

Overlapping the Actual with the Academic: The Education-Training Continuum

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Abstract

"The academy is contested terrain in contemporary society. Much of this conflict is over the boundaries between the academy and society and over the scope and authority of the academic disciplines themselves" (Brown & Schubert, 2002, p. 1051).

As policing becomes ever more complicated and police officers must subsequently be ever more vigilantly educated and trained to deal with the complexities that face them individually and collectively on a daily basis, there becomes a greater need for collaboration between traditional educational outlets and police training endeavors. The need for the police to more freely and fully access the university and the need and the ability of the university to assist in both the education and the training of police officers would seem to be a logical response to problems that arise in which society laments what are perceived by many to be "poorly trained and/or poorly equipped" officers.

If police officers reflect the society we share, then perhaps better utilization of the assets of our society could better prepare police officers for a changing world. Equipping police officers with the intellectual tools and cognitive skills necessary to most effectively handle an always more diverse population would, again, seem logical in a society that truly values diversity and seeks appropriate treatment of all of its citizens.

Universities and colleges are equipped to effectively contribute to their communities in many ways, academically, socially, culturally, economically, and beyond. Still, by and large, they are underutilized assets, with the capacity to assist police organizations, as well as other social service agencies, more comprehensively. Full utilization of educational assets is vital if we are to seek better ways of addressing a myriad of social problems that often culminate in individual contact with the criminal justice system. Integration of programs and cooperation among professionals is more important than ever as we address social problems that seem to be ever widening in their scope. This article attempts to illustrate how one program has been and continues to make attempts at the type of full integration that might strengthen both academia and professional practice.

Introduction

Whenever there is an attempt made to increase collaboration between and among "real world agencies," like police departments and academic enterprises, there is always tension. How we might best alleviate much of that tension and bring about positive collaboration is the focus of this article. To accomplish the ends we seek, we must first develop a basic understanding and appreciation of the general systems theory. Scott (1992) determined that "all systems are characterized by an assemblage or combination of parts whose relations make them interdependent" (p. 77). Systems are composed of multiple subsystems, and systems are themselves contained within suprasystems (p. 85). Systems theory, then, among other things, informs us of the need to view organizations as entities that are both interdependent with other organizations and other subsystems within organizations and that have independent aspects as well. The justice system, for example, is comprised of three basic parts: (1) law enforcement, (2) the courts, and (3) corrections. Each of these subsystems has independent aspects common only to them. Each also is dependent upon the other two in order to function at their highest potential levels. To deny that each subsystem is dependent and interdependent and that each might only succeed as far as the others allow them to succeed is to deny reality. Reality, for academia, involves the realization that our greatest successes will come with recognition that cooperation between "traditional academics" and professionals in the field will lead to our greatest potential for success as we attempt to address a society in which a variety of social problems continue to mount.

The justice studies program, at Roger Williams University, where the authors of this article are employed, attempts to continually resolve the inherent conflicts between the traditional academy and the "practice in the field" through a variety of means. The rhetoric concerning collaboration between the "practice" and study is powerful. Most colleges and universities (ours included) make grand proclamations concerning their "unique" abilities to bridge the gaps between "traditional" knowledge and "real-world" experience.

Internship programs are one example in which students (and patrons) are convinced that a given academic environment might effectively deliver traditional "book learning" with practically and vocationally necessary "real-world experience." Whether such proclamations match our genuine ability to deliver such a combination is sometimes open to debate. The debate over the effectiveness of internships, however, does not diminish the fact that internships have now become an integral part of nearly all programs in criminal justice. Whether these programs fully "integrate" the student into the "real world" and whether these programs truly increase the ever expanding knowledge base of college students is, again like the successes real and perceived of most programs, open to some debate. What about other methods of integration between traditional academia and the "real world"? Might there be other avenues in which programs with two seemingly contradictory goals converge to the benefit of both?

Perhaps the initial question should be, "How is the involvement of a university with a 'research and training institute' part of the educational and/or academic enterprise?" Should a university focus upon teaching and research in the university setting and leave space between itself and the larger community? The answer, it seems, even more today than in the past, is that universities not only should integrate

themselves more fully into the community, but they must do so. A movement is emerging in which university presidents are placing community partnerships higher on their agendas (Maurrasse, 2001, p. 1). These partnerships are forcing universities and their faculties to think more fully about the purpose of higher education.

Integration of the university with the community, however rhetorically appropriate, is not without its critics. "Traditionalists" within academia, who are reluctant to give up the historic separation that has always existed between higher education and "the real world," often tend to view integration less as any expansion of knowledge and/or service and more as a ceding of educational standards to practical ends.

