



A critical exploration of the role, value and culture of police learning in Scotland

Larissa Engelmann

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification, and that it is the result of my own independent work.

Larissa Engelmann

Full Name Goes Here (Candidate)

29/01/2023

Date

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Abstract

Police Scotland pride themselves on being a 'learning organisation' (Police Scotland, 2020a), yet their ability and willingness to develop supportive and effective learning environments has been questioned (HMICS, 2020, 2021). The lack of consensus in the literature on police learning and an absence of Scottish research presents a challenge to identify what effective learning environments in policing look like. Accordingly, this study critically explores the role, value, and culture of police learning in Scotland.

Between 2019 and 2021, 381 survey responses were collected, alongside thirty-three interviews with police officers, fifteen interviews with practitioners from allied professions and three focus groups with undergraduate university students on a policing degree.

This study makes two key contributions to knowledge. Firstly, findings highlight the need to nuance traditional theories of the learning organisation and workplace learning in the context of the police. This thesis suggests a stronger focus on organisational justice and the needs of individual learners would enhance current theories of police learning. Hence, a Police Scotland learning framework based on the findings of this study is proposed which expands and adds to existing knowledge and theory about police learning to promote, recognise, and implement learning across the organisation.

Secondly, this study emphasises the need for police services to deepen their understanding of learning culture. Participants suggest that significant cultural barriers to engage with and integrate different kinds of learning within the organisation remain. Contrastingly, practitioners from allied professions illustrate a much wider understanding of workplace learning and a more positive learning culture. This thesis therefore argues that, whilst theories of the learning organisation and workplace learning provide valuable frameworks for the police to develop learning structures, work needs to be done to address the current implementation gap between the aspirations of Police Scotland to be a 'learning organisation', the organisational learning culture, and officers' lived experiences of learning.

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Glossary

ART	-	Academic Research Team
CoP	-	College of Policing
CPD	-	Continuous Professional Development
DPSLM	-	Diploma of Police Service Leadership and Management
ENU	-	Edinburgh Napier University
GDPR	-	General Data Protection Regulation
HE	-	Higher Education
HMIC	-	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMICS	-	His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland
LEPH	-	Law Enforcement and Public Health
LO	-	Learning Organisation
NHS	-	National Health Service
NPM	-	New Public Management
PCDA	-	Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship
PEQF	-	Police Education Qualifications Framework
SPOC	-	Single Point of Contact
SIPR	-	The Scottish Institute for Policing Research
SPA	-	Scottish Police Authority

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

There is an expectation, now more than ever, that police officers need to be lifelong learners and are able to continuously adapt to changes in society, policy, and practice (Janssens *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, recent rapid developments such as the expansion and use of police powers during COVID-19 (O'Neill, 2020), and police officer engagement with and treatment of different social groups, such as ethnic minorities (McLaughlin, 2020), stressed the changing social and political presumptions of what police officers are expected to take responsibility for, and how their roles are perceived. Critically, this puts emphasis on the learning, development, and 'qualifications' officers may need (and are perceived to need) for their role. Therefore, there is a desire to better understand police officer and police organisational learning, to effectively prepare officers to address the complex challenges of the 21st century, while anticipating and adapting to future demand. Accordingly, the aim of this thesis is to *critically assess and explore the role, culture, and value of police learning in Scotland*, exploring how police learning is understood and supported in Scotland and what we can learn about professional learning from allied professions. To do this, this project engages with police officers across ranks and roles, allied professions, and students studying one of the first policing specific degrees at a Scottish University.

This presents a timely and valuable study at a time when public service operating environments, including that of the police, are recognised as more complex and multi-faceted, requiring extensive collaboration between services, transcending public sector organisations vertically and horizontally (Brown and Brudney, 2003; Bartkowiak-Theron *et al.*, 2022; Grint, 2022). Rittel and Webber (1973), who referred to these problems as 'wicked problems', argued that these challenges are less straightforward and less defined, and their solutions, if there are any, are often not clear or desirable. This adds significant pressure on police services to prepare officers to navigate this interdisciplinary and complex context, while developing an organisation that is adaptable and responsive to the needs of police officers, the public, allied professions and the government (Harding *et al.*, 2019).

Whilst some progress has been made in this area, public sector organisations (including the police) continue to struggle to develop effective and long-term joint

working relationships to address these ‘wicked problems’ (van Dijk *et al.*, 2019a; Bartkowiak-Theron *et al.*, 2022). As Roberts *et al.*, (2016) pointed out, officers currently being recruited will be the police leaders responding to these problems in the future and therefore, the education they receive now can have an impact on the success of police organisations working effectively with other services and in response to current demand. Higher education (HE), whilst not a panacea to solve every policing problem, has been highlighted as an integral part of developing participatory and shared leadership models, which can improve partnership working across the public sector and future-proof the organisation in response to this increased complexity (Herrington and Colvin, 2015; Roberts *et al.*, 2016; van Dijk *et al.*, 2019a). Hence, the role of HE in the development of police officers and the police organisation has been discussed extensively in the literature in recent years, in particular as part of a re-emerging ‘professionalisation agenda’ within policing (Lumsden, 2017a; Rogers and Frevel, 2018a).

Nevertheless, HE is only one aspect of the police learning landscape, and one that continues to be contested (Brown, 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider how different forms of learning (such as individual, team, and organisational learning) through different means (such as formal HE, informal peer learning, workplace learning) manifest and how they are perceived within the organisation. The often ambiguous and mixed findings in the literature on how to develop effective police learning environments, and the lack of research particularly from a Scottish perspective, makes this an important area to explore.

1.2 The police education context

Bittner (1974, p.17) argued over 45 years ago that the police is one of the “best known but least understood” public institutions. When reflecting on contemporary research on and with the police (Wood *et al.*, 2018), particularly in relation to police learning, this statement still rings true today. While police learning has been a topic of much debate since the early 20th century (Vollmer and Schneider, 1917), research in this area has only more recently started to expand beyond the initial police learning period, and in many ways still represents an under-researched area of study.

One reason for this may be the complex nature of police learning, as it is influenced by police culture¹, policing practice, policy making, politics and wider factors such as legitimacy² and trust in policing. As mentioned above, this leads to dilemmas around what learning is supported by the organisation, who this learning is for (officer, organisation, different publics, scrutiny body, government), how it is applied in practice, and why. Indeed, research on police learning rarely unpicks or addresses these power dynamics when promoting HE. Nevertheless, scholars do highlight the strong cultural and structural barriers which continue to limit the value of HE in many police organisations (Hallenberg and Cockcroft, 2017; Belur *et al.*, 2019).

Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus in the literature as to what training or learning develops a 'good' police officer, or indeed what 'good' in this context means. This makes it more difficult for police organisations to base their learning environment on the best available evidence. Recent exploratory research by Bloeyaert and Copman (2019) highlighted that many European countries would consider a period of 2 years of largely classroom-based theoretical learning, plus field training, important for initial police officer development. It is argued that this longer educational period at the beginning of a police officer's career forms the basis for meaningful engagement with knowledge and skill development in the future (lifelong learning), and is important to develop a learning culture within the organisation (Karp *et al.*, 2020). Only in recent years have these discussions led to more significant changes and reforms, with police universities emerging in many Nordic countries such as Finland and Norway, and the integration of HE degrees in policing across Europe and beyond, as a way to prolong the initial learning period and integrate more theoretical knowledge into the curriculum.

¹ As discussed by Corder (2017), this thesis understands police culture as a multi-faceted construct with both positive (such as solidarity, support, teamwork, sense of mission) and negative aspects (such as those supporting misconduct and corruption often inextricably linked to some of the aforementioned positive aspects). It is a concept that requires careful contextualised understandings (Cockcroft, 2017).

² Legitimacy, for the purpose of this thesis, describes civilian's perceptions of how legitimate (trustworthy) a police service and police officers may be. It is based on communities' perceptions rather than what is called objective legitimacy, which is related to more objectively measurable criteria of legitimacy, such as the absence of corruption based on officially recorded instances of corruptions (Noppe, Verhage and Van Damme, 2017).

This suggests that for many forces the police learning landscape is increasingly integrating HE as a way to address the aforementioned complexities of the police officer role. Based on these developments, one of the skills required by police officers is the ability to effectively translate knowledge, theory, and evidence into practice. Indeed, research suggests that, while both theoretical and practical learning is important, it is the combination of both which can generate meaningful learning opportunities and ensure that officers actively reflect on their intuition, utilising what is considered best practice in a given situation (Healey and Healey, 2020). Thus combining the art and craft of policing, alongside the science of policing (Innes, 2010), is important in contemporary society.

Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017) argued that having influence and power over knowledge is important to control the narrative about crime, disorder, and risk. Therefore, many scholars have argued for the expansion of police-academic partnerships to aid the transformation of police learning environments, co-producing research *with*, rather than *on*, policing (Lumsden, 2017b). Indeed, HE institutions as learning spaces which are heavily involved in policing research can support police services to learn about the wider policing landscape and ensure that they actively contribute and shape the research agenda in this space. Similarly, more extensive collaborations between police services and allied professions through shared learning environments could significantly support a wider understanding of the role of policing in modern times, addressing increasingly more complex and cross-cutting issues, requiring a more holistic understanding of, for example, law enforcement and public health (Bartkowiak-Theron *et al.*, 2022). However, there are still several challenges faced by HE institutions, allied professions, and police services to develop effective long-term collaborations (Lumsden, 2017b; Martin and Wooff, 2018). Importantly, as mentioned previously, whilst HE might have promise to support police learning, it is not a solution in and of itself for policing problems and continues to be a contested issue within the police learning literature and public debate (Jacques, 2022; Tatnell, 2022). Therefore, this thesis provides a timely exploration of Police Scotland's perceptions of, and officer engagement with, academia, and multi-agency learning environments. It assesses the ways in which this currently materialises and the impact this has on policing practice.

The recent introduction of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF)³ in England and Wales in 2020, which requires police officers to be degree educated, demonstrates the interest in expanding police-academic collaborations to develop police officers. This shift suggests an interest in England and Wales in police officers' ability to know how to share and use relevant knowledge effectively, and take an active role in advancing policing practice and police science (Paoline, Terrill and Rossler, 2015; Wood, 2018). Nevertheless, as the baseline survey report for the PEQF suggested (Hartley and Khalil, 2018), almost half of the forces in England and Wales confronted with this new pathway into policing, feel that the pace of change is too fast. One reason for this, as is often the case in policing, may be that top-down reforms were implemented without police officer views and perspectives being taken into account or given enough importance (Brookes, 2017). In the case of the PEQF, this has led to officers and new recruits having to engage in learning and development which they often do not yet see the value or relevance of, leading to frustration amongst officers and supervisors (Watkinson-Miley, Cox and Deshpande, 2021). Indeed, a recent speech by the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman, suggests that non-degree pathways may be reintroduced in England and Wales in response to problems faced through the introduction of the PEQF (Jacques, 2022). Therefore, a central element of reforms in the police learning landscape, increasingly recognised by scholars and policy makers in this field, is the importance of the buy-in from rank and file, specifically by illustrating the value added by these changes and the reasoning behind them (Harding *et al.*, 2019).

In Scotland, the Police Scotland Strategy 2026 sets out the vision of sustained excellence in service and protection, whilst suggesting that being a learning organisation (LO) is a key part of achieving this ambition (Police Scotland, 2018). Indeed, the Scottish Police College's purpose has been to "support the development of the police service as a learning organisation" by meeting "the development needs of

³ The PEQF is a professional training framework, providing three different pathways for individuals to join police forces in England and Wales; the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeships (PCDA), delivered in collaboration between police services and HE institutions, the degree-holder entry programme, which results in a graduate diploma qualification in professional policing practice and the degree in professional policing, delivered by HE institutions. All of these are licenced through the College of Policing and validated by HE institutions. For further information see: <https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/policing-education-qualifications-framework-peqf>

students and staff through the pursuit of excellence” and to “strive for continuous improvement” (Scottish Police College, 2001). However, recent reports by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) have stressed several areas of concern when it comes to the Scottish police learning landscape, such as a lack of leadership development opportunities, and the wider provision of continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities (HMICS, 2020, 2021b). Furthermore, with eleven weeks of classroom-based learning and a two-year probationary period, Police Scotland has one of the shortest initial classroom-based learning periods in Europe (Bloeyaert and Copman, 2019). Therefore, the Scottish police learning landscape is markedly different to that of many other European police forces, who have moved towards longer initial learning periods and more extensive police-academic partnerships to enable police officer and police organisational learning. These partnerships are currently limited in the Scottish police learning landscape (Martin and Wooff, 2018), with a stronger focus on developing craft knowledge through learning on-the-job.

Whilst many established police-academic partnerships over the years have illustrated Police Scotland’s wish to retain control over the police learning curriculum, training, and education of officers, there have been several significant developments over the last two decades. For example, the establishment of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR)⁴ in 2007 has introduced a significant and continuously growing partnership between Scottish HE institutions and Police Scotland, which has provided independent, empirically-based evidence to inform policy and practice within Scottish policing. However, this partnership has had little influence on police learning which might, in part, be reflective of the debates and controversies in the police learning literature as to what it takes to develop a knowledgeable and professional police officer (Kimpe, 2016; McGinley *et al.*, 2019), and how to successfully integrate theoretical and craft knowledge (Willis and Mastrofski, 2018).

Although eleven-weeks of initial classroom-based learning with little academic input is in contrast to the provision of initial learning in many other European countries, with

⁴ SIPR is a collaboration between Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and 14 Scottish Universities established in 2007 to support research collaborations and generate high quality evidence to support policing policy and practice - <http://www.sipr.ac.uk/>.

little consensus in the literature on this topic and a lack of research evidence from Scotland, it would be wrong to conclude that this training is less good or in need of reform without first reflecting on it in more depth. Furthermore, considering the complex position of police services in different countries and policy contexts, police officers and police services may require different learning provisions dependent on the country and communities they serve. This study helps to redress this, providing valuable insights into the ways in which Police Scotland continues to support police officer learning journeys both during and beyond initial learning, and how this relates to individual and organisational learning pathways. It develops a valuable contextualised understanding of the learning experiences and needs of police officers in Scotland, by including a range of perspectives from serving officers and Scottish university students studying a policing degree with the intention of joining Police Scotland as police officers. The perspectives of allied professions within Scotland, such as nursing and social work, provide a comparative commentary on professional learning within their own organisations, whilst adding nuance to the existing literature on policing learning.

1.3 Research aim and research questions

Given the lack of research on police learning from a Scottish perspective, this research project presents valuable and critical insights into an area of research and practice which continues to present a challenge for police services across the world (Bjorgo and Damen, 2020). Importantly, this research project explores both initial and continuous learning and individual and organisational learning, to provide a more exhaustive assessment of the learning dynamics within policing.

The discussions presented throughout this thesis provide a starting point to better understand how to develop an organisation which is thriving and ready to confront contemporary and future challenges. Police officer engagement with learning and development opportunities and the organisational context of professional learning will be critically assessed, examining officers' perspectives on the role, value, and culture of learning in the organisation. The exploration of professional learning within allied professions and the expectations of prospective police officers undertaking a university policing degree provide novel perspectives which help to inform discussion of the Scottish police learning landscape. On the one hand, allied professions provide

comparative perspectives of professional learning, as well as an assessment of multi-agency learning environments. On the other hand, the students'⁵ perceptions highlight the expectations they have of Police Scotland as a future employer and in what ways different kinds of learning and different kinds of knowledge are considered important to provide a professional and legitimate service to the public. Although students currently present a very specific and comparably small participant group that has yet to enter the police workforce, they represent a continuously growing number of individuals interested in studying policing in a HE context before joining Police Scotland, as illustrated in the growing number of policing specific degrees and policing students in Scotland. Additionally, reflecting on international developments in England and Wales and elsewhere, with continued debate about the value of HE for police services and the closer alignment between HE and policing, whilst not representative of all HE policing students in Scotland, it was deemed important to get a sense of emerging students' perceptions the Scottish context. As an emerging group of interest for the Scottish police learning context, they therefore present relevant viewpoints to explore. These diverse viewpoints help to nuance current understandings of the police learning landscape in Scotland, reflecting some of the dilemmas and debates discussed above.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to *critically assess and explore the role, culture, and value of police learning in Scotland from different stakeholder perspectives*. This is achieved by employing a mixed-methods design, which includes survey responses (n=381) from police officers across Scotland, semi-structured interviews (n=33) with police officers across Scotland, alongside semi-structured interviews with practitioners from allied professions (n=15), and focus groups with Edinburgh Napier University (ENU) students on the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology degree (henceforth called ENU students), who intend to become police officers in Scotland (n=14). The views and perceptions gathered through this research design answer the following research questions:

⁵ The BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology at Edinburgh Napier University was developed in discussion with Police Scotland, who continue to support the programme through guest lectures and providing information and training for students to join the Special Constabulary of Police Scotland. The course largely caters for students who are interested in joining Police Scotland upon completion of their degree.



1. How is police learning understood and supported in Scotland?



2. What is the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland and how may this vary by rank, years of service, and educational background?



3. What can we learn about professional learning from allied professions?

Before exploring the literature on this topic in more depth, the following will introduce the structure of this thesis.

1.4 Thesis overview

This thesis is presented in eight chapters. [Chapter two](#) explores the extant literature on this topic. Firstly, the Scottish police learning context is introduced to highlight the ways in which this has changed over time and discuss the limited literature currently available (2.2). To support discussions about professional learning environments, the workplace and adult learning literature will be discussed next (2.3), in particular in relation to public services and the way in which organisations can and do develop lifelong learners. The next section will look in more detail at the different levels of learning in an organisation, such as individual, team and organisational learning, and how the LO literature can help to combine the three (2.4). Furthermore, the theory-practice divide will be introduced, presenting a central debate in the workplace learning literature, in particular in relation to police and public sector learning environments. Next, the chapter highlights the changing role of the police officer and the increased focus on the professionalisation of police services to address this (2.5). This will help to explain why police education is a growing topic of scholarly and policy interest in the UK and beyond. The following discussion about the current evidence-base in relation to police education, police learning and police-academic partnerships, will illustrate timeliness and relevance of this research project (2.6) before revisiting the research aims and research questions (2.7) and providing concluding remarks (2.8).

[Chapter three](#) provides an overview and justification for the methodology used and how this relates to the research philosophy applied in this thesis (3.2). In particular, the role and value of a mixed-methods research design for this study is discussed (3.3.1). Furthermore, the ethical considerations concerning this PhD project are explored to present how these have been addressed throughout the design, data collection, and data analysis phases (3.3.6). In addition to a discussion of validity, reliability and rigor (3.3.7), this chapter also outlines how emerging findings have been shared and disseminated (3.5), before providing concluding remarks (3.6).

[Chapter four](#), building on the introduction of the methodology used, explores the role of positionality within the research process. Whilst joining Police Scotland as a special constable⁶ during the data collection period in March 2020 added a valuable and multi-layered awareness of policing and police learning, extensive reflection was required to ensure that data collection, analysis, and the interpretation of findings shows critical awareness of different viewpoints and possible biases (4.2). In addition, the outbreak of COVID-19 during the completion of this project has had a significant impact on the methodology used and participants' responses (4.3). Therefore, this chapter reflects on these challenges, while discussing the ongoing influence of COVID-19 on the write-up and completion of this thesis.

[Chapter five](#) is the first findings chapter and presents a critical and timely evaluation of the established learning pathways of police officers in Scotland. It explores the formal structured and informal unstructured learning opportunities provided by Police Scotland, and how these are experienced and perceived by police officers. Therefore, this chapter highlights what learning is currently available within the organisation and how it materialises in practice, pointing to current perceived gaps and challenges in the provision of learning.

[Chapter six](#) builds on the previous chapter and critically explores the learning culture(s) and experiences of different kinds of learning within the organisation, going beyond that which is provided by Police Scotland. Several tensions between police officer

⁶ The special constable programme is a part-time voluntary policing programme. Special constables have the same powers as full-time police officers and are part of the Special Constabulary of Scotland (for further information: <https://www.scotland.police.uk/recruitment/special-constables/>).

wants and needs and the current provision and culture of learning within the organisation are illustrated. In addition, this chapter introduces the perceptions and expectations of ENU students and how these relate to the lived experiences of officers (6.2). To provide further nuance to these arguments, the views of practitioners from allied professions are discussed and compared to those of police officers (6.5). These different perspectives emphasise a disconnect between the current learning experiences within Police Scotland and what is needed from a partnership working perspective to address the aforementioned 'wicked problems' of the 21st century. This chapter illustrates some of the significant differences between police and allied professions in the value attached to different forms of learning and different kinds of knowledge, and the impact this can have on effective partnership working, individual, and organisational learning.

[Chapter seven](#) presents findings in relation to Police Scotland's organisational and structural factors and how these influence the learning environment. Therefore, this chapter expands on individual experiences discussed in previous chapters and identifies the wider organisational factors which direct and influence learning experiences within the organisation. This draws attention to the current opportunities and barriers within Police Scotland to provide a meaningful and innovative learning environment. It also presents an explanation for some of the previously discussed tensions emerging from police officers' engagement with different kinds of learning throughout their career.

