An Examination of Mentoring as a Mode of Capacity Building in Afghanistan: Evidence from a Policing Micro-System

Gordon Marnoch*

Abstract   This article examines US funded efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan National Police through a field-based mentoring programme for officers in the area of intelligence management. Using data taken from interviews with 10 mentors from Northern Ireland, the study examined a particular mode of delivery in detail and also considered how evidence for future programme evaluation should be acquired. Mentoring took place in the context of operational police stations. The evidence collected is organized under three thematics—the mentoring role, conceiving success, and lesson learning. The study indicates that embedding mentors in operational microsystems can be an effective mode of delivering capacity building programmes and provides a source of rich learning material to be analysed for future programmes. The article argues for broadening future programme evaluation to capture the type of knowledge that can be generated through qualitative research conducted by an experienced practitioner in the field.

Introduction

Police capacity building is a major element in peacekeeping and state rebuilding efforts initiated by western powers in nations emerging from conflicts (Caparini, 2015). By 2001, when the USA intervention in Afghanistan began, the International Criminal Investigative Training and Assistance Program (ICITAP), part of the US Department of Justice, was providing police training and development in over 50 countries worldwide with an annual budget of about $50 million allocated through various budgetary streams (ICITAP, 2013). In US led programmes, the delivery of capacity building has been much varied in form, content, and delivery mode, involving the US State Department and military who both relied significantly on private contractors paid to deliver specified services. This article deals with the efforts of the USA to capacity build through a contractor delivered, field-based mentoring programme for Afghan National Police (ANP) officers in the area of intelligence management. The programme is henceforth referred to as Futures. The intention behind the study is two-fold, to learn about the effectiveness of a particular mode of delivery, in this case mentoring of ANP officers conducted by former police officers from a western country and also to consider how evidence for programme

*School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences, Ulster University, Newtownabbey BT37 0QB, UK.
E-mail: gj.marnoch@ulster.ac.uk

evaluation can be acquired. Qualitative data were collected from mentors operating in police stations.

There has never been a strong sense that resources are being effectively used in Afghanistan. A persistent doubt has existed over the focus and quality of training being provided by private contractors (Commission on Wartime Contracting, 2009; Lovewine, 2014 pp. 51–76). Quantity of training was often relied on to indicate progress to the detriment of gaining understanding of outcomes. This reflected weaknesses in evaluation and monitoring schemes used in Afghanistan (Connable, 2012, pp. 153–170). Both military led and contractor-based capacity building have been reviewed somewhat negatively in terms of cost and effectiveness. Poorly managed contracts and inadequate oversight have undoubtedly undermined the effective use of resources in police capacity building in Afghanistan as noted in various SIGAR Audit Reports (Special Inspector for Afghanistan Reconstruction). A recent example criticises the lack of performance metrics available to assess intelligence capacity building programmes (SIGAR, 2017). Regardless of whether it is federal employees or contractors who deliver the capacity building it seems clear that one major problem faced by the USA and all other initiators of police capacity building in Afghanistan is a poor appreciation of 'what works and why' (Skinner, 2008). It is clear that Afghanistan represents a very difficult country in which to build up the capacity of a police force along lines that are influenced by principles and practices found in western equivalents (Boyd and Marnoch, 2014). The availability of large sums of money has not in itself been a sufficient driver for reform. At the macro-level the issue of identifying the best available mode of capacity building has, it is argued, been somewhat obscured throughout the 15 year Afghan mission conducted by western powers, due at least in part to a lack of stability and agreement over the structure and leadership of programmes (Bayley and Perito, 2010). For much of the time the US Government lacked a comprehensive reconstruction plan for Afghanistan and issued a series of broad and general requirements for police reform programmes, leaving contractors free to devise a series of programmes, which had little regard to the needs of the ANP (Caldwell and Finney, 2010). In an overly supplier led environment they offered training in areas where they could quickly deliver to targeted groups. The contracting companies made their tender bids attractive by structuring their projects around relatively easily collected performance metrics such as number of 'students' trained and the number of courses run. Data gathering and evaluation were in any case highly problematic due to a number of factors including differing reporting requirements on the part of coalition, for example the military favoured quantitative metrics on outputs such as the number of arrests and weapon seizures which were likely to have an impact on 'war fighting', whereas the training side focused on outputs such as the number of officers trained, police officers mentored, the number of courses delivered, and the number of Intelligence reports submitted. Evaluation should also address the issue of attribution, or if 'bullet proof beyond reasonable doubt' causation is not evident, then at least provide strong indication that an intervention is making a contribution to observed results (Fox et al., 2017, pp. 54–55). For example, if a simple outcome indicator such as deaths caused by terrorist action moves in a positive direction, the question needs to be asked as to how much of this impact is a consequence of capacity building action. In reality Afghanistan during the period in which this study is located was just about 'evaluation proof' in the sense of rendering up summative accounts of attributable impacts from capacity building programmes. A mixture of technical and security weaknesses inhibiting the collection of relevant data ensured this was the case (van Stolk et al., 2011).