This article focuses upon integration or cooperative coexistence of traditional academic programs and a criminal justice training and research institute. How might we capitalize upon, rather than merely tolerate, the many differences between these two camps? Most specifically, how might we in "traditional academia" use the training and research institute for the benefit of our students, and how, conversely, might those of us in the training and research institute use "traditional academia" for the benefit of our target audience?

The boundaries that can sometimes limit the usefulness of one's knowledge must be broken down in order for successful and lifelong learning to occur. Hoover (2002) lamented the barriers that sometimes stand in the way of genuine integration of learning and, ultimately, of knowledge. "Most academic disciplines have developed boundaries that limit the usefulness of our knowledge to those outside and that blind us to the wisdom that could be found among nonacademics" (p. 1135).

On some levels, there can be no argument concerning the distinction between "training" and "education." Noble (2002) delineated the distinction thusly: "In essence, training involves the honing of a person's mind so that it can be used for the purposes of someone other than that person. Training thus typically entails a radical divorce between knowledge and the self. Education is the exact opposite of training in that it entails not the disassociation but the utter integration of knowledge and the self" (p. 27). Understanding these distinctions and the recognition that both have a positive role to play in a university setting might go some distance toward more effective collaboration between and among participants in each.

Integration of Traditional Academia with Professional Practice and Preparation

How might "traditional academia" use a training and research institute for the benefit of undergraduate and graduate students, and how, conversely, might those in a training and research institute use "traditional academia" for the benefit of the target audience in the criminal justice system? Perhaps the answer lies in the belief that there is a symbiotic rather than adversarial relationship between education and training in the criminal justice arena.

Universities typically proffer several core values that drive the institution, such as the following:

- Learning for its own sake as an intrinsic value
- Preparing students for professions and further study

- Making available opportunities to conduct research
- Serving the larger communities
- Developing a global understanding and perspective
- Maintaining a caring community with respect for each individual (Nirschel, 2001)

These core values do not distinguish between academic programs and the rest of the world, rather they reflect the interrelationship between what occurs within the walls of the academy and its impact on the greater society. The challenge, then, is to bring life to the core values.

The model suggested to implement this process consists of three distinct but inextricably related components and can be represented by a three-legged stool. The legs correspond to the undergraduate criminal justice and legal studies programs, the graduate criminal justice program, and the justice system training & research institute respectively, while the seat corresponds to the educational institutional entity as a whole.

According to the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) Minimum Standards for Criminal Justice Education (1998), . . .

. . . The purpose of higher education programs in criminal justice is to educate students to be critical thinkers who can communicate their thoughts effectively in oral and written form, as well as to instill a comprehensive knowledge of the field. Programs should strive not only to familiarize students with facts and concepts but, more importantly, teach students to use ethical behavior in applying this knowledge to related problems and changing fact situations. The development of critical thinking, communication skills, and the ability to conceptualize ideas should be a primary objective of all criminal justice courses . . . Criminal justice programs shall not offer collegiate courses nor award academic credit for vocational training courses designed for specific job preparation or advanced job training. These courses are characterized by training for specific job skills, rather than education involving conceptual learning. (p. 3)

Additionally, the ACJS Minimum Standards for Criminal Justice Education (1998) direct that, . . .

The broad scope of criminal justice should be reflected in the baccalaureate curriculum, as should a balanced presentation of the issues of the field. Substantively, all programs should have required core courses that focus specifically on the areas below:

- *Criminal justice and juvenile justice processes* (law, crime, and administration of justice)
- *Criminology* (the causes of crime, typologies, offenders, and victims)
- *Law enforcement* (police organization, discretion, subculture, and legal constraints)

- *Law adjudication* (criminal law, prosecution, defense, and court procedures and decision-making)
- *Corrections* (incarceration, community-based corrections, and treatment of offenders)

Graduate level programs are often more specialized in their focus and emphasis, and students from a variety of backgrounds often pursue graduate work in criminal justice. Nevertheless, measures should be taken to insure that all students completing graduate degrees in criminal justice have an adequate understanding of the five substantive areas listed above. (p. 6)

Although the standards were drafted to advise undergraduate and graduate criminal justice programs, the essence of the standards can be utilized as a guide for formulation and implementation of a training and research component. Does it not seem appropriate that after the development of critical thinking skills and conceptual learning, the individual should be presented with the opportunity to apply those attributes in the "real world"? Does it not seem appropriate that the "real world" should inform the academic study? Often, those in academia fully understand and appreciate the fact that their value can and should be transferred to professional practice, but tend to be wary of whether professionals practicing in the field might appropriately transfer their knowledge to academics and their students. Effectuating the transfer of knowledge in each direction, rather than merely in one direction, is among the values that a training and research institute working in cooperation and in combination with the traditional academic program brings to the university.