Lastly, [the concluding chapter](#) answers each research question in turn to highlight how the findings presented have added value to the literature on police learning and professional workplace learning (8.2, 8.3, 8.4). The possible impact of findings for the police professionalisation agenda and police education debates, as well as the advancement of the LO and professional workplace learning theories, are discussed in more depth (8.5). Indeed, a revised framework for police learning is proposed based on the analysis of the findings to support Police Scotland's ambitions to empower, enable and develop their staff, whilst being a LO (8.5.1). Furthermore, this chapter more specifically points out the key independent and significant contributions of this study (8.5), while introducing recommendations for policy, practice and further research (8.6.1, 8.6.2, 8.6.3). Lastly, before providing final comments on this topic

Chapter 1: Introduction

(8.8), the limitations of the study design and the execution of this study are discussed (8.7), to ensure that future research can benefit from what has been learned throughout this project.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The introductory chapter noted the continuously evolving police learning landscape and the increased interest in, and need for, research in this area. In order to develop relevant research questions and illustrate how this study will add to the body of knowledge on this topic, this chapter presents a review of the extant literature on individual and organisational learning in the workplace and in what ways these traditional theories and concepts are reflected in current police learning environments. This literature review provides the foundation for the development of the research design used in this study and the discussion of findings in upcoming chapters.

A narrative review of the key writings in relation to learning in the workplace and learning within policing will be provided, “to reveal problems, weaknesses, contradictions, or controversies” and identify relevant discussions and theories which can help develop the literature and research in this area further (Baumeister and Leary, 1997, p. 312). Due to the limited nature of research on police learning and education, particularly from a Scottish perspective, a comprehensive overview of the key debates in this area is developed, utilising insights from other policing and public sector contexts. The literature search strategy for this review considered the geographical, temporal, and topical relevance of research discussed and focussed on literature published in peer-reviewed journals, books, relevant reports and policy documents, combining both theoretical and traditional texts as well as contemporary research up to December 2022.

The first section of this chapter (2.2) introduces the context of this study by presenting the Scottish police learning environment and the key debates in this area from a Scottish perspective. To enable the exploration of this topic and assess how police learning is understood and experienced in Scotland, and within other professions, the wider workplace learning literature will be examined (2.3). This section will introduce the concept of lifelong learning, why it is important in the workplace and the ways in which it might manifest, such as through continuous professional development (CPD). To provide a better understanding of the underlying processes of workplace learning, section 2.4 will evaluate the literature and theories on individual, team and organisational learning and how these are combined in what is often called a ‘learning

organisation' (LO), the kind of organisation Police Scotland claims to be (Police Scotland and Scottish Police Authority, 2020). After introducing central theories and concepts in this area, the next section will explain in more depth how and why changes in the police learning landscape occurred and are necessary (2.5). The last section critically evaluates the contemporary police learning landscape, identifying current opportunities and barriers in this context (2.6). The last two sections will revisit the research aim and questions (2.7) and present concluding remarks (2.8).

2.2 Police Scotland – what we know about police learning in Scotland

The United Kingdom presents a complex and diverse policing landscape which, while interconnected through centralised policies and powers from Westminster, also has devolved policing jurisdictions and powers, including police learning. The purpose of this section is to introduce the current learning structures and context within Police Scotland. Due to the limited literature on this topic from a Scottish perspective, official reports and academic studies will be supported by grey literature⁷ and anecdotal evidence, providing context for the formulation of research questions.

Whilst Police Scotland was formed in 2013, the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan Castle has been the hub for much training and education for all Scottish police forces since its establishment in 1953. Indeed, all probationer training moved to the college in 1960 and it sees itself as the educational body for Scottish police officers (Scottish Police College, 2013). The purpose of the Scottish Police College to “support the development of the police service as a learning organisation” (Scottish Police College, 2001), has been reiterated by the 2026 strategy for policing in Scotland, with a focus on transparency, accountability, partnership working, and learning, delivering a service “on a par with high performing organisations within [the] policing and public sector network”, by being an outward looking learning organisation (Police Scotland, 2018, p. 35). However, more recently, two inspections by HMICS (2020, 2021b) have started to question this commitment, suggesting that the training and development opportunities and the learning culture within Police Scotland is not living up to these ambitions. Indeed, HMICS (2021) stated that less than 30% of respondents were

⁷ Some of this literature was identified through the Scottish Police College librarian and through discussions with current and retired police officers.

satisfied with their access to training and development opportunities and the recently published three-year Scrutiny Plan of HMICS included an audit and assurance review of the initial police learning programme (HMICS, 2022). This suggests an interest in the Scottish police learning environment and the desire to ensure that it addresses the needs of officers, the public and the government.

This highlights the value of research in this area to identify in what ways Police Scotland can address current and future challenges, allowing Police Scotland to stop “firefighting or treading water” and develop internal structures and cultures to “decisively mov[e] forward or transform” (Murray and Malik, 2019, p. 189), in line with their 2026 Strategy (Police Scotland, 2018).

2.2.1 Police Scotland learning structures

Police Scotland, at the time of writing, utilises Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) accredited by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) through the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Therefore, qualifications are aligned with wider vocational education frameworks for training and development. These vocational qualifications are given through the Scottish Police College, leaving a considerable amount of freedom to the college, and Police Scotland, in the way in which it teaches or instructs police officers (Martin and Wooff, 2018). Nevertheless, Police Scotland has an independent scrutiny body, the Scottish Police Authority (SPA), to ensure that they respond to officer, public, government, and partner agency needs. Whilst its work in this regard has been questioned, particularly in the first seven years of Police Scotland (HMICS, 2021a), it has since started to improve. Indeed, in response to recent HMICS investigations, SPA has started to develop independent review groups and committees which will, amongst other topics, take a closer look at the training and development provision within Police Scotland in the future (HMICS, 2021b). This suggests that there is a timeliness to this project which could aid the discussions between SPA and HMICS and enable a wider appreciation of different stakeholder perspectives.

Due to limited resources, because of austerity and the facilities available at the Scottish Police College, the initial learning provision for police officers, in particular classroom-based learning, has been through several iterations condensing its length and the information it covers (Figure 1). Another driver of these development has been

the New Public Management (NPM) approach, discussed further later in this chapter (section 2.5.2), and its focus on efficiency and more effective use of resources.

Therefore, in contrast to police forces elsewhere introducing longer HE based courses and degrees (McGinley *et al.*, 2019), the classroom-based initial learning period in Scotland has been reduced from four and a half months to three months since 2003. This suggests a move away from theoretical structured learning to more unstructured and on-the-job learning opportunities (Scottish Police College, 2013).

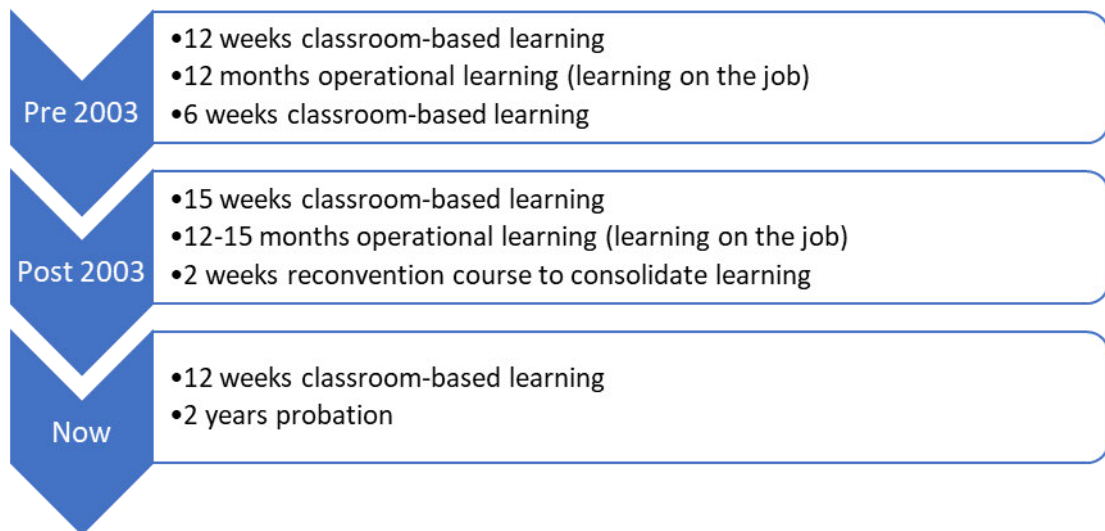


Figure 1 Iterations of Police Scotland's initial learning period (adapted from Scottish Police College, 2013).

Some of the initial learning modules, previously classroom-based, have been developed into e-learning packages to avoid the abstraction of probationary officers from frontline duties for prolonged periods of time. The recently published Police Scotland Workforce plan presents plans to expand the online learning provisions further (Police Scotland, 2021). The most recent iterations of the recruit training programme stated that subjects such as effective learning, the role of the constable, diversity and the human rights act will be provided online. This will be supported through ongoing feedback from supervisors, tutor constables and the use of a portfolio (McLeish and Wilson, 2018; Police Scotland, 2021). However, what this support looks like and how subjects learned through e-learning packages are reflected upon or transformed into practice is not discussed in much detail. This highlights a need for more research on the lived experiences of learning within Police Scotland, as explored in this study.

In 2020, the initial training period changed from a purely vocational qualification to a Modern Apprenticeship SCQF level 7 qualification⁸, in response to internal probationer evaluations of the initial learning program, where officers asked for more work-based learning to consolidate the legislative learning (Skills for Justice, 2018). This illustrates Police Scotland's desire to address police officer perceived wants. However, Staller *et al.*, (2021) warned that police recruit learning wants are not necessarily their learning needs in relation to operational practice. Therefore, adjusting learning provisions only to what officers think they need or how they think they may learn best, might not lead to the best possible outcomes for the individual, the organisation, partners, the public, or the government. Part of this change in qualification may also be attributed to the financial benefits a modern apprenticeship has to offer Police Scotland, as they will receive payment from the Scottish Government for apprenticeship schemes. There is yet to be an exploration of the impact of this change on how learning is perceived and how it manifests within the organisation.

In line with the literature on this topic, military style drill training remains an integral part of this initial learning programme (Herrington and Schafer, 2019). The Scottish Police College (2000, p. 30) argued that this is because it is "the process through which standards and discipline are taught" and "it is also recognised as having benefits in team building". This military style training is concentrated in the initial 12 weeks classroom-based learning at the college, where officers learn how to march, iron their uniform, shine their shoes and adjust to certain behavioural conduct, such as greeting everyone they meet with 'Sir' or 'Madam'. This is in addition to the extensive legislative information and physical skills training they receive, such as operational safety training. Hence, the initial training period within Police Scotland represents many traditional police training structures, developed in the early 19th century when what we now consider the British police force emerged. A key controversy here is whether these more traditional training values are relevant in developing a 21st century police force and police officers who can address contemporary challenges. These lines of debate will be further explored throughout this literature review,

⁸ This is equivalent to level 4 on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and in contrast to the level 6 (FHEQ) qualification required by the PEQF.

particularly when discussing the changing role of the police officer (2.5) and the police learning landscape (2.6).

After leaving the police college, police officers are assigned tutor constables at their local station to help with the transition and translate classroom-based learning into practice. Therefore, one of the main responsibilities of the tutor constable is to “give operational guidance and direction to the probationary Constable to assist in their development” (Police Scotland, 2020b, p. 4). There is little available evidence on the training tutors undertake or how long a police officer is assigned a tutor constable for in Scotland. Nevertheless, they are considered one of the main support networks for new probationers joining the service (Police Scotland, 2020b). Throughout this period of on-the-job learning, probationers have to develop a portfolio evidencing that they have attended certain calls (such as a sudden death, handing out a fixed penalty notice or attending a road accident), supported through several multiple choice and oral exams before their 2-year probationary period is complete.

Whilst the content and structure of initial police training has not changed significantly over time, there have been attempts to develop HE pathways into Police Scotland. These did not develop in the way it was initially hoped by academics. The BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology was one of these pathways and commenced at ENU with its first cohort in 2018. The course largely caters for students wishing to join Police Scotland upon completion of their degree. However, it is not a direct pathway into Police Scotland, as initially envisaged, and students have to go through the regular recruitment and training process with Police Scotland if they want to join. One reason for this, as stated by Kenny MacAskill, one of the previous Scottish Justice Ministers, is the fear that the introduction of degree entry would decrease the diversity of recruits (Defence Police Federation, 2016). Furthermore, Martin and Wooff (2018, p.333) argued that there is “a reluctance in the investment both culturally and implicitly in degree routes by Police Scotland”, which results in less focus in the Scottish police learning environment on academic learning and research. However, with little research on the current provision and culture of learning within Police Scotland, the opportunities and challenges academic learning introduces for Scottish policing are not well understood. This research project therefore provides a timely exploration of ENU students’ viewpoints on academic routes into policing and explores their perceptions

of Police Scotland as an employer, which will be compared to the lived experiences of police officers. Whilst this is currently a small cohort of students who plan to join Police Scotland, compared to the overall number of police officers, it represents a group that is continuously growing, and one which Police Scotland argues they are interested in recruiting and developing.

Initial learning and entry routes into policing, however, are only one aspect of the police learning landscape. The Leadership, Training and Development function within the Scottish Police College is responsible for the provision of CPD. Mandatory training largely consists of e-learning packages to ensure police officers are up-to-date with current legislation and practice, or annual operational safety training. Until recently, one other main CPD opportunity within Police Scotland was the Diploma for Police Service Leadership and Management (DPSLM). The development of the DPSLM was focussed on standardising and improving leadership development opportunities, as a qualification that officers have to complete to be eligible to move up the ranks. It was introduced in 2007 to replace the previous promotion exams. This illustrated a marked departure from previous processes, which were focused on reciting specific knowledge on particular aspects of policing with little wider engagement in reflection on practice and the evidence-base. The DPSLM required police officers to engage with theoretical knowledge in more depth and asked them to develop their critical thinking in relation to their leadership and management practice, whilst completing an academic qualification. There is currently no research or evaluation of the DPSLM available, however, the recent HMICS (2020) inspection on police training and development argued that spaces on the diploma were limited and officers felt that the 18-months commitment to complete it was too much in addition to their full-time police officer duties. This suggests a lack of integration of the diploma into day-to-day duties and a lack of support for officers to access and complete it.

This may explain why Police Scotland has decided to discontinue the DPSLM and revert back to a more informal and experience-based learning programme to prepare officers for leadership positions. The new process, which is supposed to start imminently, is called the 'Sergeants professional development programme' and will retain the level 8 SCQF qualification, whilst becoming a vocational process that is based on learning in practice (by becoming a temporary Sergeant), assessed through

line managers (Police Scotland, 2021). The return to more informal learning structures, based on experiential learning, at a time where other police forces, such as those in England and Wales, are developing HE pathways into and throughout policing, is an interesting departure from current discussions about the professionalisation of policing (Fyfe, 2013a; Tong and Hallenberg, 2018; Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019; Brown, 2020).

Beyond the DPSLM and CPD through e-learning packages, little is known about CPD within Police Scotland from the research literature. HMICS (2020) stated that although there have been efforts to reinvigorate and develop CPD programmes since the establishment of Police Scotland, there is a lack of investment in doing so, resulting in a lack of development opportunities for both police officers and staff within Police Scotland. Indeed, in an exit survey from Police Scotland in 2016, 45 out of 71 leavers indicated that CPD opportunities were poor or very poor (Police Scotland, 2016). Considering the link between supportive learning environments and availability of workplace learning opportunities and job satisfaction, the exploration of the value of continuous learning opportunities is important to develop organisational commitment and avoid high turnover rates (CIPD, 2020).

Therefore, reflecting on the current provision of learning within Police Scotland, this thesis provides a timely assessment of current uses, opportunities and barriers to effective initial and continuous learning and how this is embedded within the organisation. This supports the Scottish Government Strategic Police Priorities for the police to be an employer which "values, supports, engages and empowers a diverse workforce to lead and deliver high quality services, with a continued focus on workforce development and overall well-being" (Police Scotland, 2021, p. 20).

2.2.2 Research on police learning in Scotland

Due to the relatively recent amalgamation of police forces in Scotland in 2013, it is not surprising that the research literature on Police Scotland's learning environment is scarce. However, even before the formation of Police Scotland, there is not a lot of research available exploring policing practice and police learning. Murray and Harkin (2016) argued that this lack of scrutiny may be due to a *cool* political climate, which policing in Scotland has historically benefited from. However, in more recent years it has been illustrated that Police Scotland suffers from many of the same problems

police services across the western world do, questioning Police Scotland’s legitimacy and accountability (Fenwick, 2015; O’Neill, Aston and Krause, 2015; Terpstra and Fyfe, 2015; HMICS, 2020, 2021a, 2021b; Souhami, 2020; BBC, 2021b). Indeed, there has been increased engagement with and influence of politics in policing in Scotland post-devolution (Atkinson, 2013), which has intensified since the centralisation of Police Scotland in 2013 (Ramshaw, Silvestri and Simpson, 2019). This introduces further complexities in relation to autonomy and decision-making within Police Scotland and the Scottish police learning environment but also presents an opportunity to take a more critical look at organisational practices and structures that underpin them.

Martin and Wooff’s (2018) article has been the first comprehensive attempt to unpick some of the current debates surrounding the involvement of HE in police education and training in Scotland. They argued that police- academic partnerships are not yet working to their full potential but are showing promise. The opportunities and challenges they have identified are illustrated in Table 1. Indeed, the emergence of policing degrees, such as the ENU BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology, and current and retired police officers engaging with policing research, reflects a growing interest in police-academic partnerships in Scotland (Martin *et al.*, 2018).

Opportunities	Challenges
Aligning evidence & police practice	Not always aligned in outlook: multiple models of police-university partnerships
Linking research to education & leadership in policing	Challenging planning cycles (staff movement)
Develop closer links between police & academic institutions	Changing personnel – unsettling relationship
Research opportunity	Shared values, mutual trust & sense of purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarifying purpose and priorities - Develop shared commitment
International opportunities	

Table 1 Opportunities and Challenges for police-academic partnerships in Scotland (Martin & Wooff, 2018).

Martin and Wooff (2018) argued that the planning cycle as well as the changing personnel within policing can present a challenge to develop these partnerships. Indeed, the constant changes to the organisation and the organisation’s leadership

team (see Murray and Malik, 2019), while adapting to wider policing challenges (BREXIT, COVID-19, public funding cuts), make it difficult to plan long-term and develop effective partnerships. Martin and Wooff (2018) suggested that in order to reap the benefits of police-academic partnerships, there is a need to align Police Scotland and HE practices and processes more clearly. Indeed, the current policing context in Scotland may be at a crossroads at being able to address some of these challenges as Police Scotland is settling into 10 years of being a centralised police service, with Iain Livingstone as Chief Constable for the past 4 years, the development of the first Police Scotland Workforce plan in 2021, the emergence of degrees in policing, and the expansion of police-academic collaborations through SIPR and the Scottish Centre for Law Enforcement and Public Health (SCLEPH). This presents a unique opportunity in Scotland to reflect on current needs and demands on the police and how an effective, evidence-based and collaborative learning environment can be developed.

In fact, reforms are increasingly critical in light of the recent reviews and recommendations made by HMICS, questioning the quality of police learning provision in Scotland. HMICS (2020, p.5) argued that “there are limited opportunities for officers and staff to access continuous professional development”, in particular for leaders in the organisation. This report proposes several recommendations to improve police learning in Scotland, such as increasing the availability of development opportunities and working collaboratively with key partners to provide training. However, and a topic often not addressed in sufficient depth in the police learning literature, these recent evaluations found that the culture within Police Scotland can have a significant negative impact on officers and police staff. HMICS (2021b, p.51) argued that there is a “lack of support, with too much negative competition and poor treatment of police staff”, despite the fact that Police Scotland aims to provide an inclusive and empowering learning environment. While steps are being taken to address some of the more negatively perceived aspects of police culture in Scotland, this report highlighted that this is not enough and more needs to be done to address the often perceived unfair organisational culture plagued by discrimination and nepotism (HMICS, 2021b). This includes the need for a better understanding of the current

enablers and inhibitors of individual, team, and organisational learning within Police Scotland.

This research project builds on these findings and provides valuable insights into how learning manifests within policing, how this learning is best delivered, and what role police culture has in these discussions. It supports the development of evidence-based recommendations to further improve the police learning landscape in Scotland, providing further depth to the recommendations made by HMICS, and highlights new and emerging stakeholder perspectives in this space (allied professions and university students). To do this effectively, it is important to explore the workplace learning literature to better understand how learning manifests in professional learning environments. This provides the required evidence-base to explore the Scottish police learning environment and identify in what ways this environment reflects what is considered good practice in this context.

2.3 Workplace learning - Adult learning principles and revisiting discussions on 'learning' and 'doing'

Workplace learning can take a variety of forms, “including formal, informal and incidental learning”, illustrating the complexity in providing, facilitating, and guiding learning within an organisation (Matthews, 1999, p. 18). This, in addition to the unique socio-cultural context of workplace learning, such as the political and cultural influences on what learning is promoted and why, can have a significant impact on an organisation’s learning environment. Therefore, this section will explore the workplace learning literature and current debates in this field to provide context for the exploration of the role, value, and culture of learning within Police Scotland.