In this study, it has been possible to explore the potential for qualitative evaluation as the means of acquiring acceptable levels of knowledge concerning how capacity building works. Referring to data,

which is both context sensitive and collected from policing experts embedded in the field, represents a departure from the norm. While critical of contractor performance the tendency has been for governments to want more of the same centrally collected quantified data (RAND National Defense Institute, 2012).

It is argued here that there is a need for a different approach to performance and evaluation that provides complimentary explanations of the sociocultural mechanisms that make programmes work in the sense of realizing policing principles and practices.

Nation building efforts in Afghanistan were launched from a deficit position with respect to knowledge about the social structure and cultural norms operating in the various parts of the country where work would take place. The absence of detailed and reliable understanding about Afghanistan extended to its institutions including the ANP. Sociocultural intelligence (SOCINT) is a term applied to systematic efforts aimed at developing understandings of social and cultural principles underpinning the societies where military and peace-building campaigns take place (Patton, 2010, pp. 11–12). In social science terms an exercise in applied anthropology would be taking place (Bryman, 1989, p. 142).

Interest in finding appropriate modes of delivery has been more apparent in police capacity building efforts latterly. For example, a US Department of Defense report gave particular attention to the formation of 'Police Mentoring Teams' (Inspector General US Department of Defense, 2011). Here, the mode of delivery was seen to be the significant factor rather than the volume of programme contracted. Such sensitivity to education theory was not without precedent. According to officials from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations mentoring and field-based training was key to establishing professional police forces in the Balkans and East Timor and in addition supported development of the skills learnt during more formal training sessions and helped provide a

systematic basis for evaluating performance of the clients (GAO Report, 2005).

Mentoring programmes imply that western staffs have a significant knowledge of what we refer to here as policing 'microsystems'. Adapting a theory originally proposed by the development psychologist Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney, 1976) and subsequently adapted by Quinn (1992) for the purposes of understanding organizations, a policing microsystem can be thought of as small groupings of officers who work together on a regular basis providing the functional first line building blocks of a police service organization. They are difficult entities to understand requiring attention to individual members, their motivations, values and attitudes, and how they interact with one another, in this case in the act of managing intelligence. Microsystems exist in specific contexts and must cope with or exploit local circumstances, but are also embedded in larger systems and organizations. Microsystems are crucial to capacity building programmes since the quality and value of service produced by a large police force can be no better than the work generated by the small systems from which it is composed. Each microsystem's performance needs to be seen in reference to higher organizational aims, linked processes, and a shared information environment. A policing micro-system should also be seen as a living unit that will change over time as staff, resources, and challenges develop, rather than a fixed entity. Improving, innovating, and improvising are essential qualities of the successful self-sustaining microsystem. The mentoring programme we examine took place in microsystems located in police stations. Mentors were embedded for periods of 20 months or more. It is argued that a particular type of rich knowledge can be derived from interviews with western police mentors with direct professional interaction with ANP officers in the intelligence gathering microsystems. In acting as mentors they in effect participated themselves in the outworking of intelligence management policy in the microsystem, which provided for a unique

form of access to the first-line building blocks of the ANP.

Mentoring

In imparting western originating knowledge and techniques to police officers in the host country it is important to examine the theoretical basis of different education processes. A useful distinction can be made between standard training and mentoring (Colaprete, 2009). The term training normally signifies a process driven by an individual or team who control content and interactions. Training tends to be impersonal and hierarchical, with the flow of information and content downward usually in accordance with a formal plan or schedule. Training can be a very efficient mechanism in certain circumstances offering a means of ensuring standardization in employee actions, the opportunity to scale up a programme to deal with large numbers of trainees and replication in different places and times (Buckley and Caple, 2009). Design factors mean effective transfer of knowledge from a training environment to the work environment is never guaranteed (Awais Bhatti and Kaur, 2010).

Training programmes are also predicated to define and sequence tasks which normally require a very detailed knowledge of the working environment, the existing abilities of trainees, as well as a precise concept of what constitutes successful task delivery (Stanislas, 2014). In the context of intelligence management in the policing environment of Afghanistan this was generally difficult to establish.