To some extent the ACJS Minimum Standards recognize this relationship through the declaration that, . . .

Internships provide a useful mechanism for students to assess their interest and apply their classroom knowledge in an area of criminal justice. All programs should have elective internship opportunities available to upper-level students. Measures should be taken to insure internships are meaningful, relevant, and related to educational objectives. In that regard, the internship programs are designed to introduce the undergraduate student to the application of critical thinking skills and conceptual learning based problem solving.

The strengths of the Roger Williams University internship program have been noted in an ACJS study of regional criminal justice programs commissioned by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. This internship experience is designed in such a way as to compel students to bring the academic experience they have gained with them for use in their field placement. The students' task is to reconcile their education with the art of the practice in the field. To do this, students must develop within themselves a self-directed learner's approach. The internship program supports the development of such an approach. Students, through the use of a journal, are asked to analyze the circumstances and their reflections of observations and actions in the field. Other program requirements are structured in such a fashion as to urge students at all possible times to engage in the decision-making process and to take subsequent action. This set of approaches can be seen in the guidelines for the internship final report.

Internship Report Guidelines

The internship report requires students to outline both the nature of the activities in which they were engaged in the "field," as well as to reflectively examine the quality of those activities.

A series of questions are put to the student intern including the following:

- What was your motivation to pursue an intern placement?
- What steps were involved in securing the placement?
- What were your expectations upon starting the placement?
- How were your studies helpful to your internship? Note this includes any course work or other liberal arts higher education activities.
- How has this placement informed you? What lessons will you take away from the experience?
- How has this placement influenced your future plans?
- How have you changed during the course?
- What were the emotional responses required for this placement?
- What are the emotional responses needed to do this kind of work?

Both the thrust of the internship program and the work of the University's Justice Studies Institute for Research and Training are consistent with Donald Schön's (1983) theory of reflection-in-action. This approach guides academic interactions with field practitioners. Support of self-directed learners continues with support for field practitioners. In the case of field practitioners who, by necessity, are self-directed learners, the institute functions to refine the learner's focus and to provide a broad range of information. Both focus and additional information serve to guide the self-directed learner toward the habits of what Schön calls a reflective practitioner. Developing the habit of informed reflection echoes John Dewey's (1916) value of targeted development of habit. By prompting reflection in action as a major component in training, the training program curriculum has a closer link to the practitioner's input and issues.

The Training and Research Institute is able to adapt the internship concept by offering a venue for practitioners to connect to the academy in a supportive manner. Student interns take their academic skills and conceptual learning to the real-world while in the Training and Research Institute setting; the practitioners bring their experience-based knowledge to the classroom.

The relationship is fostered through the use of academically trained instructors within the institute. This includes university faculty as well as subject matter experts from the field. The goal is to truly blend the academic and the practical within the same class setting. The institute should endeavor to utilize faculty from a university's other schools including Justice Studies, Law, Business, and the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as leaders in the field. Such an interdisciplinary approach is essential for practitioners who will formulate and manage justice system policies in the new millennium.

Faculty, including adjunct faculty, provide their expertise in the development and delivery of specific subject matter seminars through the institute. Programs on wide-ranging topics such as criminal procedure, civil liability, legal research, domestic

violence, Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights, ethics, grant writing, and women in law enforcement may be presented through the efforts of university personnel. The topics address an attempt to blend conceptual learning and pragmatic advice for practitioners. With respect to those and other seminars and conferences, the institute relies on anecdotal as well as specific evidence of need in the criminal justice community.

The institute has established and must continue to establish partnerships for mutually beneficial initiatives with local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies in the development and implementation of training and research. These partnerships present undergraduate students with a network within which to satisfy the ACJS internship standard cited above. The faculty and administrators within the university likewise share in the network as a means of enhancing academic program delivery.

Additionally, the network presents faculty, undergraduate students, and graduate students with an opportunity to conduct applied research in a variety of areas, including policing, the courts, and corrections. Faculty serve as principal investigators and have considerable expertise in the areas of data collection, survey research, questionnaire development, data analysis, and interpretation.

Additionally, the faculty may agree to coordinate a joint research project undertaken by graduate students to glean a law enforcement training needs assessment. The results of the assessment will assist in the further development and implementation of training seminars for the criminal justice community.