2.3.1 Lifelong learning and the knowledge economy

Ellinger (2004, p. 166) argued that skills and knowledge are increasingly “perishable commodities, and employees must embrace continuous learning as a career-long process”. Lifelong learning in this sense can manifest in several different ways (within and outside of the workplace and facilitated by the individual and/or the organisation), which is why it is sometimes used synonymously with terms such as adult education, or continuing education, or indeed CPD (Ryan, 2003). Blaschke (2016, p.57) described a lifelong learner as someone who has “the capability to effectively and creatively apply skills and competencies to new situations in an ever-changing, complex world”.

Indeed, it is considered an essential characteristic of a profession (Green and Gates, 2014) and supports the development of learning professionals who have the capacity to translate learning into practice (Simons and Ruijters, 2004). Promoting lifelong learning is therefore a central component of any organisation wishing to develop an organisation which can address the complex ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century and adapt to future challenges.

The promotion of lifelong learning is entrenched in what some have called the ‘knowledge economy’, ‘knowledge society’, or ‘knowledge capitalism’, placing knowledge at the centre of meaningful development and practice (David and Foray, 2002; Burton-Jones, 2003; Allen and van der Velden, 2011; Schomburg, 2011). In such a society, knowledge acquisition and learning are central elements of success. However, learning entails more than the process of possessing and acquiring knowledge, rather it is about how this knowledge is transformed into something meaningful (Boud and Hager, 2012). This is why some scholars have moved from a focus on the *knowledge society* to that of a *learning society* (Preece, 2006; Y. Su, 2010; Y.-H. Su, 2010), promoting transformative rather than reproductive learning (Tynjälä, 2013). Hence, learning within a policing context should not simply be about acquiring knowledge but supporting the transformation of this knowledge into individual, team and organisational learning.

The growth of the *knowledge economy* has, however, significantly influenced the way in which organisations engage with knowledge and why, such as through the development of evidence-based practice both in policing and elsewhere (Fleming and Wingrove, 2017). Within policing, evidence-based practice “implicates the use of research, evaluation, analysis, and scientific processes in law-enforcement decision making” (Lum and Koper, 2015, p. 1). Although this practice has sparked increased engagement with research and academic institutions (Lumsden, 2017), while driving a professionalisation agenda within policing forward (Tong, 2016; Tong and Hallenberg, 2018) (discussed in section 2.5.2), it has been criticised for its narrow conceptualisation of knowledge, its often complex relationship with politics, and overemphasis on certain kinds of research (e.g. randomised-controlled trials) (Wood *et al.*, 2018). These traditionally narrower definitions of what evidence-based practice is, tend to limit rather than support the transformative learning processes proposed by much of the

lifelong learning literature, and highlights the influence of power dynamics and politics in the organisational learning environment. To a degree, this might explain Police Scotland's resistance to more academically influenced learning environments, as it might lead to an over-reliance on academic research over craft knowledge (Fleming and Rhodes, 2018).

Willis and Mastrofski (2018, p.27) claimed that the use of evidence-based practice in policing may constrain the influence of craft knowledge, which is "the knowledge, skill, and judgement patrol officers acquire through their daily experience". To avoid losing the possible benefits of evidence-based practice, such as improved accountability, trust, and legitimacy through improved practice (Mitchell and Lewis, 2017), many scholars, particularly in the UK, now tend to refer to evidence-*informed* practice within policing (Fyfe and Wilson, 2012; Hunter, May and Hough, 2018; Aston, Murray and O'Neill, 2019). Nevo and Slonim-Nevo (2011, p.1178) suggested that this evidence-informed practice is less concerned with a certain hierarchy of knowledge but suggests that "empirical evidence is better regarded as one component in the mutual and constantly changing journey of client and practitioner". Therefore, evidence-informed practice highlights the value which theoretical knowledge can offer but tries to avoid the perceived theory-practice divide, which often tends to dominate these discussions (Brockmann and Laurie, 2016).

Despite these more recent developments, over time, the visionary idea of lifelong learning (Westberg, 2019), has developed into a market monopolized largely by HE (Olssen and Peters, 2007). This has led to a significant shift in thinking about how the provision of HE can be beneficial to workplaces. Indeed, Fisher and Simmons (2012) argued that through the increased availability of HE, many employers started to prefer graduates over vocationally trained employees. This might explain an increased focus within police learning reforms to better integrate HE qualifications into the development pathways of police officers across the world (Tong and Hallenberg, 2018; Brown, 2020). Police Scotland, with their markedly different approach to police learning, focussing on vocational learning pathways and presenting a reluctance to integrate HE into police officer learning pathways (Martin and Wooff, 2018), suggests that little value is attached to theoretical and academic knowledge. With a lack of

research from Scotland, this study provides a timely exploration of the benefits of current approaches to learning and how this relates to other allied professions.

Interestingly, Brown (2018), conducting an integrative literature review on the value of HE for police officers, could not identify significant value added to police officers or the police organisation through degree entry. She illustrated that there is still a disconnect between academia and policing and its value, beyond symbolically ‘professionalising’ the service, is unclear. The recent statement from the UK Home Secretary asking the College of Policing to explore ‘non-degree’ entry options for police forces in England and Wales after the introduction of the PEQF in 2020, reflects some of this lack of clarity. The wider discussions about the value of graduates has led to an increased ‘vocational drift’ in HE (Tight, 2014, p. 95), which is at the heart of the current debates about police education, discussed in section 2.6. This research project develops a deeper understanding of the ways in which police officers and the police organisation in Scotland currently engage with HE, in the absence of a direct degree pathway into policing, and the impact of this engagement on developing lifelong learners. The findings from this study may therefore aid Police Scotland in deciding where they want to engage with HE and to have a better understanding of the value it might add and what might be required to effectively integrate it into practice.

The emergence of the knowledge economy and the massification of HE⁹ has started to influence how and what some practitioners learn and how this learning is interpreted in practice. Nevertheless, whilst HE has developed as one way to support workplace learning within policing, it is important to have additional integrated work-based systems in place which support the continuous development of employees. Whilst CPD can include the engagement with HE, it is not constrained to it and indeed almost all workplaces also have internal structures providing different spaces for lifelong learning. The next section will start to unpick some of the common debates around CPD in the workplace to better understand the exploration of this topic in the Scottish police learning environment.

⁹ The massification of HE describes the mass system of higher education availability across many, mostly western, countries and the marketisation of HE (Giannakis and Bullivant, 2016). Guri-Rosenblit, Sebkova and Teichler (2007) also called this a mass-oriented system.

2.3.2 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

CPD is considered one of the traditionally more formalised workplace learning processes (DiMauro, 2000). It is an essential element supporting the development of lifelong learners and professional organisations which can adapt to 21st century challenges (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008). Friedman and Phillips (2004) have argued that CPD is a common part of professional life in the UK and has become a largely taken-for-granted process, present in most if not all professions in one form or another. However, there is little consistency and common understanding of CPD across organisations and professions, which makes it more difficult to understand its purpose and value, and what best practice might look like.

In the absence of an official definition and exploration of CPD from Police Scotland, this section will use the College of Policing's (CoP)¹⁰ CPD framework. The CoP describes CPD as "a range of learning activities through which you can maintain or enhance your capacity to practice legally, safely, ethically and effectively" (College of Policing, 2020b). However, they also suggest that:

"CPD comes in many different guises. [...] Most people's learning is informal and takes place outside of a classroom structure." (College of Policing, 2022)

The CoP's focus on informal learning in the conceptualisation of CPD suggests that much of the lifelong learning within English police forces is based on peer learning¹¹ and learning on-the-job, despite the introduction of the PEQF and degree entry. This notion of CPD places significant responsibility on the individual to identify and engage in learning, which makes the role of the organisation in the police officer learning journey more ambiguous. Furthermore, similar to the Scottish context, there is little evidence on how CPD is integrated into the respective English police forces and how it is measured, supported, and promoted in the workplace. This thesis provides a timely assessment of how CPD within Police Scotland manifests and how this relates to officer

¹⁰ The College of Policing was established in 2012 as an independent professional policing body, after highly publicised reports and reviews called the provision and quality of police officer training and development into question (Flanagan, 2008; Neyroud, 2011b; Winsor, 2011).

¹¹ Peer learning describes the "active and interactive mediation of learning through other learners who are not professional teachers" and of "equal status" (Topping and Ehly, 2001, p. 113).

needs, adding to the wider literature on police learning. Additionally, it provides a comparative exploration of allied professions' manifestations of CPD and what Police Scotland may be able to learn from other services to further improve their learning environment in their effort to empower, enable and support their workforce (Police Scotland, 2021).

A report mapping CPD and lifelong learning for health professionals, found that the provision of CPD varies widely between and within countries, including voluntary and mandatory CPD programs, as well as formal and informal learning opportunities (Executive Agency for Health and Consumers, 2013). This, once again, highlights that CPD can mean different things to different organisations, even those within the same occupation. Friedman and Phillips (2004) argued that the differences in how CPD is conceptualised and manifested in organisations can lead to confusion amongst professionals as to why they should engage with CPD and what the purpose of it is. Indeed, the perceived purpose and value of learning is an important factor in practitioners' motivation to learn and that what is being learned is translated into practice (Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2021). Therefore, whilst CPD can support workplace learning, depending on how it is integrated in the wider learning culture and practice, it may not lead to transformational practice.

For some occupations it is the profession specific regulators who set the standards of CPD (such as nurses and social workers) and it is therefore a mandatory requirement for continued registration (Karas *et al.*, 2020). Registration and evidencing engagement with relevant learning packages is a common feature within contemporary and traditional professions, which presumably signifies to external stakeholders, such as the public, that practitioners are up-to-date with the current evidence-base and are capable in what they need to do. This suggests a different focus of CPD from one focussed on developing the individual, increasing self-reflection, and promoting learning as the end goal (as part of a lifelong learning ethos), which may be defined as "the holistic commitment of professionals towards the enhancement of personal skills and proficiency throughout their careers" (The CPD Certification Service, 2020).

Whilst CPD can be output (leading to registration or other organisational goals) or input (the active engagement with learning) focussed, one does not have to exclude the other. However, a profession which considers CPD to be part of the certification

and registration process, will likely make CPD activities mandatory, focussing on formal training and development activities, whereas an input-based definition might focus more on both formal and informal opportunities, promoting self-directed learning following the needs of the employee. How to balance the different purposes of CPD, to ensure accountability whilst promoting authentic learning experiences, is a continued battle for many occupations, including policing (Honest, 2019). Considering a recently published report by the Police Foundation (2022) recommending a licence to practice for police officers, who should have to evidence a certain number of hours of CPD through the CoP in England and Wales, this structured and formalised approach to CPD may become an increasingly important consideration for Police Scotland in the future.

Kennedy (2005), in an attempt to illustrate the spectrum of what CPD might entail, identified nine different models of CPD, which can have different aims and purposes (Figure 2).

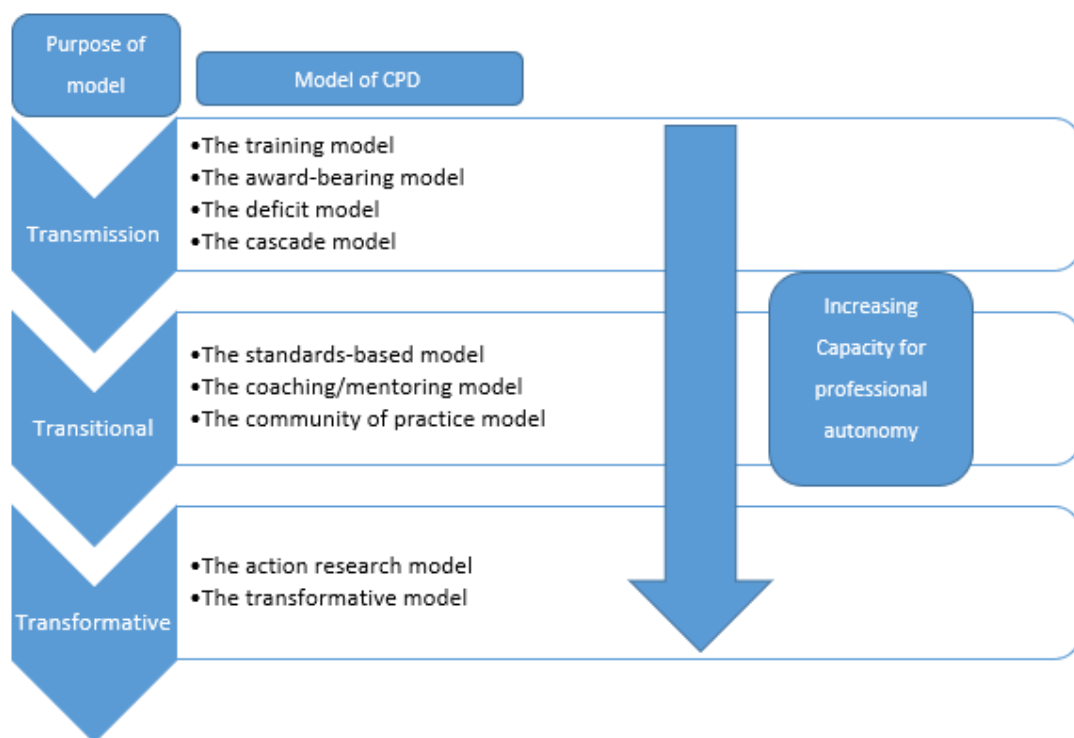


Figure 2 Kennedy (2005) Spectrum of CPD models.

For example, CPD models with the purpose of *transmission* utilise CPD as a function to prepare employees to implement certain externally set standards, policies or reforms (such as the aforementioned registration process). CPD models with the purpose of *transformation*, on the other hand, actively utilise CPD to involve employees in

developing and transforming practice and policy-making in their area, whereas the transition model is somewhere in between (Kennedy, 2005). Kennedy's (2005) conceptualisation of CPD illustrates the possible different aims and purposes of CPD and therefore the different forms it might take. Consequently, organisations may utilise several different forms of CPD at the same time or at different times to achieve different goals.

Police services in the UK do not currently utilise CPD as a way for officers to register or re-register as a police officer but rather as a sometimes mandatory sometimes voluntary process to learn about changes in legislation, practices, and research (evidence-base) (College of Policing, 2020b). This suggests a focus on Kennedy's (2005) transmission model of CPD, rather than a transformative model, which may be more aligned with authentic learning environments building capacity for change in organisations (Senge, 1990). However, the lack of agreement on what CPD can and should entail in the workplace and how it relates to effective learning environments, can lead to a lack of commitment amongst organisations to recognise a need for more transformative learning. Indeed, it is likely that all three models of CPD proposed by Kennedy (2005) are required in the workplace at different times and for different purposes. By exploring CPD within Police Scotland and allied professions, this study seeks to explore the value and benefit of these different models of CPD for the policing context.

Honess (2016) argued that there are three reasons for CPD within policing. Firstly, *practical*, i.e. learning specific procedures, legislation or use of equipment; secondly, *adaptability*, i.e. adapting to the complex role of the police; thirdly *addressing perishable skills*, such as emergency life support or operational safety training. Nevertheless, Honess (2016) highlighted that police organisations tend to focus on an external mandate of CPD and often fail to demonstrate the benefits from a learner perspective. This can have a negative impact on police officers' intrinsic motivation to engage with CPD (Honess, 2019; Staller *et al.*, 2021) and stresses the importance of engaging with adult learning theories, which state that learners need to not only know *what and how* to learn but also *why* they are learning something (Knowles, 1970). These theories are explored in more depth in section 2.4.

One aspect not mentioned by Honess (2016) is the use of CPD for promotion purposes. Indeed, the DPSLM has been an important CPD opportunity for police officers in Scotland to qualify for promotion, discussed in section 2.2.1. CPD for leadership development, it plays a particularly important part in the workplace learning environment. Firstly, leaders act as role models and therefore significantly influence the commitment to lifelong learning within an organisation (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008; Moreale and Herrington, 2021). Secondly, Herrington and Schafer (2019) argued that leadership should be recognised as an organisational rather than solely individual capacity and therefore requires tailored development opportunities provided and supported by the organisation.

However, leadership development has been a highly debated topic within the police learning literature and continues to be an area of concern for police forces across the world (Neyroud, 2011b; Wathne, 2011; Herrington and Colvin, 2015; Huey *et al.*, 2018; Herrington and Schafer, 2019; Syria, 2019). Critically, a recent HMICS report has found that “leadership training has not been provided in any meaningful way since the national service [Police Scotland] was established in 2013” (HMICS, 2020, p. 4), questioning Police Scotland’s ability to effectively support learning within the organisation, particularly for those officers who are responsible for supporting their teams’ and individual officer learning journeys.

Another study exploring CPD within policing, highlighted that the standardised nature of CPD, ‘frontloading’ officers with information, had a negative impact on police officers’ motivation to learn (Beighton and Poma, 2015). Indeed, this study emphasised how frontloading, refreshing, and debriefing can sustain an outdated culture which hinders a commitment to transformative learning approaches and ethical and professional practice. Beighton and Poma (2015) suggested that *expansive learning environments* could address the negative impact of some of these standardised, mandatory CPD opportunities within policing.

Expansive learning, according to Engstroem (2016), has three key dimensions. The first dimension, *the socio-spatial dimension*, considers who is involved in the learning process, including everyone who has a stake in this learning taking place, for example employers, allied professions and the public. An important aspect discussed through the thesis so far. The second dimension, *the temporal dimension*, recognises the

importance to not only learn from the past and for current practice but to engage in learning which looks to the future and considers innovative ways of working together to identify trends. Lastly, *the political-ethical dimension, which explores why something is learned, for whom, and what the societal impact of this learning is, making learners not only participants or those who acquire knowledge, but agents of change* (Engstroem, 2016).

This concept therefore reflects on Kennedy's (2005) transformative model of CPD, as the learner is an integral part of the process, promoting individual and organisational learning. However, in addition to putting the learner and their needs at the forefront, it is aiming to develop and implement training collectively, creating collective motives for change, which are said to increase individual motivation to engage in learning (Beighton and Poma, 2015), and develop communities of practice (Wenger, 2011) (explored further in 2.4). Hence, within expansive learning environments there is a recognition that learning does not happen in isolation and, particularly in the workplace, often includes a complex myriad of interdependent factors. This has been highlighted as particularly important to consider in the recently published *Police Learning and Development 2025: Destination Map* (Harding *et al.*, 2019).

Expansive learning theory addresses some of the idealised individual learning theories, such as andragogy, which suggest that the key differences between pedagogy (teacher controlled learning) and andragogy (self-directed learning) is the importance for adults to understand *why* they learn, personal motivation, experience as well as readiness and orientation towards learning (Knowles, 1973; Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2021) (explored in 2.4). This cannot always easily be applied to the complexity of the politicised and ethical context of police work, having to incorporate different stakeholder needs and balance them with individual officer needs and capabilities. Consequently, the theory of expansive learning environments may be particularly useful in the complex and shared learning environments between law enforcement and public health occupations (Mulholland, Barnett and Woodroffe, 2019; Karas *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, exploring the ways in which Police Scotland promotes the different aspects suggested by expansive learning theory, supports our understanding of the degree to which Police Scotland understands and is influenced by the interdependent factors impacting on police learning environments.

However, promoting interprofessional continuous learning, introduces other limitations, such as professionals protecting their own *turf*, conflicting aims and outcomes and the influence of established hierarchical and power structures between services (Mulholland, Barnett and Woodroffe, 2019). This makes the development of an expansive learning environment more difficult. Therefore, it might be an ideal learning environment to strive for but not easily achieved. Nonetheless, expansive learning theories highlight the need to break down some of these power structures and contextual barriers between services. This might lead to the development of a *learning sector*, rather than learning constricted to particular organisations, which, it is argued, is needed to address the ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century. The additional viewpoints and perspectives gathered from allied professions and ENU students for this study provide a more nuanced and comprehensive picture of the wider police learning and professional learning landscape in Scotland and highlights the ways in which expansive learning environments are currently developed and utilised across services with the needs of different stakeholders in mind.

Reflecting on the lifelong learning and CPD literature, therefore, highlights the focus on knowledge-based and instruction-led forms of learning in (police) workplaces, where learning is often considered a means to an end. However, the limited literature on the availability, understanding of, and engagement with CPD in the policing context makes it difficult to identify what currently works and how to better integrate expansive and transformative workplace learning in practice. Indeed, recent reports have started to question the provision of CPD within police services in the UK and beyond (Herrington and Schafer, 2019; Honess, 2019; HMICS, 2020). The concept of the LO provides a useful theory to explore learning in the workplace, as it incorporates individual, team and organisational learning, explaining what the role of the organisation may be in workplace learning scenarios. Whilst it is not the purpose of this research project to test whether Police Scotland is or is not a LO, it presents a useful concept and the next section will explore the literature on individual, team and organisational learning, in light of Police Scotland’s claim that they are an outward looking learning organisation.

2.4 Individual, team, and organisational learning – Building blocks of learning organisations

The term 'learning organisation' (LO) was officially coined by Senge (1990, p.3), who argued that this is an organisation which builds capacity for change and ways in which to sustain it (Senge *et al.*, 1999). His key argument was that focusing on individual learning is not enough to achieve organisational goals, such as those set in the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, for Police Scotland "to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland". Therefore, Örtenblad (2018) suggested that the key difference between learning in an organisation, such as the workplace learning structures discussed above, and being a 'learning organisation' is that the organisation plays an active role in the structure or outcome of the learning process. This can manifest in different ways such as; the organisation as a facilitator of the learning of individuals, the organisation as a learning unit in and of itself, the organisation as an end process dependent on the learning within the organisation; or indeed a combination of these (Örtenblad, 2018).