Mentoring and field-based learning had been used by the UN in the Balkans (GAO Report, 2005). The UN experience pointed towards a learning cycle being required to assist clients absorb, deploy, and develop new skills learnt during formal training. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1984) links formal training and field-based mentoring in which the client is supported and guided by an experienced mentor to develop skills in a work setting. Mentoring helps the client to reflect on their experience of 'doing' and encourages further skill conceptualization prior to the next opportunity to practice learning. In this process the mentor gains a sense of the local environment and supports the client to adapt their new skills to suit circumstances, while in turn the mentor understands how things work in the field, providing knowledge that can be fed back into the formal training setting making it more relevant to future clients. The presence of field-based mentors provides confidence (psychosocial support) to clients and facilitates the informal transmission of knowledge, relevant to their work and professional development (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007). Training tends to be formal with well-defined learning objectives delivered in a short period and in a dedicated space, whereas mentoring is rather more personal, with a mature seasoned mentor providing one-on-one attention to enhance an individual's skill set, knowledge, and performance (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2004; College of Policing ND Based on CIPD Factsheet, 2015). The mentor typically provides information, advice, counsel, encouragement, support, and feedback to the mentee. The mentee should utilize acquired knowledge and resources to improve and grow into their work role. There should also be an emphasis on inculcating staff with appropriate understandings of appropriate relationships and behaviours in the work environment consistent with the organization's values. Mentors should be individuals who are committed to supporting junior colleagues in overcoming organizational barriers to professional development (Garvey et al., 2009, pp. 11–32). There is the potential for mentors to place less stress on communicating predetermined instructions on new and existing skills and instead exploit their position as someone close to the on-going action that mentees are involved in. In such circumstance they can identify significant emergent organizational issues and address associated officer behaviours. The opportunity to use such critical incidents in the microsystems as a focal point for mentoring provides an advantage over

traditional training and coaching (Burdett, 1994, pp. 133–145). Thus, in a capacity building scenario in which developed western concepts are being transferred to less developed states it is likely that field mentoring will be of high value to clients.

There are also political and social reasons to recommend mentoring as the means of capacity building. Afghanistan was and remains a country where power relations are in flux. As in other places where western designed nation building has been attempted traditional leaders have found themselves losing influence (Hippler, 2005, pp. 3–27). A fragmenting political and social order meant traditional leaders resisted programmes that seemed to be taking control away from them. Also efforts at nation building were seen to be failing because Afghans did not want to be 'mere objects' of external campaigns (Spanta, 2005, p. 76). Politically, given the tensions that exist through post-conflict countries not wishing to be seen to be dominated by western powers, there is a prospect that the mentor–mentee relationship will be perceived as more equal in comparison to conventional training which to a certain degree will be an exercise in replicating external practices (United Nations, 2015). Mentoring which relies on a bonding experience with the targets of intervention may be less likely to be seen as another press for change driven by 'outsiders' with their own interests and impersonal sub-contracting chains.

Mentors if fully embedded in the microsystem can also be 'comrades in adversity', a concept associated with the action learning school of development, where the sharing of difficulties provides a bonding experience that facilitates the constructive sharing of concerns and experiences (Margerison, 1994, pp. 109–110). Mentors achieving this status are less likely to face rejection from alienated police officers suspicious of the motives of western capacity builders. The concept of mentoring is nevertheless problematic when used in the context of the ANP. A system of learning that works in a conventional western organizational context was by no means guaranteed to be deliverable in the circumstances encountered. A key stage in policy transfer is the 'handover' of principles and practices from the 'donor to recipient'—grounded in a specific local context. It should be acknowledged that this is an underdeveloped area of expertise which requires research and the production of evidence on how to remove constraints on this element of capacity building (Benson, 2009, pp. 7–10). There is certainly merit in considering how methods of data collection, analysis, and utilization practices could be developed around the human interactions, which mentors undertook during the delivery of Futures. Embedded mentors appeared to be an excellent conduit for extracting actionable SOCINT material to be recycled in the design of subsequent capacity building programmes.

Methods

The study examined a mentoring programme in a single province where the USA has taken the lead on assisting the Afghans with security. The mentors were working in a difficult arena where to a large extent their role had to be self-defined. It was clear that a high amount of reflection had taken place among the group, which encouraged the researchers to explore viewpoints that had emerged while working in the field. Prior research and initial observations had indicated that the mentoring programme taking place in the police station microsystems was subject to much negotiation and adaptation. Quantitative studies such as those constructed around fixed question surveys find it difficult to capture context, which was thought to be a significant factor in the mentoring programme. Qualitative research is generally better suited to capturing a sense of organization processes being completed or breaking down, exploiting the researchers proximity to the micro system over extended periods of time (Bryman, 1989, pp. 139–141).

Empirical data are derived from interviews carried out with mentors, who each worked for at least

20 months in 14 police stations located in one province of Afghanistan, during 2012–13. A strength of the study is the access to the whole group involved in mentoring. In total, 10 out of a total of 14 mentors associated with Futures were interviewed. Interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis, nearly always in the locations where the mentors were working.

