issues this paper addresses will be the lack of training on a generalist level directed at the generalist police officer.

Through my own experiences I find that police officers in a generalist concept structure have difficulty focusing on the entire scope of the job. They feel overwhelmed, inadequate or undertrained, and this sometimes results in undesirable job performance. "While modern police executives agree that the prevention of crime and the apprehension of criminals are two of the objectives of the police organization, they also state that these objectives are just a part of the police mission." (Thibault 395)

A generalist performing his duty may be called upon to perform many things as special duty, such as replacing electric breakers, having a dumpster moved, or having potholes filled. " In the largest of metropolitan departments, at least 80 percent of an officers time is spent on non criminal matters." (Thibault 395)

 "Structure analysis can be a major step of organizational development within a government agency." (Mohler 20) Analysis is just the first step in a remodeling or restructuring of a department. "As a result of ANAPOL, A Method Of Structure Analysis For Law Enforcement Agencies, one principal for a new organization was to use generalist instead of specialists." (Mohler 18)

"Rural police are generalists rather than specialists. Both community residents in general and leading citizens find this pattern of policing appropriate." (Maguire 186) Not only is it the best mode of policing in rural area, it is the best in an urban setting as well, for a variety of reasons.

Advantages of' specialization are:

a. By streamlining work flow and removing bottlenecks.

b. Enhancing the quality of work.

c. Completes jobs faster.

d. Reduces the cost of police services.

e. Motivates workers, improves their expertise, creates greater job satisfaction.

Disadvantages that may create or compound problems:

a. Specialists may develop a status consciousness that is become snobbish when dealing with generalist.

b. Specialists may find it difficult to communicate with generalists due to a lack of common terminology.

c. Specialists may become too isolated in their work, thereby losing sight of the departments overall goals and the work of other specialists.

d. Too much specialization may invite undue competitiveness, nurture secretiveness, and even leading to corruption inside the department.

e. Specialists may tend to resent strict discipline or close supervision, especially by generalists who are their superiors in the department (Souryal 15-16).

THEORETICAL

"Police training will need to become more crime specific. Domestic disturbances will continue to demand the major part of officers' time. Counseling, interpersonal skills, and applied psychology, sociology and decision making will receive increasing emphasis in train" (Milner abstract).

In my experience I have found that generalists are more well rounded police officers than specialists. They also have the ability to handle more difficult and varied situations. If afforded training tailored to the generalist they become what is desired by most police administrators, public officials, and the general public.

I have trained officers to be generalists and find that most officers, when they realized their role, strive to be better officers by seeking more training on their own. They tend to feel a bigger part of the community because their role has put heavier responsibilities on them, and they are able to perform at a higher level.

This concept would "Focus on the creation of a new set of social roles along with the new expectations these social roles produce among the public and professionals in the criminal justice system. The focus is further narrowed on the legitimization of a new pattern of police organization and the and the relationship between the greatly modified roles and role expectations" (Thibault 391).

If this concept is adopted by an agency then the following should be considered:

1.) Modify all training tailoring it to the generalist.

2.) Remove the pool of investigators allowing each generalist to follow-up on their cases.

3.) Allowing each generalist to be able to work modified and overtime hours as needed to complete assignments.

"Morale, motivation, and productivity are at their highest level when the best people are placed in the positions for which they are most qualified" (Quarles 50). "Many morale problems develop in law enforcement when well trained and educated officers perform limited and perfunctory duties not directly related to major crime problems" (Quarles 46). "A generalist approach, implementing a rotational system, can minimize stagnation, elitism, cliquism, and corruption. Specialization, on the other hand, has been shown in studies to promote an internal atmosphere where these types of cancers can flourish" (Gabor 9).

CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

"There are numerous manpower alternatives to the use of sworn police officers working within every division of the police department" (Quarles abstract). "Police work of the future of the future should see greater education, greater development of specialists, and greater use of scientific methods and a team approach" (Gabor 6).

"ANAPOL's success can be attributed to acceptance of the project within the agency, a constant flow of information, a combination of talents and experiences, omission of quantitative targets, and the commitment of top management" (Mohler)> "The police professional of the

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future will be a generalist: (l) highly educated, (2) superbly trained, and (3) have the opportunity to work a variety of specialized assignments, but for shorter periods of time. These three factors will cause the police professional of the future to be elevated in status socially, receive a more significant salary, and be looked upon with great respect from all segments of society. Permanent specialized assignments will be, for the most part, viewed as an antiquated police management concept, that too often played a destructive role organizationally. Stagnation, boredom, elitism, cliquism, corruption, and empire-building will be so minimized that the often degrading image brought to mind by the term "civil servant" will have been reshaped" (Gabor 16).

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