Consequently, the LO identifies the organisation as a learning unit, which consists of individuals, teams, and the organisation as a whole, where learning is supported by communities of practice. Wenger (2011, p.1) described communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". Within such communities, as Crawford and L'Hoiry (2017, p.639) argued, "the mastery of knowledge requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community [...] [and] conceived learning is social and comes largely from experiences of participating in daily life alongside others engaged in similar practices". Hence, communities of practice in this thesis, are defined as team learning environments which support and create learning opportunities largely organically through social interaction. Therefore, they present an integral aspect of learning in an organisation, which, where present, can support capacity building and innovation through sharing knowledge across teams and individuals. To enable a useful exploration of police learning in Scotland, this project aims to consider the different levels of learning within an organisation, going beyond individual experiences and considering the impact, value, and use of learning in relation to individual, team, and organisational learning, which includes the degree to which the current culture of learning results in communities of practice.

In addition to communities of practice, some scholars have identified certain building blocks of learning organisations, which are important to promote and embed the previously discussed lifelong learning culture in professional organisations to address contemporary and future challenges.

2.4.1 Building blocks of a learning organisation

Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne (1989) presented eleven characteristics which describe, what they call, a learning company, later called learning organisation (Figure 3). In the context of this thesis, three key features of particular relevance will be discussed in more depth, these are; *inter-organisational learning, learning culture and climate* and *self-development opportunities for all* (a more detailed discussion of the eleven characteristics can be found in Burgoyne (1992)).



Figure 3 The 11 characteristics of a learning organisation (Burgoyne, 1992).

Burgoyne (1992, p.330) argued that a level of self-control over one’s own development is important in a profession, as it supports feelings of agency and avoids feelings of “being moved round in a hidden chess game, occasionally being sent for training the reason for which they [employees] do not know”. As discussed previously, this reflects on individual learning theories such as andragogy, highlighting the need for learning to be guided by employee skills, experience, and need (Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2021). Indeed, Staller *et al.*, (2021) argued that part of a police trainers responsibility is giving autonomy to the student to spark motivation in learning. As will be discussed in

section 2.6, a student-centred learning environment has historically been difficult to achieve in police organisations.

The *development of a learning culture or climate* reflects the need for organisations to avoid developing what is often called a blame culture, instead nurturing a culture in which mistakes are seen as learning opportunities (Burgoyne, 1992). Staller *et al.*, (2021) discovered that the learning climate within police organisations can heavily influence police officer motivation to learn and therefore either promote or inhibit ongoing engagement in learning. Nevertheless, how such a positive and supportive learning climate or culture can be achieved in practice is not discussed in detail. Therefore, while organisations might know this is important, it is not clear what structures and practices may support such a climate. This research project helps to identify how the current learning climate and culture manifests within Police Scotland, whilst exploring how different viewpoints from practitioners from allied professions and that of ENU students compare and contrast with the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland.

Lastly, *inter-organisational learning* highlights the need to transcend traditional organisational boundaries in the learning context, as organisations are increasingly interconnected and influence one another (Burgoyne, 1992). Research literature from the Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH) field, suggest “intra- and inter-service collaboration and education” is important to develop a shared language and avoid confusion amongst services (Murray *et al.*, 2021, p. 11). Indeed, communities of practice can often cross organisational boundaries and develop learning environments between and across services (Crawford and L’Hoiry, 2017). However, van Dijk *et al.*, (2019) argued that changes required to achieve this kind of learning may go beyond the abilities of one organisation and may need to be driven by changes in governmental policy-making and rhetoric. Therefore, an organisation may develop structures and cultures which promote multi-agency working and learning, but the complexities of such work and its success is influenced by factors out of their control. This research project will unpick some of these dynamics and identify where learning and the learning environment can support effective partnership working within current structures and policies.

A more recent conceptualisation of the LO is that of Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008) (Figure 4), which adds to and re-contextualises some of the eleven core characteristics identified by Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne (1989) into core building blocks of a LO. The definition of a LO emanating from these building blocks, is the definition of the LO utilised in this thesis.

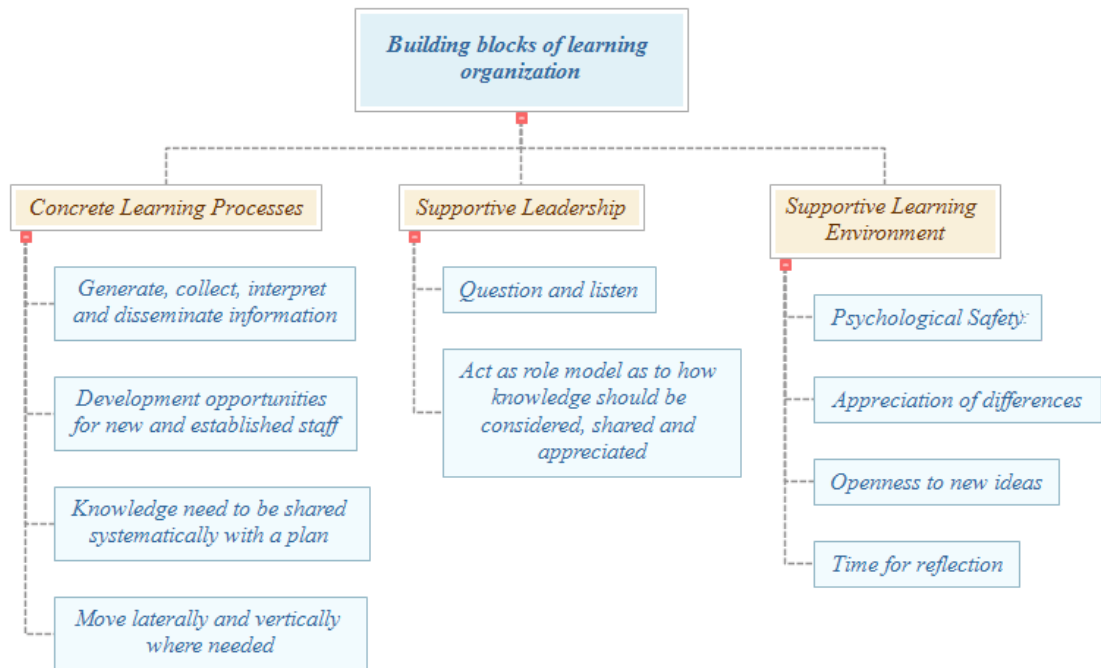


Figure 4 Building blocks of a learning organisation (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008).

For example, the characteristics presented in figure 4 more clearly highlight how to involve individuals in the development of a learning culture and *supportive learning environment*, and how different characteristics of a LO relate to one another. Such as the central building block of allowing *time for reflection*. Established learning scholar Schoen (1987) argued that reflection is a key ingredient of professional behaviour, suggesting the need for reflective practitioners who become researchers into their own practice. Indeed, Wood *et al.*, (2018) argued that police discretion (the ability to make decisions on the job), as the embodiment of police professional craft knowledge, requires ongoing critical and reflective practice to enable learning. However, as Fielding (2001) pointed out, the ability and time to reflect in an organisational context can be heavily influenced by the power structures within an organisation. The findings from Stop and Search studies in Scotland have illustrated the pitfalls of a lack of

reflection on certain policing practices and the influence of organisational power structures (Aston, Murray and O'Neill, 2019). Therefore, although there is recognition that police officers should be reflective practitioners (Wood, 2018), how existing internal and external power structures can be broken down to enable reflective practice amongst all employees is less clear (Fielding, 2001). One way in which to address this may be a better understanding of current power structures within the organisation in relation to the learning environment, which is a focus within the exploration of learning for this study.

2.4.2 The limitations of the workplace and organisational learning literature

The LO literature has been criticised for its outcome focus by describing the benefits of being a LO for professional practice and what the building blocks are, but not focussing enough on the journey and how to get there (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2013).

Additionally, even if all the building blocks of a LO are in place, this does not mean everyone will be willing to and want to learn. Indeed, Gould (2016) has argued that deeper societal inequalities, which might impact on someone's ability and/or willingness to learn, are often not addressed in the workplace learning literature. The findings from evaluations of the PEQF, and the professionalisation through degree entry, in England and Wales have highlighted that officers experience a disconnect between academia and policing, which hinders their ability to apply theoretical learning in practice. This illustrates that even where the learning structures are in place this does not mean that officers are able to utilise the provided learning as intended by the organisation. This research project provides an analysis of the lived experiences of learning by police officers in Scotland. This helps to add to the current workplace learning literature, by comparing lived experiences of learning to the established pathways and structures of learning within the organisation, and the culture which underpins it.

Controversially, Pedler and Burgoyne (2017) argued that organisations have changed drastically through individualised learning cultures, changing the expectations put on organisations and placing more responsibility on the individual to focus on their own learning journey separate from that of the organisation. However, Halmaghi (2018, p. 102) remarked "even if people have the ability to learn, it does not mean that the

group has this capacity too". Therefore, focusing on individual learning journeys may limit the development of communities of practice which play an essential part in transforming individual learning into organisational transformation. This is particularly important when exploring learning in the workplace, especially in policing, where individuals from different backgrounds and with different skillsets are coming together to learn towards a common goal, serving the public, whilst also advancing their careers (laterally or horizontally) within the organisation.

The literature on police learning and police services as learning organisations has further argued that there is the lack of overlap between police organisational values, described as "bureaucratic, even quasi-militar[istic] [...] not open and creative", in comparison to workplace learning environments focussed on empowerment and employee autonomy in the learning process (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011, p.486, 489). This is often seen as a particular barrier within police forces to move from the previously mentioned transmission model of CPD and employee development to transformative models, whilst also limiting the ability to innovate and adapt as an organisation. Indeed, there is a need to be able to learn and build the capacity to learn, individually and organisationally, now more than ever (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008), to address the complex context public services work in. Therefore, the next section will unpick a source of debate particularly within public services and traditionally considered craft professions, namely the perceived theory-practice divide.

2.4.3 The theory-practice divide

Gould (2016) argued that moving beyond a focus on work-based learning, i.e., learning on-the-job, to one where formal theoretical learning and informal on-the-job learning can complement one another, is important to promote authentic workplace learning environments in the social work occupation. This perceived gap between theoretical and craft knowledge has also been identified in the policing sphere and has been suggested to hinder meaningful learning in the workplace (Fleming and Rhodes, 2018). This is based on Schoen's (1987) previously mentioned theory of the reflective practitioner, recognising that "most learning is not directly transferable without interpretation and adaptation" (Gould, 2016, p. 4). Indeed, Williams, Norman and Rowe (2019) argued that reflection and critical thinking skills are important for police officers to develop their personal understanding of professionalism, which could aid

the ongoing professionalisation of police services, whilst supporting individual and team learning.

A helpful way to illustrate how learning on-the-job (experiential learning) can be transformed into organisational learning is introduced by Simons and Ruijters' (2004) concept of the learning professional (Figure 5). It highlights the need for learning professionals to be able to *elaborate, expand and externalise* experiences. Their theory demonstrates the need for professionals to not only engage in individual learning, but be able to *externalise* this learning, developing the profession as a whole, and sharing and reflecting on learning with others, developing communities of practice.

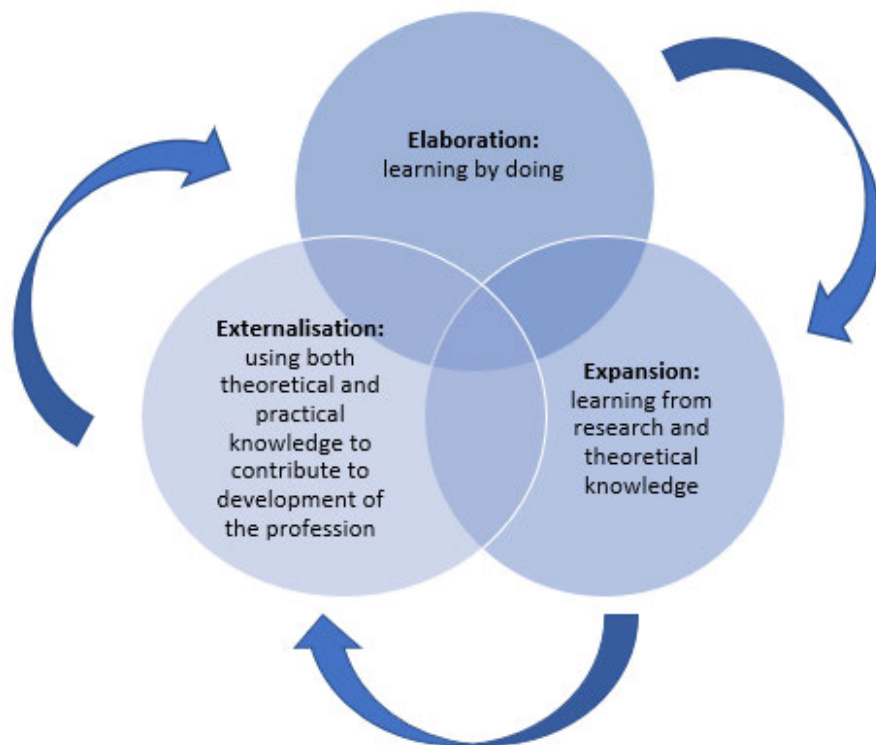


Figure 5 Learning professional model (Simons & Ruijters, 2004).

In this context theoretical knowledge is seen as an 'expansion' to what is learned on-the-job to understand the wider working environment and make evidence-informed decisions (Simons and Ruijters, 2004). Simons and Ruijters (2004) argued that this *externalisation* should be supported by a learning culture, where practitioners have a platform to share their learning, developing structures of communication which are built on trust, what Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008) called a supportive and psychologically safe learning environment. Whilst Police Scotland states that they are "an outward looking learning organisation" and "a service that is staffed, trained and

equipped to meet the challenging operating environment” (Police Scotland, 2020a, 2021), there is a lack of available research exploring how learning happens within Police Scotland and how police officers experience this environment. Therefore, this thesis provides a timely and important exploratory view of this learning environment and makes suggestions for further research in this area, whilst providing a reworked framework of police learning, integrating the workplace learning theories discussed throughout the previous two sections. To do so, it is important to better understand the current police learning landscape and how changes to the police learning environment have emerged and transformed over time.

2.5 The changing role of the police officer and the professionalisation agenda – why police education is a topic of interest

As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, the perceived role of the police officer informs and drives what learning may be required by police officers and the police organisation. One driver of the changes in police learning in this context has been the ‘professionalisation agenda’, which has emerged in response to the shifting role of the police officer and aims to re-legitimise policing and align police services with other recently professionalised public services, such as nursing, social work and teaching. This has led many police services across the world to fundamentally transform how they train and educate their police officers. Therefore, to better understand the police learning landscape, it is important to recognise the underlying drivers for change and reform, such as the perceived changes to the role of the police officer in society.

2.5.1 The ever-changing role of the police officer

The ever-changing nature of policing has a significant impact on the skills and knowledge needed by police officers (Brookes, 2017; Fyfe, 2013; Hail, 2016). Indeed, Punch (1979) argued that police officers are responding to an increasing number of social service rather than law enforcement calls, which would result in different skills being required to effectively support service users in distress. Nevertheless, whilst the role of the police officer is arguably expanding, their training and learning regime has stayed remarkably constant over time. This means that officers rarely learn how to address the growing number of calls that are not crime related, such as responding to people in mental health crisis (Punch, 1979; Murray *et al.*, 2021). Indeed, due to the pace of change and the complex nature of policing in contemporary society, identifying

relevant skills and knowledge that make a 'good' police officer, and implementing these into an adaptive police learning model, continues to be a topic of much debate (Baro & Burlingame, 1999; Rowe, 2014; Williams et al., 2019).

The expanding role of the police officer beyond crime prevention and crime fighting is not new but certainly an increasingly more accepted and recognised concept. Indeed, to address the perceived learning needs of officers responding to more complex calls, Vollmer (1936) developed the first HE degree in policing in the United States in the early 20th century. One reason why these initial degrees in policing did not lead to more extensive changes across police services may be the perceived gap between this expansive role of the police and traditional police culture, which is based on a sense of action and mission, focussed on crime fighting (Reiner, 2010). Indeed, traditional police culture, aligned with the crime fighting and action rich perception of policing, often does not recognise its day-to-day focus on police-public relationships and what Souhami (2020) called the extraordinary ordinariness of policing. Traditional notions of policing are further supported by official police rhetoric and statistics, focussing on the crime fighting aspect of police services, rather than the rapidly increasing number of wellbeing and service calls they attend (Scottish Government, 2014).

The 'wicked problems' that police officers are responding to are related to notions of equity and diversity within society, and therefore require extensive communication and negotiation between services and a wider understanding of the role of law enforcement agencies (Rittel and Webber, 1973). The multi-dimensional nature of these problems and the need for joined up solutions highlights the important role of shared learning environments. Indeed, McCune *et al.*, (2021, p.13) suggest that it is not enough to "simply be taught generic skills for working across contexts and disciplines", and a more authentic interdisciplinary learning experience is required. This relates to the socio-spatial dimension of the expansive learning theory developed by Engstroem (2016), discussed previously, recognising different stakeholders and how to effectively 'expand' learning environments to include relevant practitioner groups, viewpoints, and perspectives. In relation to the Scottish context, much of the learning and development of police officers continues to be largely provided by police in policing settings. Therefore, boundary crossing (Crawford and L'Hoiry, 2017) is currently

limited, which can inhibit the capacity building necessary to address the ‘wicked problems’ officers encounter when they leave the police college.

Indeed, if an integral part of the role of the police officer is often not recognised in official rhetoric, nor integrated into organisational or occupational culture, it might explain why the skills and knowledge associated with this expanding role are not yet routinely embedded into police learning pathways. Nevertheless, work in Scotland and beyond in recent years suggest a step change in recognising this shifting role, such as the development of the LEPH agenda (van Dijk and Crofts, 2016; Coleman, 2021; Watson, Heyman and Thomas, 2021). Furthermore, the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, which led to the centralisation of the previous eight Scottish police forces, has expanded the purpose of the police in Scotland from order maintenance and crime prevention “to improve the safety and wellbeing of people, places and communities in Scotland” (Police Scotland, 2022).

Whilst Police Scotland’s definition of the role of the police officer recognises the expanding demand on police services, van Dijk et al., (2019) found that more collaboration between public health and law enforcement services is required to provide an effective service for the public. This is despite the fact that changes to multi-agency working to improve public wellbeing have been an important topic within public policy making for over 10 years. The Christie Commission (2011, p.IX) recommended “implementing new multi-agency training to reduce silo mentalities, drive forward service integration and build a common public service ethos”. However, current efforts within the LEPH field and beyond suggest that these silos still exist and meaningful reform is difficult to achieve (van Dijk *et al.*, 2019a). This can hamper police’s ability to address the ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Hence, part of this research project aims to identify ways in which to address these silos, by identifying what effective shared and multi-agency learning environments look like, what Police Scotland may be able to learn about professional learning environments from allied professions, and how to further align public service learning environments to enable effective partnership working.

In addition to the need for more, and more meaningful, partnership working within this space, police forces have recognised the need to more extensively integrate the evidence-base on best practice within policing into their curriculum. To address this,

the growth of police science since the 1960s (Jaschke *et al.*, 2007) has contributed to a new wave of 'professionalisation' within policing to address some of the pressures discussed above. This 'professionalisation agenda' seeks to reform police learning in line with other professional services, such as nursing and social work, taking into account the wider discussions in the workplace learning literature. However, the public, allied professions, the government, politics, the police, and researchers, do not always have the same objectives when it comes to policing or the need to 'professionalise' it (Sanders, 2003; White and Escobar, 2008). Therefore, deciding on what skills and knowledge are required by professional police officers and how to develop a learning environment that will support the development of professional police officers and police services is contested.

2.5.2 The professionalisation agenda

The concept of professionalisation is heavily dependent on how a profession and professionalism is defined. However, this can differ according to context and time. Indeed, Sklansky (2013) argued that the ambiguity of professionalism can lead to varying and sometimes conflicting conceptualisations. It is also a very politicised concept and can therefore be influenced by priorities and political agendas. Indeed, James and Willis (2001, p.27) argued that while changes to the police learning environment may lead to professional dominance, professionalisation is "fundamentally a political process". Whereas Hughes (1959) suggested that a profession is "a community of practitioners whose special knowledge sets them off from other individuals in relation to whom they hold special rights and privilege" (in Schoen, 1987, p. 32), highlighting the focus within the 'professionalisation agenda' on knowledge and learning. However, in what way 'special knowledge' or 'special rights' can be defined is less clear, and is dependent on the occupation, its level of scientific background and levels of autonomy, which can be inextricably linked to politics.