It was anticipated that interview subjects in relating mentoring experiences would use an explanatory discourse informed by their career experience both past and present. While in terms of conceptual range this might potentially limit the scope of interpretation of the mentoring process, for reasons of authenticity it was a factor the study exploited rather than tried to eliminate. The responsive form of interviewing employed therefore aimed to encourage mentors to forge interpretations in their own language, which the study reproduces. The extensive use of interview material in form of quotes is common practice with qualitative research. Respondents were not tied down to narrow questions, instead being invited to take a 'grand tour' through the issues involved in mentoring ANP officers in the particular microsystems encountered (Undheim, 2003). Such an approach was felt would best prevent the interviewer imposing pre-conceived ideas on the subjects. This was an important consideration given the need to extract a rounded interpretation of the factors understood by mentors to count in the pursuit of programme aims. When transcripts were analysed it was clear subjects provided authentic explanations that they constructed in their own terms rather than recycling 'familiar narrative constructs' (Miller and Glassner, 1993, pp. 100–102).

Interviews ranged across a wide range of issues, but always addressed the viability of Futures in Afghanistan, relationships and cultural issues impacting on progress, contextual issues such as the availability of resources, the physical and human geography of the province where the programme was being implemented, and the institutional characteristics of the ANP. Interview notes were written up immediately after. The researchers subsequently compared readings of interview transcripts and came to an agreement on the need to focus on certain emergent themes. Transcripts have been analysed using standard transcript content analysis techniques, with emergent patterns of issue representation and explanation identified used to explain this particular case of capacity building (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Qualitative study designs tend to come with built in limitations. The collection of data is time consuming, requires expertise, and is difficult to operationalize on a large scale. Survey-based research is more readily replicated and has an internal validity where sound quantitative methods have been applied. Some prior knowledge of the organization being examined is nevertheless an essential requirement. In situations where context relevant prior research is very scarce it is hard to conceive of a design being found that could identify key variables that could be quantified.

Context—mentors, mentees, and futures

The re-building of the ANP intelligence capacity required outside help as a consequence of the US prohibition on teaching/sharing its own intelligence methodologies. This created an opportunity for a major contractor who in turn recruited experienced former police officers with knowledge of intelligence management principles and practices derived from the Northern Irish 'Troubles' in roles that included inter-facing with the military.

A lengthy policy document written by ex-RUC officers set out principles underpinning Futures, with the operational methodology based on the experience and skills developed in counter-insurgency tactics used by law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland. A version of Futures had previously been delivered by retired RUC/PSNI Officers in Iraq providing an attractive 'off the shelf' option for the contractors. That Futures mentees were being mentored

by a group consisting entirely of former police officers with experience of intelligence management in Northern Ireland added considerably to programmatic cohesiveness.

Futures provided a model and a set of minimum standards with which to develop an effective and accountable police intelligence management system. In 1976, The Bourn Report (also known as *The Way Ahead*) recommended the security response to the violence should change to being police rather than military led (Bourn, 1976). Two years later the Hannigan Report concluded that a more normal policing style could increase stability (Hannigan, 1978). Together these two reports were the genesis for the Northern Irish COIN (Counter Insurgency) policy and allowed for the development of a more targeted and intelligence led response against those committing the most harm. To do this, the police developed new intelligence methodologies and skills all within a rule of law context that did improve community relationships and increased stability. The model that emerged was essentially a COIN response based on the rule of law, albeit with some key differences to that which would be deployed in a democratic state during peacetime. The system itself was intended to provide a structured approach based on the identification of threats and what was known about these threats thus generating requirements for additional intelligence. Mentors were expected to help their ANP mentees acquire a 'tradecraft' in intelligence technology and techniques, skills to recruit, and manage informants and to collect, analyse, and exploit information to meet the identified intelligence requirement. In simple terms mentors described the system and shared their tradecraft, demonstrating how mentees could successfully apply the system. Futures provided information in Pashto and Dari for use by ANP members. Mentoring was taking place in a capacity building sequence which had begun with formal courses delivered in theatre by police trainers also recruited from Northern Ireland.