The institute provides a venue to conduct applied research for faculty and other independent researchers. Funds from a federal discretionary grant may provide stipends for research, the writing of publications, and the presentation of data. A summer visiting faculty fellowship may be utilized. Those responsible for formulating social policy within the justice system require reliable empirical data about social phenomena in order to develop effective methodologies and programs. Increasingly sophisticated systems, programs, and training are required to address the complex challenges facing the justice system. The precise nature of the data that is needed to support the justice system varies significantly according to the types of phenomena being studied and the purpose of the study. An institute should be capable of providing accurate information to social policy makers, utilizing various types of research methodology, including the following:

- Survey research
- Experimental research
- Quasi-experimental research
- Longitudinal research
- Focus group research
- Program evaluation
- Policy analysis for social agencies

The research conducted by the institute should focus on the U.S. and regional justice systems and should . . .

- Provide task analysis and needs assessment surveys for justice system agencies.
- Provide high-quality education and training for justice system personnel.
- Apprise justice system personnel of recent developments in the law.
- Analyze crime data for justice system agencies.
- Provide research and technical expertise for justice system agencies.
- Provide quality computer education and training for justice system agencies.

As previously suggested, the typical university core values do not distinguish between academic programs and the rest of the world; rather, they reflect the interrelationship between what occurs within the walls of the academy and its impact on the greater society. Have we infused the core values with life? Are the various facets of the educational, training, and research process at a training and research institute effective to that end?

The core value of "learning for its own sake as an intrinsic value" overlays quality undergraduate and graduate programs and is exemplified by the symbiotic relationship among the individual components of the university's delivery system. Student internship programs within the criminal justice community combined with academic training fulfill the value related to "preparing students for professions and further study." Applied research conducted jointly and severally by faculty and students related to policing, corrections, and courts issues work toward "making available opportunities to conduct research." "Serving the larger communities" would be evidenced by the numerous and diverse training and research partnership endeavors with local, state, federal, and institutional entities as well as through the initiation of faculty fellowships within the criminal justice community. "Developing a global understanding and perspective" is fostered through the utilization of research in understanding and designing additional research and training proposals. The collegial environment of the faculty, staff, students, and criminal justice community as a whole serves as the example of "maintaining a caring community with respect for each individual."

Summary

Within a university setting, there can sometimes exist an undercurrent tension between "careerists" and the more "traditional"-minded professors. Embracing the "middle" status that encompasses both traditional academia and careerism allows for a positive coexistence for both "sides" for the benefit of our students and, hopefully, larger society. The three-legged stool we've mentioned before is an apt description of the way in which we've sought balance between support for the "intellectual" and the development of reciprocal relationships with practitioners in the field. Training supported by a university creates better research opportunities for traditional academia as well as fulfills the needs of our field agencies within the criminal justice realm.

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Assessment of Training as a Change Mechanism and Action Plan for Modification: Incorporating an Associate's Degree in Applied Science into a Police Training Program

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Background and Significance of the Change

The Frederick County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) is the primary full-service law enforcement agency in Frederick County. Frederick City is now the second largest city in Maryland. The county, encompassing the city, has a population of approximately 200,000 people and is 645 square miles in area. Our agency is growing at the rate of approximately 10 to 15 deputies every year for the past five years, and we anticipate maintaining this growth rate for several years in the future. Our current authorized strength is 160 sworn deputies. The FCSO will be moved into a new multimillion dollar state-of-the-art facility. In addition, plans are underway for a police academy wing to be added to the existing public safety facility in July 2004. Currently, the FCSO Law Enforcement Academy shares facilities and partners instructors and equipment at the public safety facility with the fire and rescue services.

The rapid growth of the county and need for qualified and professional personnel presented a unique academy and training development unit challenge. The training unit was faced with a decrease in qualified recruit applicants, partly due to the lucrative job market in 2000. Our first identified objective was to increase recruit numbers. Our second objective was to offer a program utilizing existing job benefits to attract professionally qualified recruits. Our third objective was to manage the current accumulated college credit hours of our recruits and veteran deputies in a meaningful way that would result in a college degree, rather than meaningless hours scattered throughout several disciplines or accumulated wholly as "electives." Our final objective was to retain our personnel.

The impact on the FCSO was clear. In order to professionalize our agency at a rapid rate of growth, attract qualified personnel, offer recruit incentives, and retain these recruits, the FCSO had to look at nontraditional alternatives available within our own agency and community. Without achieving these goals, the FCSO would fall behind in filling current vacancies and hire less-than-qualified personnel. Existing personnel would continue to aimlessly accrue college credits, and we would continue to fight high attrition rates.

Looking first at the recruiting issue, the FCSO in conjunction with Frederick Community College (FCC) agreed to explore developing a program to incorporate an associate's degree into the existing police academy program in order to recruit the