One suggested benefit of the professionalisation agenda, from a political point of view, is the more effective use of resources and increased effectiveness, driven by the New Public Management (NPM) approach introduced in the UK in the 1980s (Cockcroft, 2018). This approach, some scholars argue, saw professionalism used as a "technology of control to discipline workers" (Lumsden, 2017a, p. 4). With its focus on performance measurement, efficiency, and effectiveness, the NPM approach promotes certain kinds

of evidence and knowledge, that which can be measured, over others, often linked to producing results with the least amount of resources (Bristow, Carter and Martin, 2015; Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019). Therefore, professionalisation informed by the NPM approach, rather than specifically focussed on the learning needs of the police officer, the police organisation, or the public, learning environments within this agenda tend to be reformed based on efficiency, i.e. how can more officers be developed and educated, faster and with less resources. The impact this may have on police-public trust, legitimacy, accountability, and officer wellbeing is therefore, not necessarily at the forefront of this agenda and, furthermore, may be negatively impacted by it. However, research on police professionalisation and its impact on police-public relationships is still in its infancy. Therefore, the value added by professionalising policing through significant changes to police learning environments continues to be debated.

Green and Gates (2014, p.75) provide a more expansive definition of what it means to be a profession, focussing on some of the key structures and characteristics a profession should have, such as a “cognitive base, institutional training, licensing, work autonomy, colleague control, a code of ethics and high standards of professional and intellectual excellence”. Green and Gates’ (2014) characteristics, presented in Figure 6, illustrate the different structural, political, and cultural aspects that should be considered when an occupation considers itself as being professionalised, including its learning environment.

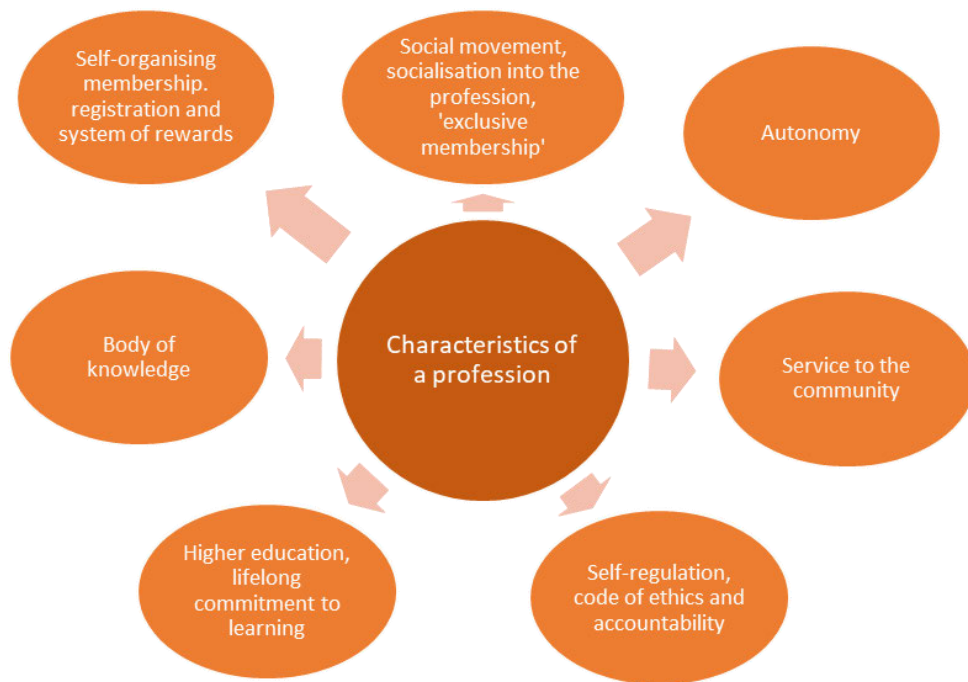


Figure 6 Green and Gates' (2014, p.77) characteristics of a profession.

As illustrated in figure 6, some of the standards set by traditional occupations are the provision of degree entry, CPD and an extensive knowledge and research base to build their practice on (Sutherland, 1987). This explains the particular focus on especially higher education and engagement with the knowledge base in the modern police professionalisation agenda (Green & Gates, 2014; Horn, 2016; Rogers & Frevel, 2018b; Tong & Hallenberg, 2018). Indeed, Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008) established that although there were clear cross-national differences in which aspects of the social work occupation were professionalised, one feature realised in all countries, was the move to degree entry. Similarly, Lahtinen, Leino-Kilpi and Salminen (2014) highlighted that the majority of nursing education across Europe is now provided through HE. Therefore, within this agenda there is a link between professional status, knowledge and power, reflecting the previously discussed establishment of a 'knowledge economy' (Pegg and Caddell, 2016). This suggests that the provision of HE within the quest to professionalise policing is seen as one way to develop lifelong learners and the learning environment required to become a profession.

Sklansky (2013) suggested that the characteristics of a profession (Figure 6) are too broad and ambiguous, not providing enough clarity and guidance for organisations to become professions. In contrast, Lumsden (2017a) argued that this is intentional to ensure that fundamentally different occupations can become a profession in their own

right. These different viewpoints highlight the lack of clarity as to what it takes to become a profession and explain the different approaches taken to police learning in the name of the professionalisation agenda across the world (Rogers and Frevel, 2018b). This will be discussed in more depth in section 2.6. Consequently, the mixed opinions on what the professionalisation agenda consists of, and how to achieve it, raises several questions about the need for, and value of, changes to the police learning environment in the name of the professionalisation agenda.

The largely prescriptive trait-based notion of professionalism and professionalisation, often considered a way in which to transform public services into a closed degree-entry only profession, may explain why this agenda has not always been met with enthusiasm amongst practitioners (Yam, 2004; Pugh, 2005; Williams and Cockcroft, 2018). Weiss-Gal and Welbourne (2008, p.289) argued that this may be due to internal power relations, the ability to utilise external influences to achieve these aims, and the “political, economic and social context within which it is operating”. Therefore, the complex historical, structural and cultural factors influencing different professions make the road to professionalisation complex and different for each occupation. For the purposes of this thesis, professionalisation is understood as an ongoing process within policing, which, whilst the concept has changed and adapted over time (see Noordegraaf, 2016), continues to be largely understood as a trait-based notion which seeks to transform craft occupations in line with the characteristics presented in figure 6, one aspect of which is aligning them closer with HE and academic learning pathways.

In the late 20th century many public services (i.e. teaching, nursing, social work) have been ‘professionalised’ in the UK, and therefore, are often used as more recent examples to encourage the professionalisation of police services (Hallenberg, 2012; Simmill-Binning and Towers, 2017; Tong, 2017). Nevertheless, there is little research exploring how recently professionalised public services work with those occupations which have not yet been ‘professionalised’, and what the impact of the differences between ‘professionalised’ and ‘non-professionalised’ public services are on individual practitioners, the organisation, the public and policy makers. Indeed, Gould (2016) argued that the professionalisation agenda can introduce stratification between the educated and qualified thinkers and the ‘doers’ (presumably perceived as less

qualified). This research project starts to address this gap by providing a comparative perspective of recently professionalised occupations (nursing and social work) and Police Scotland, developing a better understanding of the impact of different learning environments on effective partnership working.

Whilst this agenda has led to significant changes in the provision of learning and education for public services such as nursing and social work, it remains a contested idea within policing.

2.5.2.1 Professionalisation and the police

The introduction of the 'professionalisation agenda' in the public sector has led to several debates around autonomy and power relations within occupations and the possible loss of such autonomy through professionalisation, often leading perspectives of anti-professionalisation (Magnuson and Baldwin, 2014). This might explain why some police officers define the police service in opposition to a profession. Magnuson and Baldwin (2014, p.13) argued that this dichotomous view of professionalisation and anti-professionalisation can be unhelpful, missing the possible benefits of professionalisation in relation to its ethical aspirations to improve practice and developing lifelong learners, leading to "an unwillingness to collaborate". Hence, the way in which professionalisation is conceptualised and framed is important.

Bayley and Bittner (1984, p. 35) argued "officers commonly portray policing as being essentially a craft in which learning comes exclusively through experience intuitively processed by individual officers". Professionalisation in this sense is seen as a way that curtails professional wisdom and reduces police officer autonomy. Consequently, police officers often do not see a purpose for institutionalised training or intellectual excellence through HE because professional wisdom is learned 'on-the-street' rather than in the classroom. This draws attention to the strong influence of traditional conceptualisations of policing and the police, and the culture which underpins it (Charman, 2017). Indeed, Lumsden (2017) argued that police culture can be considered a protective factor against professionalisation, as it keeps traditional practices and understandings of the police and how police officers learn their craft (through learning on-the-job and from peers), alive and well.

However, Fleming and Rhodes (2018) argued that the differences between craft, and theoretical knowledge may not be as big as previously thought. Therefore, the

dichotomous view of only being able to use either craft knowledge, or theoretical knowledge, acquired largely through academic classroom-based learning, may be outdated and unhelpful. Learning environments play an important part in this context to signal the value of both craft and theoretical knowledge and equip officers to combine the two in their daily practice. With a lack of clear learning pathways and evidence about the current learning environment, by talking to police officers, this study will explore important viewpoints on the value of both craft and theoretical knowledge, and how the two are currently understood within the Scottish police learning context.

Conversely, it is argued that police officers may understand policing as an occupation and craft, but themselves as police officers as professionals, illustrating the difference between organisational and individual professionalism (Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019). This suggests a gap between acting professionally and being a profession, where the former requires less commitment to all the characteristics mentioned in figure 6, but arguably may come with less support and social standing. Indeed, Williams, Norman and Rowe (2019) argued that both are required to develop a profession and support individual and organisational learning. This has also been recognised in the health professions stating that team and organisational culture and the associated environment is as important as individual behaviour to promote professionalism within the organisation (The Scottish Government, 2012).

Despite these debates, the professionalisation agenda has gained momentum within policing over the past 50 years (Fyfe, 2013). It was and is one of the key drivers influencing changes in police training and education across the world. Interestingly, and in contrast to the rest of the UK, the drive to 'professionalise' has not yet significantly influenced police learning in Scotland. This is despite the fact that there is a vested interest by the Scottish Government to learn from and collaborate with countries that have a strong focus on the professionalisation of policing through degree entry, such as the Nordic and Scandinavian countries (Scottish Government, 2017), whilst aligning more closely with the CoP. This PhD project provides a timely assessment of Scottish police officers' views on aspects of the professionalisation agenda, in particular the possible more extensive integration of HE into the police learning curriculum and the commitment to developing lifelong learners. This will

significantly advance the literature on this topic from countries not yet committing to the dominant discourse of police professionalisation.

The lack of agreement in the literature and official rhetoric about the need to professionalise policing poses a significant challenge for police services to know why and how to professionalise. Indeed, Martin (2021, p.12) argued that traditional notions of police professionalism are not enough to address current challenges and “it is critical to embed reflection and learning needs at an organisational level, allowing the police service to become more self-reforming”. Therefore, a more contextualised understanding of professionalisation and how it can effectively support organisational and individual learning is needed. By exploring learning within Police Scotland and the wider police learning context in Scotland, this thesis develops an understanding of contemporary learning pathways, their value as perceived by officers, and how this might relate to current debates within the professionalisation of police services. This is important in the context of developing professional learning environments within Police Scotland.

As this literature review suggests, both wider societal factors (the development of a ‘knowledge economy’, HE massification, closing the theory-practice divide) and policing and public service specific factors (the professionalisation of public services, the recognition of the shifting role of the police officer, resource restrictions and political influence) have influenced police learning environments across the western world. Therefore, the next section will explore the current evidence-base on police learning environments based on these changes.

2.6 The police learning landscape – opportunities and barriers

Police forces across the world are trained and educated to various different levels (Belur *et al.*, 2019). Some police forces such as those in Finland, Germany, Norway, Iceland, Australia, and more recently England and Wales have identified engagement with HE as important to develop competent and confident police officers (Paterson, 2011; Bjørge, 2017; Belur, Agnew-Pauley and Tompson, 2018; Frevel, 2018; Bartkowiak- Theron, 2019; Belur *et al.*, 2019). As mentioned previously, this was heavily influenced by the changing role of the police officer and the professionalisation agenda. However, the purpose, value, and use of HE for police services continues to be debated in the literature (Paterson, 2011; Belur, Agnew-Pauley and Tompson, 2018).

Indeed, since the announcement of the introduction of the PEQF there have been significant debates about its added value and purpose, ranging from professionalising the police service, raising the social standing of the organisation, to developing officers who are critical thinkers and able to address the ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century (Tong, 2016; Wood, 2018; Hough and Stanko, 2019; Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019; Leek, 2020). Brown (2018, p. 10) went as far as to say that the academisation of initial police learning could be considered “something of an article of faith”. Therefore, a more extensive evidence-base on different police learning environments is required to ensure that reforms are based on current and rigorous research, which better understands the purpose and value of different spaces for learning.

2.6.1 The current police learning landscape

An integral part of the contemporary police learning environment is para-military style training, which, like much of the contemporary police training in the UK, can be traced back to the early 19th century (Herrington and Schafer, 2019), and present a way in which to instil discipline and order into the organisation (Baro and Burlingame, 1999; Charman, 2017; Rogers and Frevel, 2018a). This training style was and is seen as a way to curtail the use of police discretion and ensure a structured and controlled crime-fighting response (Waddington, 1993; Stone and Travis, 2013). This is despite the fact that police discretion is considered an integral part of the police constable role and provides the autonomy that is considered essential for professional decision making (Fleming and Rhodes, 2018; Leek, 2020). Some of the rigid and prescriptive nature of this training style therefore, may influence police forces’ ability to develop an inclusive and transformative learning environment (Rogers and Frevel, 2018b), which *rewards flexibility* and develops a supportive *learning culture and climate* (Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne, 1989). This might explain why these traditional police training approaches are often perceived to be in opposition to the aspired transformative learning environment of many police forces (Belur *et al.*, 2019).

Another important aspect of police learning which has persisted through space and time is the focus on ‘learning from experience’ or ‘learning by doing’. This experience-based learning tends to be dominated by informal learning opportunities (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2013; Charman, 2014; Belur *et al.*, 2019). Informal learning opportunities are often unstructured, can be intentional or unintentional, and tend to be based on

networking and engaging with other officers or practitioners (Janssens *et al.*, 2017). It therefore presents another way in which to engage in CPD. However, the informal and precarious nature of relationships and learning on-the-job also makes it a topic of much debate in the police learning literature (Longbottom and van Kernbeek, 1998; Fenwick, 2015; Belur *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, while informal and experiential learning is important, as mentioned previously, contemporary learning theories argue that the combination of theoretical and experiential learning, through reflection, are central to professional police learning environments (Beighton and Poma, 2015).

Janssens *et al.*, (2017) argued that the engagement with more experienced colleagues, such as through peer learning (Topping, 2005), can lead to higher learning outcomes. However, “merely gaining experience might not suffice” (Janssens *et al.*, 2017, p. 104). Importantly, peer learning is also a way in which to learn the ‘hidden curriculum’¹², which helps officers to adjust to the new workplace and its culture (White and Heslop, 2012). Considering the centrality of police culture and the importance of what Charman (2017) called *becoming blue*, the learning of the ‘hidden curriculum’ plays an important part for police officers to become part of the organisation and build a support network. However, the lack of organisational control over peer learning and the possibility of replicating or reaffirming bad practice has increasingly questioned its impact on policing (Charman, 2017). Therefore, the literature suggests that only where peer and informal learning is *structured*, peers and learners are *matched appropriately*, and peers are empowered to feedback their learning to the organisation, can it support individual, team, and organisational learning in line with the official curriculum (Topping and Ehly, 2001; Andrews and Manning, 2015). Consequently, peer learning and informal learning structures should be situated within the wider learning provision and culture within police services.

An example of informal learning structures is the tutor constable scheme, a common scheme for police services across the world, providing learning support for new recruit police officers when transitioning from the police college or university to their local

¹² The hidden curriculum describes the informal messages shared with and learned by new recruits outside of the official and formal learning environment. These can often contradict or question the official curriculum, which can lead to unintended consequences and inhibit aspired change within the organisation (see White (2006) for further detail).

police station (Rogers and Frevel, 2018a). Whilst being an integral part in the development of police officers, there is little research available on this role and their value, training, and purpose has been questioned over time (Home Office, 2002; HMICS, 2021b). This is problematic as Hough *et al.*, (2018, p.39) argued that the tutor constable role is “key not just for recruit learning, but also for the development of a professional police officer”. By exploring both informal and formal learning structures within Police Scotland, this research project provides a to date missing understanding of the value and role of tutor constables in the Scottish policing context.

One concept which helps to explore on-the-job learning in more depth is Kolb's (1976) experiential learning cycle. It illustrates the different steps involved in learning from experience (Figure 7). He argued that in addition to *experiencing*, practitioners should engage in a cycle of *reflection, interpreting, generalizing, applying, and revising*, to ensure that they achieve the higher learning outcomes mentioned by Janssens *et al.*, (2017). This cycle presents similar processes to that illustrated in Simons and Ruijters' (2004) concept of the learning professional (Figure 5), but is more focussed on the individual learning process rather than how learning is shared and generalised across teams and the organisation.

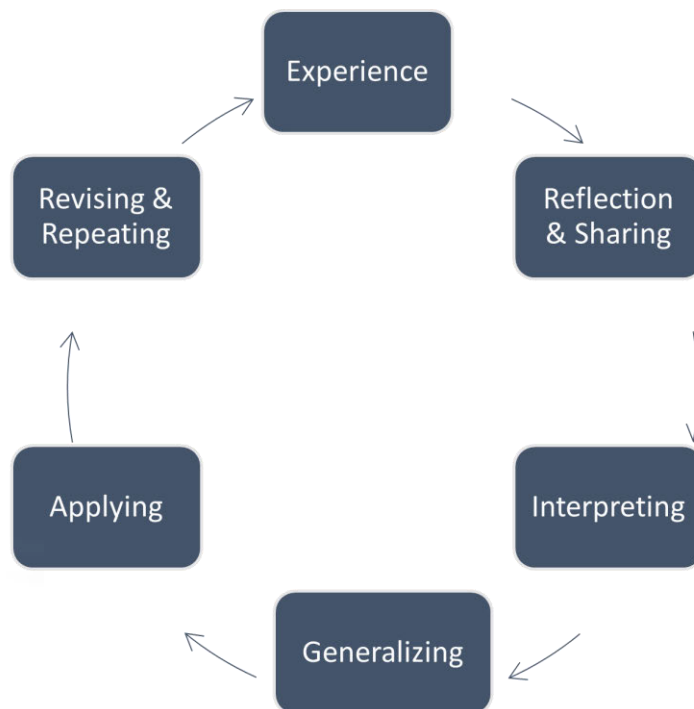


Figure 7 Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle.

Indeed, Kolb's (1984) conceptualisation of experiential learning has been criticised for being too focussed on the individual, disregarding the context in which learning takes place (Morris, 2019; Russ, 1998). However, as Cierna *et al.*, (2017) pointed out, within the workplace, individual learning and self-legitimacy is as important as team learning and organisational learning, all of which rarely happen in a vacuum and without one another. Therefore, the aforementioned shift to individual learning journeys can disregard the needs of the organisation and indeed the need for shared and multi-agency learning required to respond to the complex problems of the 21st century.

Nevertheless, it does provide a starting point to understand what learner-led processes are important to promote development and learning from experience. Kolb's (1984) theory suggests that there is a need for *active learning* to support a participative, adaptive, and flexible learning environment (for a more detailed discussion of active learning see Healey and Roberts (2004); Healey and Healey, (2020)). However, policing research suggests that the facilitation and organisational structures to support Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle are often lacking, such as a lack of time to reflect or lack of support from tutor constables (Wathne, 2011; Belur *et al.*, 2019). This, in conjunction with the professionalisation agenda and the influence of the knowledge economy, has further driven the increased engagement with HE in policing.

The introduction of HE for traditionally perceived craft occupations has started to blur the lines between training and education and might help to address the perceived hierarchy of vocational learning (often associated with training) and HE (associated with education), leading to what is called 'academic drift' in craft occupation and 'vocational drift' within HE (Tight, 2014). White and Heslop (2012) argued that depending on where HE sits within the wider training and development sphere within policing, different cultural and social value is placed on it. Indeed, based on case studies from nursing and teaching, it may either legitimise practice that is already there, educate police officers and transform practice, or simply be seen as an accessory not adding or taking much away from current practice (White and Heslop, 2012). The current evidence-base on the value of HE for police training, suggests that it is often perceived to either legitimise or accessorise rather than transform policing. Considering Wood *et al.*'s, (2018) argument that neither the police nor HE can achieve

the development of well-rounded professional police officers as lifelong learners by themselves, there is a need for more research in this area. Therefore, identifying ways in which to effectively combine the two concepts rather than conceptualise them as opposites is important (Bartkowiak-Theron, 2018). As highlighted in other recently professionalised occupations such as nursing, “the relationship between practice and higher education [can be] extremely valuable” and finding shared visions and common goals are critical to the success of these partnerships (Edinburgh Napier University and NHS Lothian, 2012).

Some scholars argue that HE for police officers is the only way forward to address the previously mentioned ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century (Christopher, 2015a). However, research illustrates that the evidence-base supporting this transformation is mixed (Belur *et al.*, 2019; McGinley *et al.*, 2019; Terpstra and Schaap, 2021). Indeed, many of the studies supporting HE for policing had “small samples, [a] lack of adequate control measures, improper measurement of education, generalizability issues, and [failed] to account for college degree major” (Paoline, Terrill and Rossler, 2015, p.50). Even though some studies since then have tried to address these shortcomings (Paoline, Terrill and Rossler, 2015), findings have not been significantly more conclusive and can vary dramatically between countries and cultures (Paterson, 2011; Belur *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, as Huey (2018) suggests, more research in this area is necessary to explore what works when it comes to police learning and development.