As participant observers in a policing microsystem the mentors had a unique observational vantage place to peel away socio-cultural veneers, which obscured under-performing behaviours and relationships. Embedded in the working life of a police station it was possible for them to build empathies that in turn developed mentor–mentee trust. Mentors had incentives to navigate phenomena such as a pronounced aversion to 'losing face' on the part of ANP officers, who were ashamed at being identified as deficient in a particular skill. They could readily observe the disparity between claims to be following procedures and operational realities. For instance one mentor found that a requirement for a secure storage facility for intelligence records had resulted in the use of a cloth-covered hole in a wall situated in a shared office. In contradiction of ANP claims there were often no established administrative procedures and little written paperwork kept in relation to intelligence, meaning information was frequently shared by word of mouth. Intelligence reports to headquarters might be sent in an envelope in the possession of an officer who was required to hitch a lift in the absence of any ANP transport resource thus compromising established security procedures. Mentors also quickly realized that communication was only possible through mobile phones, which had to be purchased by the officers themselves. The well-known literacy problem in the ANP was much in evidence but could be mitigated, as mentors learnt, through the pairing of officers, so that there was always one literate individual present to make records of operational actions. Manifestations of the language problem in Afghanistan, where there are both Pashtu and Dari speakers, were leading to seemingly inexplicable postings of officers to the 'wrong area', where they would not be able to communicate with either colleagues or the public. Mentors also became aware of the need for a 'lynchpin' figure to be present at the next level up from their microsystem who had the ability to integrate intelligence into a form that was analysis-ready, rather than a

disparate collection of reports produced under different circumstances by individuals of varying abilities.

While this article is focused on the microsystem where mentors interacted with their mentees, it is necessary to acknowledge the extent to which difficult relationships prevailed with higher levels of the ANP, meaning the project came with many surprises. The mentors had assumed that a working organization existed and that the task was to improve the skill level of the ANP officers. Preparation for the mentors, while it included briefings on Afghan culture from ex-pat Afghans and from experienced mentors who had worked on similar projects, did not adequately prepare them for the conditions they would face on the ground. Nevertheless, interviews indicated that the preparation was helpful up to a point and taught effective mentoring skills stressing in particular the importance of being sensitive to local culture.

The situation on the ground was fast moving and variable with some mentors working in a reasonably benign environment with relatively easy freedom of movement and a good number of mentees to work with. This was not always the case and others worked in a hostile rural setting with perhaps only one or two mentees and restricted freedom of movement, often only able to communicate with mentees via mobile phone. Furthermore, the speed of programme development made it impossible to brief mentors on work site conditions as they only learnt where they were going a day or two before departure. Often the mentor team (mentor and interpreter or culture adviser) would be dispatched to an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) base with instructions to search out the base administration office, request living accommodation and find a military escort to take them to the ANP station in search of mentees. Thus, mentors frequently deployed not knowing how many mentees they would have, the current abilities of mentees including literacy rates and or facilities available. Working practices were necessarily improvised and because the mentees as a

group had a variable capability it was usually a case of transferring knowledge in small segments followed by mentoring to put the new knowledge into practice and to identify the next area for development. One unforeseeable factor was the frequency of sudden change when in line with the prevailing organizational culture the appointment of a new leader led to the entire staff being replaced within weeks. For example in 2011 a new Chief of the ANP on his appointment replaced 90% of the intelligence staff.

In a more conventional situation the mentors would be senior ANP officers, perhaps supported by a high-level Force Champion (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). They would also be following a policy approved by the ANP command. However, Futures was brought in by a small number of ISAF commanders who had identified a need in their Territorial Area of Responsibility to develop ANP intelligence officers and their local commanders. Many senior ANP officers at provincial and HQ levels were initially unaware of the programme and could therefore provide no support. On arrival mentors would brief the local ANP commanders and build a working relationship with them. Programme delivery was very much bottom up, an inversion of the normal mentoring methodology. Only once the programme was underway was it possible to begin approaching senior ANP commanders and win their support for the programme and help overcome local resistance.

Findings—interview analysis

Interview-derived data were analysed to make sense of the mentoring process in the microsystems in which it was located. Data have been organized under the following themes to help provide evidence on what 'works and why' in the task of police capacity building:

- Identifying with the mentoring role.
- Conceiving success.
- Lesson learning.

Extracts from interviews relate to 10 respondents who are identified by letters A–J.

Identifying with a mentoring role

The circumstances in which they worked were very challenging and the mentors were forced to work out a role for themselves through a mixture of learning and improvisation. None of the interview subjects gave any hint of feeling that as outsiders they lacked the credibility to be mentors to ANP officers. This is perhaps a surprising finding given the difficult operational circumstances that they found themselves in, although it is quite possible that adversity generated a 'comrades in adversity' effect, which provided a basis for bonding to take place (Margerison, 1994, PP. 109–110). There are explanations to be found in the interview transcripts. Firstly, the existing condition of the ANP meant that a top down mentoring programme was not a viable option and this was accepted by mentees. The tasks and practices being mentored had been successfully tried and tested over many years in Northern Ireland reducing the capability and activities of violent terrorist organizations. Mentors having worked as intelligence officers in Northern Ireland during this period had a belief and confidence that if adopted, Futures would develop the capability of the ANP to effectively counter terrorist groups. Furthermore, mentors recognized some basic similarities between Northern Ireland and Afghanistan and they could identify with the position of the ANP enabling them to empathize with mentees and share 'stories' and experiences. In some instances the more experienced ANP officers, some trained by the Soviets, used these discussions to test the mentor's credibility. The mentors all believed they passed this 'test'.

Features of the ANP and individual microsystems emerged as opportunities for mentors, for example due to the strict age-related hierarchy, younger officers tended to be overlooked and confined to mundane tasks, unless they were under the patronage of their local commander. For these officers mentors offered an innovative way to learn.

> The younger group viewed us as a means for them to further their careers and were very keen to learn. (H)

In most cases the younger officers proved a ready and willing audience for mentors, in this sense conventional mentoring relationships could be established in spite of the difficult circumstances.

On occasion mentors would encounter commanders who refused to engage, blocked access to other officers or forbade their staff from using the forms and procedures passed on from mentors.

> . . . commanders are usually not the people demonstrating capability and therefore not leading well. (E)

This only improved when they were ordered to engage and support Futures. This represents an instance of learning from the negotiation of obstacles. Such experiences pushed the Futures mentoring team to seek engagement with senior ANP Command officers to develop local 'champions' (Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002).

A strong sense of the value of the mentoring programme came across in interviews, respondents identifying with a common sense of purpose in the work they were performing. This is demonstrated in the extracts from interviews presented below in which the mentors were generally clear about the significance of the role they were performing and highlighted the relevance of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). This was expressed in a number of ways. Some of the discussions centered on the need for complementarity and sequence:

> An effective training programme was crucial to the delivery of effective mentoring. Close working relationships between the trainers and mentors ensured that feedback on training from mentors assisted in developing training courses.

Similarly, trainers were able to give advice on the competency and skills of students which were of benefit in developing the mentoring effort. (G)

This respondent had a positive experience of working with trainers who had been contracted to provide classroom-based learning; however, this was not always the case and there were several interviews in which trainers were discussed in critical terms.

I feel that the trainers would benefit from being mentors first to enable them to have a grasp of reality at the coal face to enhance delivery ... (B)

Too many classroom sessions lead to boredom of the mentee. (F)

PowerPoint presentations for the majority .... are an instant turn off. (A)

In addressing what they perceived to be strengths in the programme, interview subjects were taken through a number of discussion points which would allow them to identify with and refer to concepts associated with mentoring, signifying that they embraced certain values associated with this approach to staff development in policing. It was evident from most of the interviews that the subjects had been dealing with a difficult process which had required them to develop new skills. Establishing relationships was seen as a key stage:

Aggressive, confrontational and impatient approaches [don't work]. (B)

The key to the successes that I have had, I feel are down to interaction on a daily basis with the Afghans and focused one to one mentoring to show support. One example I can give is where a concept was explained by way of briefing, with questions taken and answered. Practical examples were shown. Then over a period of time each officer was

visited and time spent with them to ensure they were on the right track and to address any issues that they had. This is continuing. (G)

Mentees for the most part are shrewd and quickly establish the 'expertise' of a mentor. Those men without the appropriate experience will very quickly be exposed. (D)

It was also clearly indicated by all respondents that the programme material they were using to build capacity needed to be treated as a starting place rather than a 'must follow' route to pre-determined destination point.

... the content must be appropriate and achievable by the target audience ... so program objectives must reflect that the outcomes anticipated will not be equivalent to the mentor's country. (E)

A mentor that adheres rigidly to the Plan almost always fails to impart valuable lessons. (D)

The discussions conducted indicate that the learning system required mentors to have some degree of control over the process in the sense of flexibility over timings and emphasis. In mentoring, relationships need to be managed carefully and this was an issue that most of the respondents wished to stress.

If you rush them, they will feel pushed ... Rushing mentees, arguing with the mentees and treating [them] with disrespect does not work .... Once trust and respect is gone you will never regain momentum. (C)

The mentor explained why a long-term view that accepts that success is organic was needed. It was a case of allowing mentees to adapt their learning to their environment, with the support and advice of a mentor.

The need to see the world through the mentees eyes featured frequently in interviews, which is also regarded as a pre-requisite in successful mentoring programmes offered in conventional western organizational contexts.

> ... [things work] not in a way we would be satisfied with but we have to remember that it works for them and generally they are happy with it. (B)

Success—how mentors conceived it

The researcher asked mentors to explain why they thought the programme was a success. There is no attempt being made here to claim programme success is evidenced by the interview responses, rather the intention is to examine how success was conceptualized. When mentor responses to questions were examined it was clear they are conceiving success in terms of the tasks their mentees could perform. This implies accepting that programme impact should be seen in terms of a sustainable work (intelligence management) process rather than quantifiable output or outcome metrics. Mentors rejected the tendency to try and demonstrate the success of intervention in solely material terms with their responses overwhelmingly constructed around the perceived capabilities of those under their influence during the programme. In describing success in terms of individual development the mentors were demonstrating that a bond had been formed with the individuals concerned. This conforms with the conventional role that mentors are supposed to play (Bozeman and Feeney, 2007).