A particular challenge for police learning reforms is that “we know virtually nothing about the short- or long-term effects associated with police training of any type” (Skogan *et al.*, 2015, p.320). Therefore, many of the changes implemented within the police learning landscape have been made on good faith. Indeed, Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017) questioned if the integration of HE is a symbolic image change for policing in the quest to be accepted as a profession, rather than a way to meaningfully transform the organisation (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011; Beighton and Poma, 2015). The two may not be mutually exclusive, but the purpose will likely influence the way it is implemented and perceived by officers, the public, and allied professions.

Nonetheless, in addition to what has been discussed previously in relation to the professionalisation of police services, the growing number of police-academic

partnerships, such as the SIPR or the N8 policing research partnership¹³, and the introduction of the PEQF in the UK, suggests that police-academic partnerships will develop further in the future. Therefore, whilst the focus of this thesis is not only on HE within policing, it is important to reflect on the current debates and research on police-academic partnerships in relation to the police learning landscape. In particular, the debates regarding the introduction and now possible downfall of the PEQF in England and Wales (Jacques, 2022), and the growing number of policing degrees in Scotland which seek to educate students who would like to join Police Scotland in the future.

2.6.2 Police-academic partnerships and police learning

As discussed previously (2.3.1), police-academic partnerships were initially driven by the evidence-based policing agenda (Rogers and Frevel, 2018a), which aimed to transform traditional partnerships characterised by mistrust, scepticism and infrequent and ad-hoc police research (Hallenberg, 2012; Goode and Lumsden, 2018; Martin and Wooff, 2018). Nevertheless, many scholars argue that this historical mistrust and disconnect between academia and police has persisted over time (Hallenberg and Cockcroft, 2017; Bradley and Nixon, 2009). Considering the first University degrees in policing emerged over 100 years ago (Vollmer, 1936; Shjarback and White, 2016), the cultural barriers which conceptualise experiential learning in opposition to HE and vice versa, appear to be particularly pervasive, and research is yet to identify ways in which to address this effectively.

Nevertheless, HE degrees in policing continue to develop based on their perceived, not always proven, benefits for policing (Figure 8).

¹³ The N8 policing research partnership is a collaboration between 8 universities and 12 police forces to share and co-produce knowledge and develop innovative solutions to contemporary policing problems (see <https://www.n8prp.org.uk/> for further details)

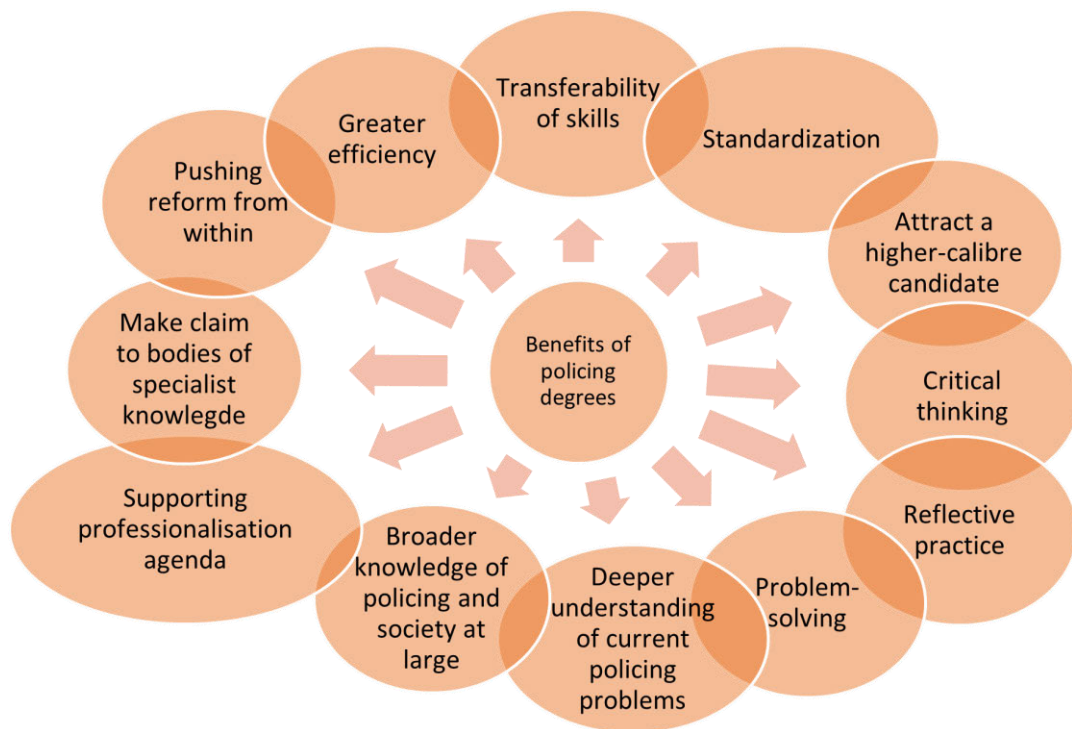


Figure 8 Benefits of degree entry for police (adapted from Cockcroft and Hallenberg, 2017).

Williams and Chapman (2019) argued that these benefits are not always realised straight away. Indeed, they argued that without a wider shift in the learning culture within policing, policing degrees could intensify negative feelings towards HE, and add to contemporary pressures of police services and police officers, adding to their workload without improving practice. Furthermore, Pepper, Brown and Stubbs (2021) argued, the introduction of degree entry could demotivate established police officers to engage in CPD and learning because they feel devalued or 'not enough'. Indeed, a recent study found that the police organisation often did not value learning from HE and the ability to apply what was learned in practice was often rank dependent (Norman and Fleming, 2021). This illustrates the influence of hierarchy and traditional police culture on police learning experiences and the need for research and reforms to look beyond degree entry and consider the impact on the wider police learning landscape.

The perceived opposing viewpoints between police and academia are quoted as one of the main barriers to police learning reforms involving HE. Frevel (2018) argued that much of the distrust and the barriers to develop effective police-academic partnerships stem from the fundamental differences between how learning and

knowledge is approached by police and academia. Table 2 illustrates some of these perceived differences:

Police	Academia
Train	Educate
Reduces complexity	Introduces complexity
Want to evolve homogeneity	Point out heterogeneity
Force officers to accept hierarchy	Irritate hierarchy
Strive legal realisation	Allow social realisation
Follow a technical approach to deal with practical problems efficiently	Favour a methodological approach to analyse problems of knowledge systematically
Need rapid action in interaction with object	Support reflection and consideration with distance to object
Have to act fast and efficient with the object	Analyse calm and with distance to the object

Table 2 Differences between police and science (academia) (Frevel, 2018, p.205).

This might not be an exhaustive list of perceived discrepancies between academia and policing but gives a flavour of the perceived differences between the two worlds. For example, police services may perceive the move towards degree entry as a loss of control over the curriculum and individual officers, by developing critical thinkers involved in self-directed learning, which is often considered to go against the hierarchical and para-military nature of policing (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011). Contrastingly, according to the professionalisation agenda, the engagement with HE may also give police services more control and influence over police science and the evidence-base which informs policing practice, by co-producing knowledge and ensuring research is tailored to current policing needs (Martin and Wooff, 2018). It is also considered a way in which to address some of the aspects of police culture which may not always reflect the current evidence-base in policing, such as ‘policing by numbers’¹⁴ or the performance orientated mentality which dominated much of the first years of Police Scotland (Fyfe, 2016; Wooff, 2017). Therefore, both sides of the

¹⁴ This describes the years shortly after the centralisation of police forces in Scotland in 2013, where the focus of the then Chief Constable was on measuring policing success by the number of arrests made, setting targets for officers to achieve. An approach heavily critiqued since for its lack of evidentiary basis and its impact on trust in the police (Wooff, 2017).

above table demonstrate important characteristics of the police learning environment, which, where effectively combined, may support individual and organisational learning. Some scholars argue that one way in which to bridge the perceived disconnect between academia and policing is the use and integration of pracademics.

Pracademics, officers who are both *practitioner* and *academic*, are considered knowledge brokers for police research, translating academic research into practice, and are often suggested as quintessential to breaking down police-academic barriers (Braga, 2016; Huey and Mitchell, 2016). However, Willis (2016) highlighted that pracademics might not be able to single-handedly transform police learning culture and/or practice, since organisational (budgetary and administrative) as well as cultural (the hierarchical nature and inherent distrust of academia) characteristics can act as barriers to fulfil the knowledge broker role. In addition, the integration and focus on pracademics has been argued to undermine “the specific benefits that academics bring to practitioner-academic partnerships” (Willis, 2016, p. 316). Furthermore, the growing number of pracademics may illustrate a way in which subcultures within policing may develop, increasing the distance between officers engaged with HE compared to those who are not (Macvean and Cox, 2012). Therefore, the value of pracademics to policing is highly dependent on the surrounding learning culture and pracademics alone are unlikely to achieve all the benefits of HE mentioned previously by Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017) (Figure 8). This research project engages with police officers who have different educational backgrounds, including those who have engaged with HE and would consider themselves pracademics. Their views will help to develop a better understanding of the role of pracademics within police organisations and their boundary crossing role in closing the perceived gap between craft and theoretical knowledge.

The literature presented throughout this section has reiterated the need for further research in this area, highlighting several unanswered questions and an ambiguous evidence-base when it comes to police learning reforms. Contemporary research on police learning tends to focus on countries who either have already or are currently implementing degree entry into policing. The exploration of police forces such as Police Scotland, who, at the time of writing, have more limited engagement with HE, is

useful to explore the wider police learning environment and identify if and where HE may best fit to support or indeed transform current practice.

2.7 Revisiting the research aim and research questions

Despite calls for a better understanding of police learning environments and an increased interest in this topic due to the re-emergence of the professionalisation agenda, as this literature review has highlighted, the evidence on how to develop competent and confident police officers continues to be scarce and contested. With the establishment of the Academic Research Team (ART)¹⁵ as part of the wider Research and Insight function of Police Scotland, and the expansion of policing degrees across Scotland, it would appear that Police Scotland is starting to align itself more closely with HE. Taking into account recent HMICS (2020,2021) reports questioning Police Scotland's commitment to a supportive and empowering learning environment, this study provides a timely and valuable assessment of the Scottish police learning environment, to address the aforementioned gaps in the literature, and add to emerging discussions and theories on workplace learning in the policing context.

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the purpose of this study is to ***critically assess and explore the role, value, and culture of police learning in Scotland***. This is achieved by answering the following research questions:

-  1. How is police learning understood and supported in Scotland?
-  2. What is the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland and how may this vary by rank, years of service, and educational background?
-  3. What can we learn about professional learning from allied professions?

¹⁵ A team established by Police Scotland in 2018 to streamline access procedures and develop systems that acknowledge current research from within and outside of the organisation and support such research. This team is now part of the *Research and Insight* team of Police Scotland.

Research question one focuses on established learning pathways, structures, and cultures within Police Scotland, to provide an understanding of what learning is currently available within Police Scotland and how officers engage with such learning. This question also seeks to explore the wider police learning landscape in Scotland by understanding the perceptions of a possible new generation of police officers and their assessment of the role and value of HE for police officers in Scotland.

Hence, this question was answered through interviews (n=33) and a survey (n=381) with police officers across rank and file and three focus groups with ENU policing students (n=14). Whilst the participant numbers for ENU students are smaller than the number of police officers engaged with in this study, and not representative of all students studying on policing programmes in Scotland, these participants are able to provide an emerging insight into some of the thoughts and rationales behind a closer alignment of the Scottish police learning environment with HE. Students have, at the time of writing, not yet joined Police Scotland full-time but some have started to volunteer for Police Scotland as Special Constables.

Research question two expands on the presentation of established learning pathways, by adding another level of analysis, presenting police officers' lived experiences of learning, whilst exploring how rank, years of experience, and educational background influences this lived experience of learning throughout a police officer's career. This research question utilises triangulated data from interviews (n=33) and the survey (n=381) with police officers across ranks in Scotland. Furthermore, this question seeks to explore the opportunities and barriers to learning within Police Scotland.

Research question three reflects the increasing interest in joint and multi-agency learning to address the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century which extend professional boundaries, as well as the recognition of different learning pathways and environments across public services. It is answered through interviews (n=15) with practitioners from allied professions. Due to the nature of this project (a resource limited project conducted by one individual completing a PhD) the size and reach of this sample is limited and it is important to recognise that practitioners talk about their

own experiences rather than providing a comprehensive organisational or occupational perspective on their learning environments.

Data was collected between October 2019 and February 2021. The size of the study and convenience sampling (see chapter 3) is considered through the analysis and evaluation of findings. Nevertheless, this study offers a unique perspective on the current opportunities and barriers to learning within Police Scotland, and an exploration of how police learning manifests in Scotland and how it might compare to allied professions. A more detailed justification and explanation of participant groups and the research design can be found in the upcoming methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

2.8 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to provide a narrative overview of the current literature on organisational and workplace learning and development, with a particular focus on the police, identifying the drivers for change within this context and discussing underlying learning theories and concepts. In addition, it was important to explore the learning environment in Scotland, to present the context of this study and what is currently known about Scottish police learning pathways and structures. There is agreement within the literature that learning plays a vital role for police officers and the police organisation to adapt to modern day challenges. However, research on this topic indicated that how this is done differs significantly between police forces and there are mixed views on the effectiveness of different approaches to police learning and education. Indeed, although the professionalisation agenda promotes degree entry into policing, and some forces have answered this call, there is little evidence of its benefit to organisational learning and policing practice. Broader concepts of learning in the workplace, such as the learning professional (Simons and Ruijters, 2004), workplace learning theories focusing on expansive learning environments (Beighton and Poma, 2015), and other adult learning theories (Kolb, 2014; Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2021), may provide more useful concepts to explore police learning, particularly in the Scottish context, where Police Scotland retains a lot of freedom in the structure and execution of police training with little engagement and alignment with HE.

There is a significant lack of research in Scotland on police learning and education. Nevertheless, recent evidence suggests that Police Scotland is struggling to provide the supportive and empowering learning environment they aim to deliver as a self-proclaimed Learning Organisation (Police Scotland, 2018). The current experience-based learning environment within Police Scotland introduces certain barriers for police-academic partnerships, which have been observed within the wider policing and police professionalisation literature. However, the literature also illustrates some unique challenges in the Scottish police learning context, due to its centralised nature and historic and structural particularities. Therefore, it is important to recognise the specific policing context as well as the occupational and organisational culture that has developed in Scotland, whilst comparing this to wider discussions in the police and workplace learning literature, which argues for stronger alignment with HE, whilst recognising the value of craft-based knowledge and experience.

In conclusion, the police learning landscape is diverse and complex and much of the current evidence-base focusses on the US, England and Wales, Australia and Nordic countries (in particular Finland and Norway). These are often countries which have or are currently implementing degree entry into policing. This has significantly steered discussions in police learning towards professionalisation and legitimising through police-academic partnerships and evidence-informed practice. Considering the limited evidence-base on police learning in Scotland and the importance for police officers and services to engage in lifelong learning, there is a need to take a step back and engage with wider concepts of workplace and adult learning, to develop a contextualised understanding of how police officers and police organisations learn best and what this might and should look like in practice. Based on this understanding, three important research questions were developed, which will address the identified gaps in the literature. To demonstrate how these research questions were answered, the next chapter will present the research methods and design.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Having explored the burgeoning literature on police learning and education, this chapter presents and justifies the methodological choices made to address the aim of this study; to critically assess and explore the role, value, and culture of learning for police officers and the police organisation in Scotland. This PhD project utilised a mixed methods design, which resulted in thirty-three interviews with police officers, fifteen interviews with practitioners from allied professions, and three Focus Groups with ENU students being conducted, alongside 381 survey responses from Scottish police officers. This data was collected between October 2019 and February 2021. By discussing the research philosophy, research design, and methods of analysis and triangulation, this chapter provides a better understanding of how research questions were answered, what barriers were encountered during the data collection process, alongside a detailed analysis of the methodology.

Firstly, the social constructivist and interpretivist framework underpinning this research will be introduced (3.2). In particular, this section will highlight the applicability of such a framework to the mixed methods design of this study. The next section will introduce the research design (3.3). This section will discuss why a mixed methods approach was utilised, provide a discussion of online and in-person data collection methods, present the survey design, whilst discussing pilot studies, and introducing the recruitment strategies used to engage with participants. This section also includes a discussion of the ethical considerations of this study and how these have been addressed. Next, the methods utilised in the analysis of surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be discussed, to subsequently explore the ways in which these were triangulated (3.4). Every effort has been made to ensure that this research project generates impact, therefore findings were shared with Police Scotland as they emerged. The ways in which this was done, and other avenues of dissemination, will be briefly discussed in section 3.5, before providing concluding comments on the methodological choices of this research project (3.6).

3.2 Research philosophy

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015) argued that the philosophy used, described as the outer layer of the 'research onion' (Figure 9), ultimately underpins the consequent

decisions about theory development, research methodology, and interpretation.

Research philosophy is therefore defined as “a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p.124).

Therefore, this subsection will outline my personal views and philosophy of research, knowledge, and knowledge construction, grounded in academic thought.

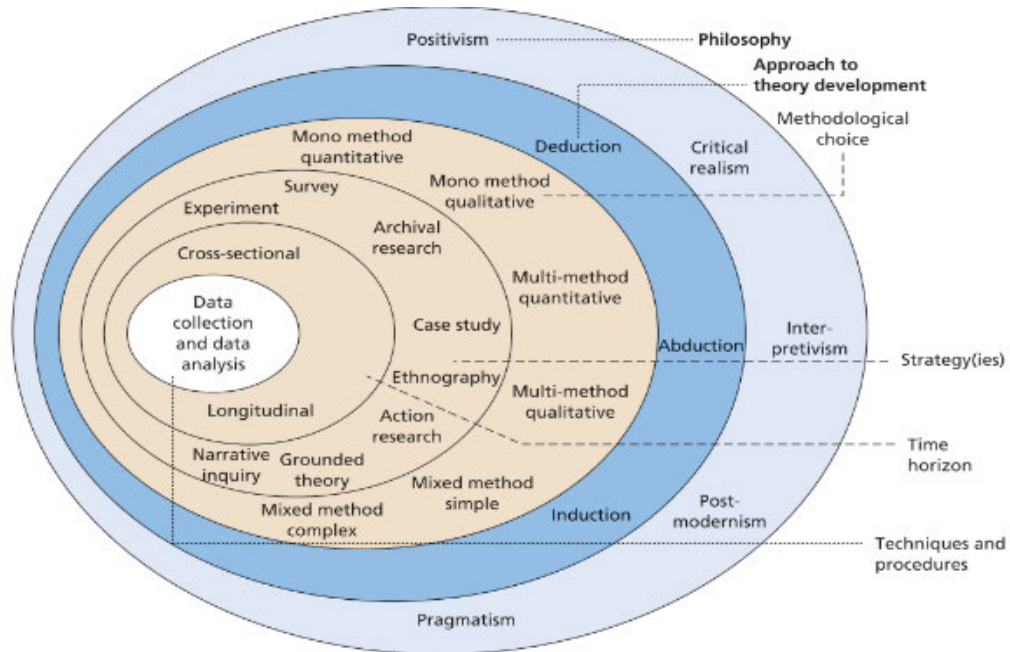


Figure 9 'Research Onion' (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015, p.124)

Social constructivism, a research philosophy on the outer layer of the research onion (Figure 9), is rooted in the thought that “what one takes to be knowledge of the world and self finds its origins in human relationships” (Given, 2012, p.20). Meaning is therefore constructed through everyday interaction, rather than there being one universal truth for everyone. It is contextualised and socially situated and highlights that views can change depending on context. Indeed, through my journey of becoming a serving special constable, while collecting and analysing the data, my views have developed through my interaction with the police organisation and police officers. I developed my own reality of police learning and development within Police Scotland, while studying others’ views on it, developing an *insider* status within the organisation (Brown, 1996), which needs to be acknowledged and considered ethically. The social constructivist framework allows me to take this into account when collecting, analysing, and presenting data. This positionality will be further reflected upon in chapter 4.

In addition to the social constructivist research philosophy, an interpretivist approach is used to explore the findings and recognise the context and possible impact of the views expressed. Interpretivism is closely linked to Max Weber's concept of *verstehen* (Chowdhury, 2014). Indeed, this is what this project is trying to achieve, *zu verstehen* or 'to understand' participants' constructions of meaning in relation to the role, value, and culture of learning within Police Scotland, understanding how learning and development could and should support police partnership working, current and future police officers.

As the name suggests, interpretivism is focussed on interpreting the findings. Therefore, rather than using deductive reasoning, going from a general statement or assumption to the more specific (Wilson and MacLean, 2011), inductive reasoning has been adopted here. This is based on observations and tries *to understand* a certain phenomenon, before making more general statements about it. It is often argued that using this approach makes it more difficult to generalise findings. However, Williams (2000) suggested that interpretivist frameworks can still make *moderate* generalisations, taking into account that the phenomenon studied will manifest itself in different ways in different communities. Additionally, by ensuring that the knowledge generated takes different viewpoints and interpretations into account, the interpretivist framework allows recognition of the subtle nuances in understanding the topic at hand, allowing the use of different research methods and participant groups, whilst recognising my own role in the interpretation of findings.