> The infrastructure that has been built around a unit and equipment given to fulfill the task is no way to measure success. Success is in the individuals that make the unit. (H)

When trust and a relationship begin to develop. When the company forms started to be used and the quality of the written product were enhanced . . . . Transformation on the content of an AIR to include the answers to the 'golden questions, the concept of the intelligence cycle and targeted recruitment. (I)

Eventually small capability pockets appeared in the unit consisting of people who did the job as they were taught in schooling. (E)

When the mentees commence replicating work practices as instructed and producing intelligence reports as instructed. (F)

... the first operation undertaken [resulted] in a number of munitions being seized. The various departments had worked together to bring about a successful outcome . . . . 200 operations later was a defining moment . . . . Success has to be Afghans doing it for themselves from soup to nuts. (G)

Success measured in their ability to defeat obstacles that can be in its path and operate independently of its mentor. (B)

Success is in the individuals that make up the unit. (D)

... mentoring effort is . . . . an overwhelming success due to the fact that from an ill disciplined group, a capable company of men has been developed in a twelve month period ... [they are] currently operating in overt, discreet and covert profiles in the most hostile districts . . . . with very little support, using their resourcefulness to overcome problems that face daily, be it

the Taliban or the bureaucracy of their parent organisation. (A)

I knew I had been successful at one of my initial police stations when they demonstrated their understanding (not parrot fashion) of the Intelligence gap and Intelligence Requirements, and they targeted and recruited sources that were normally out of their comfort zone to approach. (J)

Success could also take the form of seeing structures being created and used with associated rule creation and routine behaviour. Sustainability was a significant part of the concept of success represented during interviews.

Those mentored while possessing a basic intelligence background appeared to have no structures in place to exploit the intelligence obtained. There is now a configured accountable reporting system established and as a result the flow of intelligence has vastly improved. The Officers operating in the field understand the Intelligence Requirements and the essential need for Source Protection. (B)

The mentoring effort was certainly sustainable. This was evidenced in my own experience with the situation whereby mentoring . . . ceased. As the last to leave and first to return, I had the opportunity to see that structures and working practices remained, were being adhered too and some areas developed by the Afghan mentees. (G)

I believe you find this out after an away period; it's a big test for your mentees to be left to their own devices and own choices for 1 month. Once you return it will show you exactly where you stand with regards to readiness, competence and a big thing, motivation of the mentees to carry on the momentum. Only when the mentees operate successfully without your input you know its time for transition. This will obviously take time and will differ from place to place, depending on support. (H)

Undoubtedly continuity . . . has been the thread to link knowledge of organisational development for the benefit of rotating Coalition Forces so as to avoid the trap of 'restarting' the mission several times over. (J)

Learning lessons

When mentors were asked what could be learnt from their experience on the Futures programme a number of issues emerged as key concerns. Firstly pre-planning was weak.

A mentor must be able to relate to his audience . . . . 'development could have made progress sooner if the . . . programme had briefed to all levels . . . [of mentee organisation]. There was no knowledge about the program . . . this was a significant setback. (A)

Concentrate on mentoring the senior managers the Provincial and District offices. Once they had their office in order, move on to the junior officers. (F)

There should have been a thorough scoping study from the outset. This would have uncovered deficiencies particularly at middle and senior management levels. (D)

That the programme was targeted at the wrong level of the ANP hierarchy was another commonly held view.

The programme commenced intensively at the lower levels of the organisation without fully educating/mentoring the management along similar lines [bottom up]. This is now evident, it is preventing progress and has some negative effect on programme delivery. (C)

Development could also have been enhanced if there was a selection process in place, for example, [mentees were] literate, [have a] driving licence and served a minimum of 4 years. (A)

Get in at a higher level to mentor those who have the ability to influence the program [uptake]. The whole process of mentoring . . . felt like it was bottom up. More steer should have come from [HQ] which, in my view is not strategic enough. I suppose, if in the early days, the PIMs were given too much discretion in what they delivered. (B)

This had the consequence of senior ANP officers failing to exploit the opportunities afforded by Futures. In a number of locations ANP Commanders failed to authorize their junior officers (who having undergone Futures training and mentoring had developed significantly improved capacity and skills) to use their newly developed skills to collect and manage intelligence.