Quantitative research methods are often considered to not 'fit well' with qualitative constructivist and interpretivist views, because of their positivistic nature focusing on replicability and objectivity (Bryman, 1984). Nevertheless, for this research project the quantitative survey is considered a complementary data collection method. It offers a way in which to ask relevant questions, that will add to interviews and focus groups, by forming a baseline of officer engagement with and perceptions of training and development. While interviews provide the detailed experiences and thoughts beyond the statistics to explain the *why*, the survey provides the context, i.e. the *what*, as well as the ability to look at differences based on demographics such as rank, years of service or educational background, i.e. the *who*. Furthermore, qualitative questions in the survey offer survey respondents the chance to elaborate on their answers and

provide further depth to their responses. Therefore, they build on each other's strengths and weaknesses, recognising that both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used and applied within a social constructivist and interpretivist framework.

Based on this philosophical research framework and the formulation of relevant research questions (2.7), the following research design was developed.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Rationale for mixed methods approach

This study uses a mixed methods research design, which describes the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods, in "the belief that research methods should be integrated or mixed building on their complementary strengths and nonoverlapping weaknesses" (Johnson and Turner, 2003 *in* Clark and Ivankova, 2017, p. 5). Mixed methods designs are based on methodological pluralism, which suggests that no one research method is inherently better than another (Heesen *et al.*, 2019). However, Flick (2018) argued that the jury is still out on whether quantitative research might advance qualitative research or vice versa.

Nevertheless, a mixed methods approach was considered beneficial for this research project because it presented the opportunity to engage with a larger number of participants, offering an opportunity to explore geographic and demographic differences in engagement with and experiences of learning. Furthermore, in addition to providing a detailed and nuanced picture of police learning from different perspectives, it enabled the exploration of both individual learning experiences through qualitative study, as well as the exploration of organisational learning structures and culture(s) and police officers' engagement with these. This aids the development of a multi-layered analysis of police learning in Scotland.

Exclusively gathering survey responses would not have allowed the depth of analysis to explore how police officers, practitioners from allied professions and ENU students experience learning and development. However, only focussing on interviews and focus groups could have provided a skewed picture of the availability and engagement with learning opportunities in Police Scotland. The survey further offers additional capacity to explore differences between officer characteristics, such as rank, years of service, and educational background, while enabling officers a more anonymised

avenue to voice their opinions, encouraging more truthful answers. Hence, each method introduces a slightly different perspective on police learning. Through the use of triangulation, this provides a more complete picture of the different experiences and perspectives on this topic, increasing the credibility of the study (Noble and Heale, 2019).

Lastly, this project did not only combine one type of qualitative research method with one type of quantitative research method, but due to the different respondent groups, and the outbreak of COVID-19, multiple qualitative research methodologies were used. Face-to-face and online semi-structured interviews were utilised to gather police officer and partner agency perceptions and experiences, in addition to face-to-face and online focus groups with ENU students. Focus groups were considered beneficial because Scottish university policing students are currently an underrepresented population in police learning research, and little is known about their views about this topic. Therefore, this method provided a more elaborate way to gather multiple perspectives on the same topic and understand how opinions are formed, enabling discussion between students and supporting the social constructivist framework of this study. Additionally, the use of both online and face-to-face interviews and focus groups ensured that data collection could continue during the COVID-19 outbreak, whilst increasing the geographical spread of participants.

Therefore, the decision to use a mixed method design has been based on several different factors, both practical and philosophical, and has supported the collection of diverse perspectives from three different but related participant groups, police officers, practitioners from allied professions and ENU students. As suggested above, the survey was one central aspect of this research design, hence, its design and development will be discussed next.

3.3.2 Survey design

The survey was designed uniquely for the Scottish police learning context, reflecting its inconsistent engagement with HE (Martin and Wooff, 2018), the vocational focus of the initial training period, and possible future challenges (Appendix H). It was designed solely for the purpose of this research project while drawing on existing survey frameworks from the literature, such as a questionnaire developed by Bruns and Bruns (2015), an American study looking at educational attainment and job performance; a

study of Swedish police students and to what extent they value different aspects of their curricula (Kohlström *et al.*, 2017), and a master's thesis exploring the delivery of ongoing training within a police service in England and Wales (Honest, 2016). This supports future comparisons of findings with other force areas and enabled the use of tried and tested questions.

The survey was designed using Qualtrics, a survey platform providing both qualitative and quantitative question functionality and anonymous data collection, approved by Edinburgh Napier University's research integrity committee. Both open-ended and closed questions were used, embracing the mixed methods nature of this study and offering participants the opportunity to elaborate on their answers. Whilst it has been argued that open-ended questions can increase non-response rates of participants, due to the required time and effort in answering such questions (Ornstein, 2014), they can also help to avoid bias by not limiting answer choices. Additionally, open-ended questions give the participant the opportunity to clarify answers, increasing the validity of closed questions (Singer and Couper, 2017). Nevertheless, as Kori *et al.*, (2018) points out, open-ended survey questions should not be treated as a rich data source in and of themselves. Only where embedded in, and constructed to add to other questions, can open-ended survey questions provide valuable insights. Therefore, open-ended and closed questions were utilised in tandem to explore the same topic in more depth.

The survey comprised of up to 60 questions, dependent on the participants' learning experiences and educational background. The questions were organised into six thematic areas, explored below, and included several different question types, including multiple choice questions (choosing one or multiple answers), scaling questions (i.e. on a scale of 1 to 10 how satisfied were you with the training you received?), ranking questions (ranking different items on a scale of 1-8), Likert scale questions (i.e. to what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statement), dichotomous questions (two possible answer options, for example yes and no), and open-ended text boxes for qualitative answers. This offered the flexibility needed to explore motivations, perceptions, attitudes, and engagement with different learning opportunities before and throughout an officer's career. Indeed, whilst the survey presented an additional way in which to recruit participants for interview, it was in

itself a way in which to gather evidence about police officer engagement with learning based on particular demographics (rank, years of service, educational background), to better understand the learning environment within Police Scotland, and further nuance and support the analysis of police learning in Scotland.

3.3.2.1 Survey items

Six thematic groupings of survey questions allowed the exploration of police officer engagement with and perceptions of the police learning landscape (Figure 10). The first set of questions explored officer *demographics*. These questions provided the needed background information to make comparisons between ranks, service bracket, and division. Next, *probationer training* explored officers' experiences of initial learning and to what degree this experience prepared them for the realities of the job. This section also offered officers the opportunity to indicate if there were any skills or knowledge they thought were missing from the training they had received. The next section explored the *educational background* of participants, looking at their engagement with learning and education before and after joining Police Scotland and what, if any, support they received from Police Scotland. Afterwards, participants who indicated that they had engaged with *HE* since joining Police Scotland were able to answer questions about their *motivation* to do so and their *experiences* studying as a police officer. To explore learning within Police Scotland further, the next grouping focussed more specifically on officers' experiences of *continuous professional development*, and their assessment of the current availability and quality of learning opportunities for their role. Lastly, officers were asked questions about their *views on the role of HE* for police officers in Scotland, to explore the role of academic learning in the Scottish police learning context.



Figure 10 Thematic Groupings of Survey Questions.

Demographic information, such as service brackets and divisions, were clustered together to ensure officer anonymity. The groupings of force areas (divisions) utilised in the survey were based on rough geographical regions with similar levels of rural, semi-rural or urban areas. This was important to allow for an analysis of possible geographical differences in experiences of and engagement with learning and development (Appendix L). Lengths of service brackets were aligned with other surveys published by Police Scotland and roughly reflect the seniority levels of officers. Therefore, differences between service brackets can be more effectively compared to other available data sources from Police Scotland. Lastly, officer ranks were only clustered for Chief officers, because of the comparably small numbers of Chief officers (14), which could make their responses easier to identify.

Changes to the survey design, such as clustering, were refined further after the piloting of the different data collection methods, an integral part of developing an effective study design.

3.3.3 Pilot study

The piloting of a study can increase the likelihood that participants will understand the questions asked as intended and avoid confusion and “potential practical issues in the following research procedures” (Aliff *et al.*, 2017, p. 1074). Therefore, the survey, interview and focus group schedules (Appendix A, B, C, H) were piloted during the summer of 2019.

The survey was piloted with both current and retired police officers, as well as the supervision team. It was important to pilot the survey with a representative participant sample, to identify which questions may need further revision (Boynton and Greenhalgh, 2004). Indeed, piloting uncovered several questions which needed to be adjusted to reflect the terminology and understanding of police officers. This was expected, considering the *outsider* status of the researcher (Brown, 1996) and the relative lack of transparency of what learning and development within Police Scotland looks like and what it entails. This stage led to several adjustments of questions and phrasing to improve the validity of the survey.

Similarly, interview and focus group schedules were piloted with representatives of the relevant participant groups. Although the interview schedules were semi-structured, therefore, offering the ability to adjust questions during interviews dependent on the rapport with the participant, it was important to sense check the concepts and terminology used in questions. Similar to findings from Aliff *et al.*, (2017), the piloting of interviews led to changes to the order in which questions were asked. For example, the need to discuss initial learning and engagement with CPD before exploring organisational learning, because participants felt more confident exploring what learning as an organisation might look like after they had discussed their own learning wants and needs. In addition, due to the lack of research on university students’ perspectives on police learning and education, piloting presented a unique opportunity to ensure that questions were aimed at the right level to gather relevant viewpoints from ENU students. Indeed, the pilot focus group led to several additional contextual questions and statements added to the schedule, which supported ENU students’ understanding of the topics explored and their relevance to their own experiences.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that although care has been taken to select a representative sample for pilot interviews, the use of personal networks likely led to

pilot participants who had a particular interest in the topic of research. This could result in participants who demonstrated a better understanding of the topic compared to the general participant population. Therefore, although piloting improved the interview schedules overall, it was still important to adjust questions and interview protocols based on the participants at the time, highlighting the importance of reflective practice throughout the research process.

3.3.4 Recruitment strategies – an introduction of the participant pool and sampling strategy

This study collected 381 police officer survey responses, alongside thirty-three police officer interviews, fifteen interviews with practitioners from allied professions, and three focus groups with ENU students (Figure 11). This section provides a justification for the participant groups chosen, describes the recruitment strategies used, and provides an overview of the demographics and relevant characteristics of each participant group.

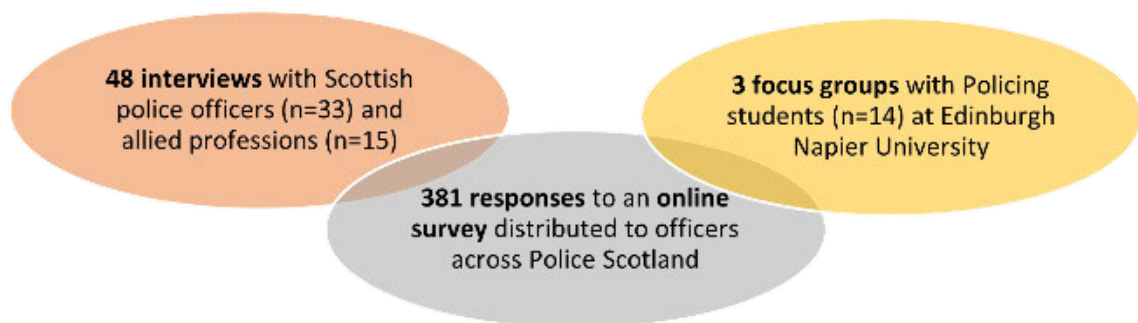


Figure 11 Illustration of participant groups

Initially, this study was split into three phases, with the survey being the first phase to aid with recruitment for interviews, whilst giving the option to change interview questions depending on emerging findings from the survey. The second phase would have been interviews with police officers and practitioners from allied professions, and the third, focus groups with ENU students. This would have offered the opportunity to use findings from interviews to influence discussion topics for focus groups. However, due to delays when negotiating access with Police Scotland (3.3.4.1.1), and the outbreak of COVID-19, data collection through different methods and from different participant groups ran concurrently instead.

The following will present each participant group and their recruitment strategy in turn.

3.3.4.1 Police officers

When thinking about police learning and development, one of the participant groups evidently had to be police officers. This project made the informed choice to look at learning throughout officers' careers, rather than focussing only on initial learning. This presents a novel and valuable dimension of this research that is rarely explored in the police learning literature. Therefore, it was important to recruit participants across ranks, years of service, roles, and divisions. Hence, the inclusion criteria for police officer interviews were: (1) being currently employed as a police officer by Police Scotland and (2) being out of probation. This was important for officers to be able to elaborate on their experiences of learning and development and present a more in depth understanding of the current use and availability of learning opportunities. Additionally, due to their relative lack of experience probationers may find it more difficult to reflect on the value of learning and the learning culture within the organisation. For the survey on the other hand, to encourage increased response rates and explore responses based on police officer service bracket and other characteristics, inclusion criteria were: (1) being a current police officer employed by Police Scotland, including those still in their probationary period. This is because the survey asked more general questions about police learning and had specific questions that related to experiences of initial learning geared towards both established and probationary officers.

A central aspect of this part of the research project involved the negotiation of access to participants with Police Scotland.

[3.3.4.1.1 Negotiating research access with Police Scotland](#)

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), the relationship between academia and Police Scotland is at best still precarious (Martin and Wooff, 2018). However, the establishment of the ART and the expansion of the Research and Insight function within Police Scotland, could be considered positive steps in bridging this gap. This is in addition to existing police-academic collaborations, such as SIPR and SCLEPH, which support research with and on Police Scotland. Nevertheless, this research project has illustrated that there is still a long way to go for researchers (both within and outside of Police Scotland) and Police Scotland to work truly collaboratively.

Access negotiations commenced during the summer of 2018; around the same time the ART was established. This meant that this project was one of the first to go through an official access process developed by the ART. Previously, conducting research, with or on Police Scotland, involved few formal access procedures and researchers instead had to identify local gatekeepers themselves, using previously established contacts, or other networks such as the SIPR. The aim of the ART was to provide a more structured approach to research access, through identifying a single point of contact (SPOC). In the case of this research project the SPOC would support the publication of the survey and the recruitment of police officers for interviews. However, one of the barriers encountered during access negotiations was the lack of integration of the ART into wider Police Scotland structures to facilitate access, and the fact that it was under resourced. This delayed the access to participants and negatively impacted on project timelines.

The ART was specifically used to negotiate access for the survey distribution, as the survey presented one way of identifying further participants for interviews. Although initial meetings with the ART were promising, after long delays between meetings and a lack of progress in publishing the survey by February 2020, it was unclear if the survey would still be published as planned. When the decision was made with the ART to directly approach officers for interviews, while negotiating the publication of the survey, further obstacles were encountered. There was a general lack of understanding and confusion amongst officers as to what the role of the ART in this process was. Many police officers who were approached directly, requested to be contacted by the ART to indicate that approval to conduct this research had been granted, even though they were assured that approval had already been granted by the team. This was further confounded when some officers, often those in senior positions, agreed or disagreed to take part in interviews on their own accord, indicating that the introduction of the ART was not communicated clearly, and there was confusion amongst both officers and researchers what accepted practice was. Therefore, the introduction of the ART, with a lack of planning and clear direction in relation to their purpose and ability to make decisions, introduced institutional anxiety around engagement with academic research. Nevertheless, those officers willing to take part,

after being reassured of the approval of the ART, were interviewed while waiting for progress on the survey publication.

Progress with the survey was unexpectedly made when interviewing a newly promoted senior officer in a training and development role, with a particular interest in this topic. The survey was published on the Police Scotland staff intranet news page within 2 weeks of interviewing this officer based on their own initiative to support this project. This was despite the fact that the predecessor of this officer, who was identified as the SPOC for this project by the ART, was unable support the publication of the survey. This reaffirms a pervasive problem in the police, that depending on who you talk to, and who is in a certain position at the time, research can either be supported or hindered (Harkin, 2014; Fyfe and Richardson, 2018; Goode and Lumsden, 2018).

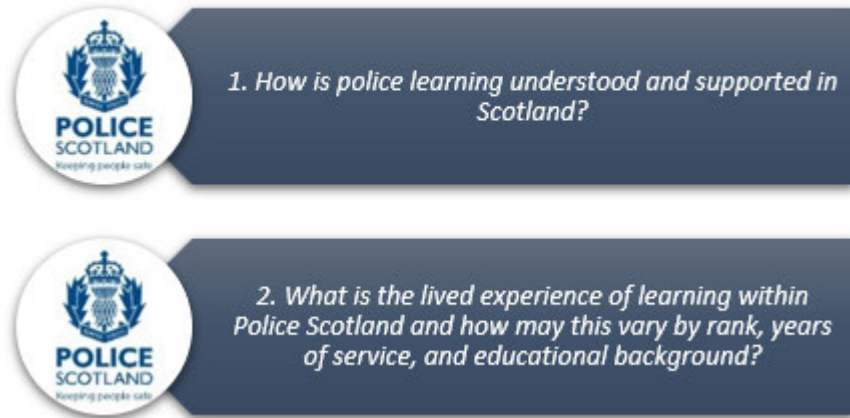
Due to the timing of the first survey publication (in the midst of the first outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK), and low response rates, further negotiations with the ART were initiated towards the latter part of 2020 to publish the survey a second time. The ART initially agreed to email the survey to divisional commanders in those areas that were underrepresented at the time. However, due to little progress by January 2021, additional support from one of the supervisors on this project was required to facilitate emails to divisional commanders, as the ART lacked capacity to do so. Nevertheless, divisional commanders responded positively to this email and shared the survey with officers in their divisions, which increased response rates by over 200 responses.

Consequently, whilst attempts to utilise new and emerging research structures within Police Scotland, such as the ART and the Research and Insight function were made, most officers were recruited through informal networks and the support of individual officers with a passion for and interest in this topic. Therefore, before even starting the data collection for this project, many of the themes discussed in the literature (Martin and Wooff, 2018) and indeed in the upcoming findings chapters were encountered. It is beyond the scope of this project to provide detailed commentary on research access negotiations with Police Scotland. However, the experiences presented here highlight one facet of the structures and cultures within the organisation, which can limit police-academic partnerships and collaboration.

Despite these initial challenges, over 400 police officers took part in this research project.

3.3.4.1.2 Police officer survey respondents

The survey was administered to partly answer research questions one and two:



It presented a way in which to gather a broad range of learning experiences from officers across Scotland. Survey questions explored both individual learning experiences, such as the usefulness of the initial learning period and engagement and experiences of CPD, whilst also presenting a way in which to assess Police Scotland's appreciation and engagement with different kinds of learning as an organisation. Hence, the survey supports an analysis of individual officer experiences based on their rank, years of service, and educational background, and linking these to institutional structures and culture. It is important to remember however that the 381 survey responses only represent a fraction of the police officer population in Scotland and therefore emerging themes, even where statistically significant, should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the additional interviews with police officers and findings from the research literature on this topic may provide some confidence in the accuracy of some of these themes. Furthermore, findings from the survey provided insights into relevant and important themes for briefing papers shared with Police Scotland for their upcoming people strategy and workforce plan.

The first publication of the survey on the staff intranet website, was accessible to all police officers across Scotland and therefore used probability sampling. Probability

sampling “increases the likelihood of obtaining a representative sample” (Fritz and Morgan, 2010, p. 2305). It involves the selection of participants through a *random* procedure by not deciding, within a certain population relevant to a study, who can and who cannot take part. This was important to ensure that a cross-section of the officer population was sampled, rather than officers with particularly positive or negative views on learning and development opportunities within Police Scotland.

A response rate of 200+ officers was the initial target to be able to conduct useful statistical analysis of the data. The first publication of the survey in March 2020 generated 165 valid survey responses. This is why a readvertisement of the survey was considered necessary. The second publication of the survey used non-probability sampling, or purposive sampling, focussing on specific divisions within Police Scotland (Divisions L, U, K and Q, J, V). This focus reflects those divisions that were underrepresented after the first publication of the survey. In addition, the survey was continuously shared through interview participants and the researcher’s twitter network. These recruitment methods generated an additional 216 completed survey responses, leading to **381 survey responses overall**. In addition to the 381 survey responses utilised for analysis, there were 105 incomplete/withdrawn survey responses (those who began the survey but did not submit their answers at the end), which were excluded from analysis. This was necessary as the final question of the survey ensured consent from participants that they want their responses to be used in the analysis for this project. Participants were made aware at the start of the survey that they could withdraw from the study by closing the webpage at any stage before submitting their responses on the final screen. Whilst 105 incomplete/withdrawn responses may seem a rather large number, this may include participants who have started the survey and could not finish it due to work commitments, for example those completing it on shift, and those who have then completed it at a later date. One reason for this may be the way in which the survey was publicised, through the staff intranet page and work email, which officers can only access on work devices and during working hours. Whilst survey responses could be changed during their session, they could not be saved and finished at a later date for the same response.

Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 illustrate some of the descriptive statistics of the survey respondents, highlighting some of the demographic information of survey respondents. Further descriptive statistics can be found in section 3.4.1.2.