Discussion

In gaining an appreciation of how mentors understood their role the study provides material for use in any subsequent programme specification including staff selection criteria. The record indicates that systems for monitoring and evaluation of capacity building programmes in Afghanistan require development on lines consistent with that proposed by van Stolk *et al.* (2011). Evidence collected on how success was conceived by mentors suggests ways in which programmes should be evaluated in broader terms that are not wholly reliant on quantified output metrics. As argued capacity building needs to take place at different levels in the ANP and the intelligence management microsystem cannot be neglected. The study indicates that embedding mentors in operational microsystems can be an effective mode of delivering capacity building programmes and that it is also a source of rich learning material. The position of the mentors, situated as they were in a first line microsystem, gave them a unique opportunity to learn how ANP officers had to function in an intelligence management role. This meant identifying and acknowledging highly constrained circumstances, where resources were limited and relationships with commanders often dysfunctional. When a mentoring programme is planned it should be supported by the senior host–police service command briefed in the principles and practices of the programme. In the case examined much of this had not taken place and some of what was reported refers to encouraging mentee resourcefulness within the microsystem, whether that was overcoming the dangers posed by the Taliban or coping with the wider policing system and the obstacles it presented to intelligence management. The nature of the microsystems relationship to the larger policing system meant that mentors needed to establish credibility for themselves with the mentees rather than have this assigned by higher levels of the command. The nature of one to one mentoring in the circumstances of the case examined meant that Futures had to be translated into Afghan terms that mentees identified with, thus avoiding the transfer problems associated with training programmes which are identified in the research literature. This requirement meant that the programme avoided the fate of many initiatives, which fail because they are perceived to be based on the crude transfer of 'off the shelf' western skills and knowledge (Page, 2000). This is likely to be a significant factor in similar programmes delivered in the future.

Finding ways to convince mentees to accept that Northern Ireland-derived principles and practices could be transferred to Afghanistan and the particular microsystem was a crucial step. At all times an ability to improvise rather than simply follow a procedural formula had to be demonstrated. Mentors talked about gaining a strong sense of what was possible to achieve in the microsystem. This gave them a better appreciation of what should be regarded as success, such as demonstrations of abilities to complete tasks and achieve ends.

The case examined suggests a more nuanced understanding of the drivers for programme success can be developed out of the analysis of qualitative data derived from interviews and from systematic recording of participant observer reactions to relationships and issues. In police capacity building in countries emerging from conflict it is very likely that there has been an over-reliance on conventional output-based performance metrics, which in the future should be complimented by alternative sources of data in order that programme funders have a better understanding of what works and why. This study has been based on personal observations and formal interviews conducted in the operational field. If, as it is argued, programme performance measurement and evaluation needs to have a qualitative dimension then it will be necessary to find a systematic means of securing the type of data we have used in this study. The study has added to the understanding of the potential ways of resolving difficulties encountered with finding appropriate assessment and metrics systems identified by Connable (2012).

Qualitative study designs tend to come with built in limitations. The collection of data is time consuming, requires expertise, and is difficult to operationalize on a large scale. That there are likely to be varied representations of incidents and relationships is both a strength and weakness of qualitative research. In terms of validity it needs to be accepted that it may be hard to verify the accounts provided by interview subjects. The researcher conducting the analysis may also arrive at different conclusions to someone else conducting the study due to their particular background and personal characteristics. In spite of these limitations the data collection method used in this study was best suited for addressing the sociocultural knowledge deficit that has presented as an obstacle to police capacity building in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Valuable information was being collected and informally shared by mentors, but not routinely analysed or archived as part of their role as subcontractors. Conceivably although there are no guarantees, a permanent staff engaged with capacity building would be collecting stories which would accumulate to create a living organizational anthropology of the ANP. If on the other hand subcontractors are to be the main delivery agents, then a formalized means of recording experiences should be developed to counteract the lack of continuity and concomitant loss of operational history. According to its proponents SOCINT should be seen a discipline in its own right sitting alongside more widely known intelligence gathering systems such as human intelligence (HUMINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT). The richness of materials used in this study does suggest a case for SOCINT or another formal intelligence variant based around concepts and methods associated with organizational anthropology to be incorporated in training for mentors.

Summary of conclusions for future police capacity building

There are a number of significant factors at work in influencing programme effectiveness indicated by this study, which should be noted and considered in the future. Pre-planning and identification of where exactly capacity building in respect of intelligence management should begin in organizational terms was hindered by an absence of detailed knowledge about the ANP itself. Addressing the knowledge deficit needs to be a priority before more

resources are committed. The mode of delivery should be considered carefully both in the sense of what works with respect to creating capacities but also in relation to building up sustainable knowledge growing relationships. Useful information has been collected on the form that a mentoring role can take, this type of knowledge needs to be used as a starting point for orientating future programmes for the ANP or other organizations. The study has provided a means of recording relevant information on the development of structures and working practices that constitute success.

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