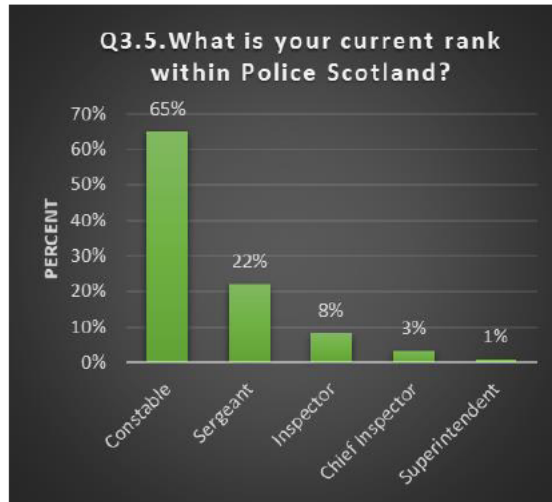


Figure 12 Survey responses to question 3.5 'What is your current rank within Police Scotland?' (n=381).

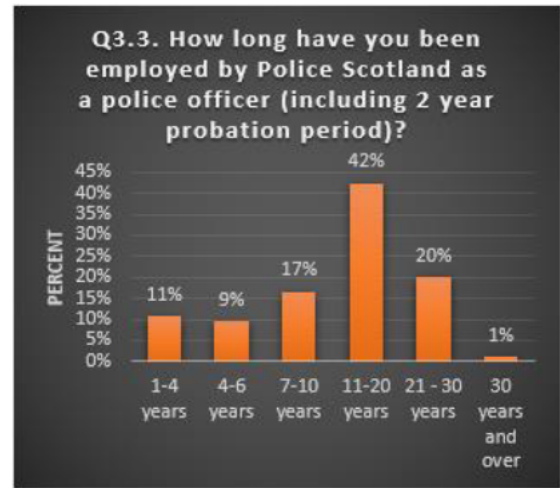


Figure 13 Survey responses to question 3.3 'How long have you been employed by Police Scotland as a police officer (including 2-year probation period)?' (n=381).

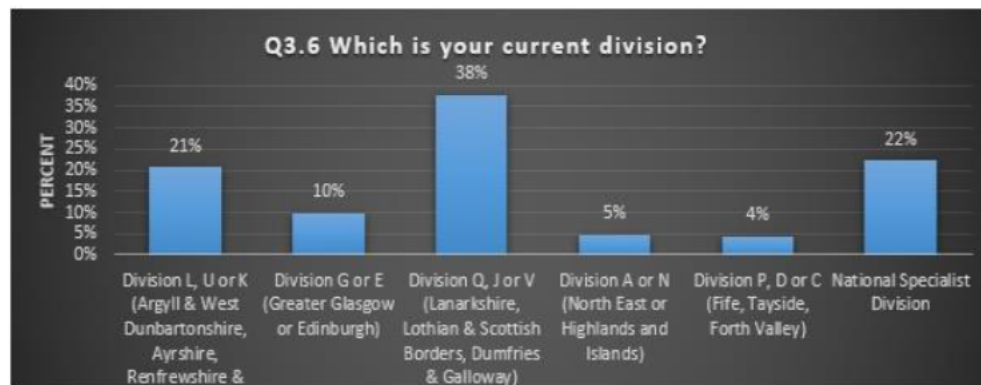


Figure 14 Survey responses to question 3.6 'Which is your current division?' (n=381).

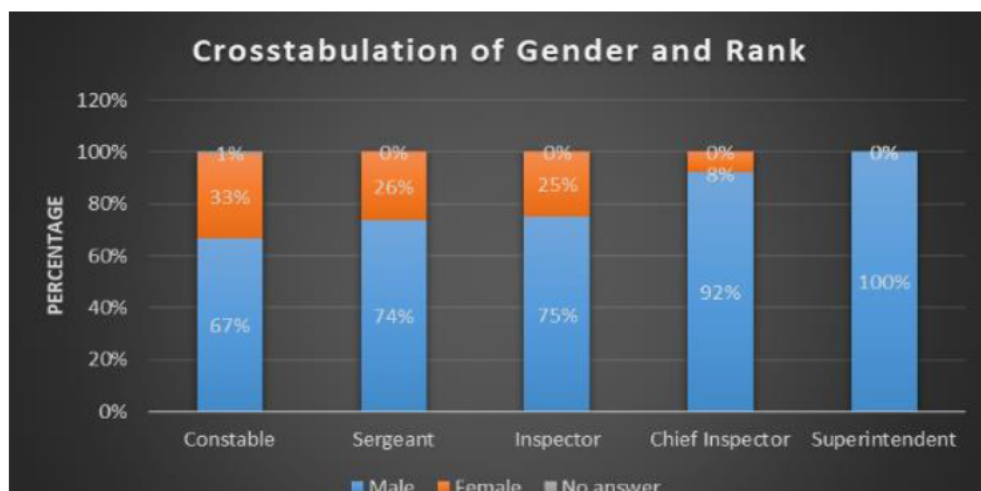


Figure 15 Crosstabulation of gender and rank of survey responses (n=381)

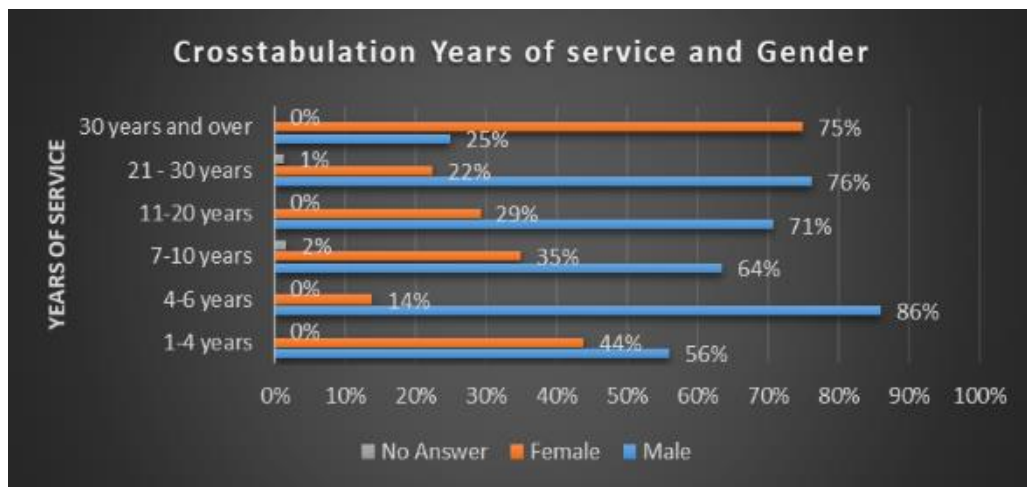


Figure 16 Crosstabulation of years of service and gender of survey responses (n=381)

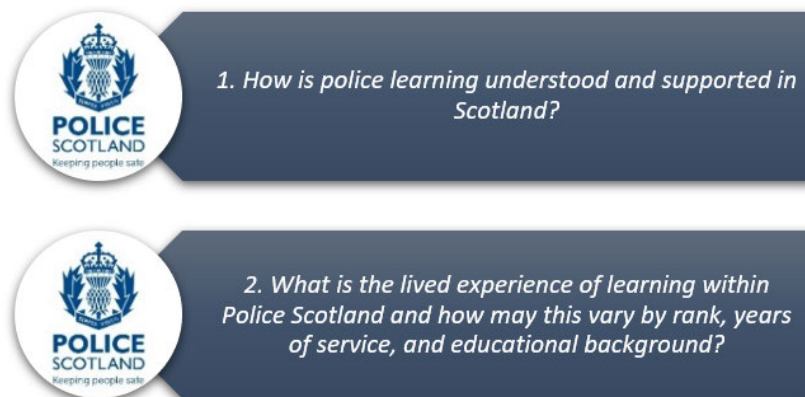
Figure 12 presents the spread of survey respondents across ranks. Constable level officers make up the largest number of respondents with 63%. This is compared to 79% of constables in the general Police Scotland full time equivalent officer population (Police Scotland, 2021). As Figure 12 illustrates, officers up to and including Superintendent rank have responded to the survey, despite the fact that the survey was aimed at all ranks including chief officers. Whilst it is unclear why chief officers did not take part, one explanation may be the increased pressures of the role, not having enough time to take part, or the advertisement not being specifically aimed at chief officers. Additionally, the professional development for senior chief officers is coordinated nationally through the CoP and therefore their current experience might not be directly influenced by Police Scotland learning opportunities (College of Policing, 2020a). Consequently, they may have felt that their current experiences with learning provided by Police Scotland is limited and not relevant to the aim of the survey.

The targeted recruitment of participants in certain areas, expectedly, led to an overrepresentation of those divisions (Figure 14). However, considering Police Scotland is a national organisation, there is an assumption that training, and development opportunities should be evenly spread across the organisation, therefore the response rates across divisions should not have a significant impact on the results of the survey. Nonetheless, where these recruitment strategies are considered to have

an impact on the findings discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 this is reflected upon and taken into account in the analysis of findings. Whilst the above figures highlight an overall good spread of survey respondents across rank, years of service and division, as well as gender, in comparison to the general full-time equivalent police officer population, survey responses only represents a small sample of police officers in Scotland. It is important therefore to recognise that the survey by itself is not generalisable to all officers in Police Scotland. Additionally, there are other factors beyond the scope of this project that could have been explored, such as the link between police officer age and/or gender and engagement with and experiences of learning, or transferees' experiences of learning. Whilst the size of the survey sample is not generalisable to all officers across Police Scotland, in conjunction with police officer interviews, the survey helps to highlight certain areas of concern or good practice that could benefit from further research and attention.

3.3.4.1.3 Police officer interviews

Face- to- face, online, and phone interviews with police officers were conducted in addition to the survey to help answer research question one and two:



As mentioned above, due to the delay in publicising the survey, most officers were identified through convenience and snowball sampling (n=24), which are non-probability sampling techniques. In contrast to purposive sampling, convenience sampling describes a form of sampling “where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study” (Doernyei (2007) in Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016, p. 2). This

sampling method was deemed appropriate in response to the delays experienced publishing the survey and the timelines of this research project.

Non-probability sampling is often considered less representative than probability sampling (Fritz and Morgan, 2010). Indeed, police officers identified through personal networks within academia will likely have some form of engagement and possible positive views on academic education for lifelong learning, and CPD, skewing the data. To avoid this, snowball sampling was utilised, which is a method where the first round of participants is asked to share the interview invitation with others and them doing the same, starting a chain reaction (Frey, 2018). Therefore, officers recruited through personal networks were encouraged to share interview invitations with officers in their team to broaden the scope of recruitment and create a more diverse and representative sample. The initial contact with officers was made through the help of the SIPR and the then Director of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, as well as established contacts from the supervision team. Recruitment of police officers commenced in October 2019.

When the survey was published in March 2020, recruitment for interviews was still ongoing, because data saturation was not yet reached. Hence, it was utilised to recruit additional officers interested in follow-up interviews. Because the survey was advertised on the staff intranet, accessible by all officers, any officer across the force could have asked for a follow-up interview. Therefore, additional interviewees were recruited through *probability sampling*, which was the initially envisioned method of interviewee recruitment. This led to an additional nine police officers being recruited, leading to thirty-three police officer interviews in total, when data saturation was reached.

Face- to- face interviews were conducted in public cafes and offices, dependent on where participants felt most comfortable. Online interviews were conducted utilising MS Teams, as approved both by the university and Police Scotland. Two walking interviews were carried out with officers living locally, who were more comfortable meeting in person while adhering COVID-19 guidelines. King and Woodroffe (2017, p. 6) argued that the act of walking can aid the conversation to flow more easily and *“tends to generate a more natural or conversational style of interview”*. This thesis highlighted that neither walking, phone, online, nor face-to-face interviews appear to

have had a significant impact on what participants felt comfortable or uncomfortable talking about in relation to their learning environment. The time spent building rapport and trust was considered more important in eliciting officer viewpoints and experiences than the mode of interview. In addition, the nature of this topic was not significantly sensitive or controversial and officers appeared comfortable talking openly about their experiences.

On average interviews lasted one hour and ten minutes, with the shortest interview lasting forty minutes and the longest two hours and thirty minutes. All qualitative interviews and focus groups were recorded using an encrypted recording device or encrypted videoconferencing recording features. This allowed the interviews to flow freely without being distracted or preoccupied with excessive notetaking.

Figures 17, 18, 19, 20, and Table 3 illustrate the characteristics of police officer interview participants. Interviewees represent a wide range of ranks and years of service, including officers who have completed the DPSLM, and officers who were on different versions of accelerated promotion¹⁶ pathways. This suggests that the sampling methods used were successful in identifying a diverse sample of police officers.

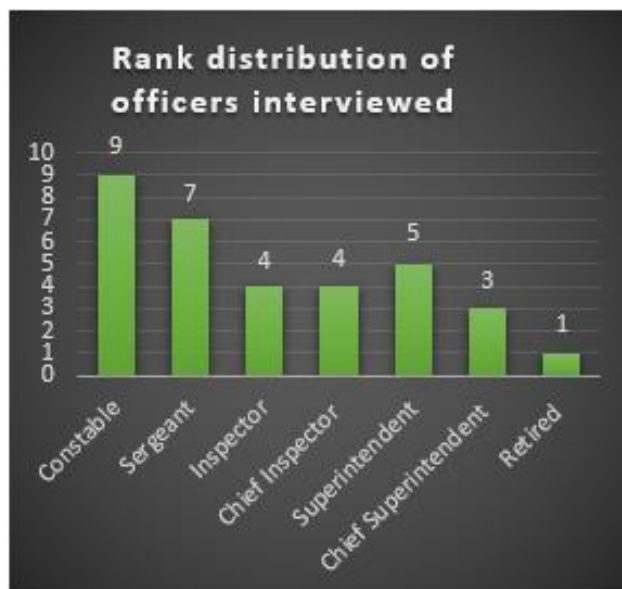


Figure 17 The rank distribution of officers interviewed for this study (temporary ranks are represented as the rank they had at that time of interview).

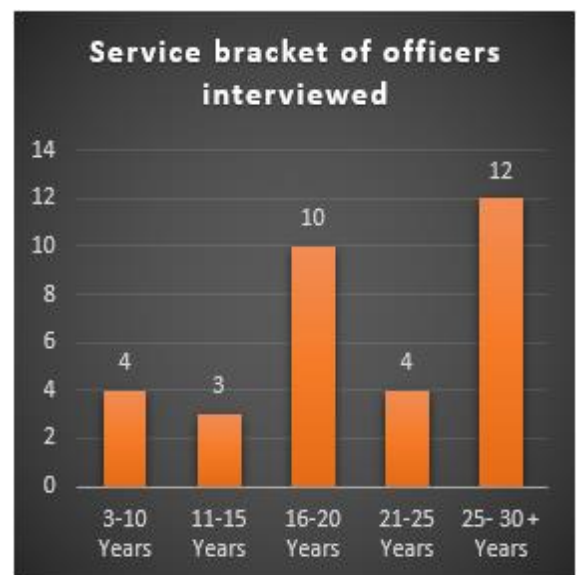


Figure 18 The distribution of years of experience of police officer interviewees.

¹⁶ Accelerated promotion is a programme that has existed within the legacy forces and Police Scotland in different iterations. It describes a pathway programme, where officers are identified, either because of their experience or education, and fast-tracked through the promotion process. Police Scotland has recently announced that a new Accelerated Leadership Pathway will be introduced to “attract, identify, develop and retain talent in the organisation” (HMICS, 2020, p.31).



Figure 19 Experience of Police officer interviewees identifying those officers that had a career before joining the police, those that engaged with higher education (any degree from HNC to PhD) before and after joining Police Scotland and those that have been on accelerated promotion pathways at some point in their career.

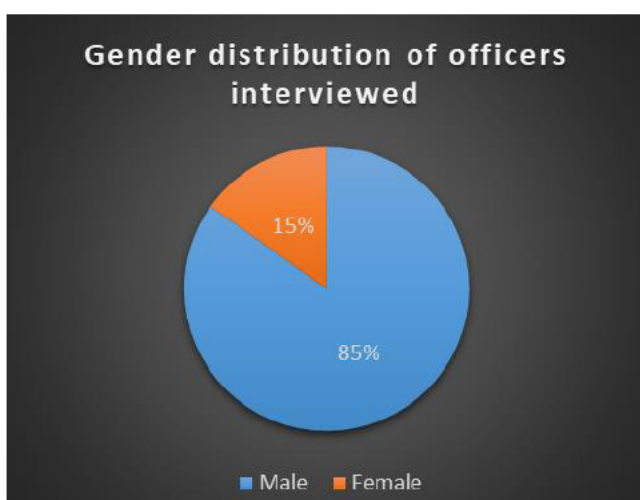


Figure 20 Gender distribution of officers interviewed (n=33)

Interview Participants Overview						
	Rank	Years of Service	Engagement with HE before joining	Engagement with HE after Joining	Previous Career	Promotion Exams or Diploma
1	Constable 1	18	Y	N	Y	N/A ¹⁷
2	Constable 2	3	N	N	N	N/A
3	Constable 3	28	N	Y	Y	N/A
4	Constable 4	10	Y	N	Y	N/A
5	Constable 5	20	N	Y	Y	Both
6	Constable 6	10	Y	Y	Y	Diploma

¹⁷ N/A in this case refers to constable level officers who were either not interested in promotion or were not yet in a position to do the Diploma at the time of the interview.

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7	Constable 7	3	Y	N	Y	N/A
8	Constable 8	19	Y	N	N	N/A
9	Frontline Management ¹⁸ 1	18	Y	Y	Y	Exams
10	Frontline Management 2	16	N	Y	Y	Diploma
11	Frontline Management 3	27	N	Y	Y	Exams
12	Frontline Management 4	17	N	Y	Y	Diploma
13	Frontline Management 5	14	Y	N	N	Exams
14	Frontline Management 6	12	Y	Y	N	Diploma
15	Frontline Management 7	16	Y	Y	Y	Diploma
16	Frontline Management 8	11	Y	Y	N	Diploma
17	Middle Management 1 ¹⁹	26	N	Y	N	Diploma
18	Middle Management 2	18	Y	Y	Y	Diploma
19	Middle Management 3	27	N	Y	Y	Diploma
20	Middle Management 4	29	N	Y	N	Diploma
21	Middle Management 5	24	Y	N	N	Exams
22	Middle Management 6	26	Y	Y	N	Exams
23	Middle Management 7	24	Y	N	N	Exams
24	Middle Management 8	26	N	N	N	Exams
25	Senior Management 1 ²⁰	28	N	Y	Y	Exams
26	Senior Management 2	23	Y	Y	Y	Exams
27	Senior Management 3	27	N	Y	Y	Exams
28	Senior Management 4	20	N	Y	Y	Exams
29	Senior Management 5	27	Y	N	Y	Exams
30	Senior Management 6	30	Y	Y	N	Exams
31	Senior Management 7	25	Y	N	Y	Exams
32	Senior Management 8	20	N	N	Y	Exams
33	Retired Middle Management	30	Y	Y	N	Exams

Table 3 Police Officer Interviewee rank, mode of interview, years of service, Higher education before and/or after joining, previous career before joining Police Scotland and where applicable if the exam or the promotion diploma has been completed. (Y=Yes, N=No).

As figure 20 highlights, the gender distribution of interviewees is skewed and there are more males than females who have been interviewed. Whilst this could make it more difficult to highlight differences in engagement with and experiences of learning based on gender, which is undoubtedly an important subject to explore, it was not a

¹⁸ Sergeant, Temporary Sergeant, and Acting Sergeant

¹⁹ Inspector, Detective Inspector, Chief Inspector and Temporary Chief Inspector

²⁰ Superintendent, Detective Superintendent and Chief Superintendent

particular focus of this study. Nevertheless, this was reflected upon in the analysis of findings in the upcoming chapters.

One of the more novel aspects of this research project is the engagement with police partner agencies (allied professions) working closely with Police Scotland. This recognises the increased complexity and interconnectedness of the police learning environment with that of allied professions and provides an opportunity for Police Scotland to learn from professions with different learning regimes.

3.3.4.2 Allied professions

Interviews with practitioners from allied professions working closely with Police Scotland explored their perceptions of the role, culture, and value of learning within their own organisation, and how different learning regimes may impact on partnership working and shared learning environments (Appendix B). With an increased focus on the role of HE in police learning at the beginning of the project, those allied professions with degree entry, such as nursing, paramedicine and social worker were prioritised, to offer specific insights into their perceptions and experiences of learning. This focus reflects the comparisons made in the literature between vocational police training environments and those of degree professions (Wood and Bryant, 2015; Khalil and Liu, 2019). These interviews examine how learning and development within policing and amongst allied professions can be improved in the face of an increasingly complex policing context where partnership working is becoming not only wanted but needed (Brown and Brudney, 2003; Weber and Khademian, 2008; Suve, 2017). Therefore, interviews with allied professions provide both comparative viewpoints as well as lived experiences of learning with police officers in shared and multi-agency learning environments.

As discussed in the literature review, the focus on degree entry and the professionalisation agenda however can be misleading and suggest that the purpose of the study is for Police Scotland to become a degree entry profession, despite the mixed evidence supporting its value. Additionally, many public services, in particular the National Health Service (NHS), were under increased pressures during the outbreak of COVID-19, which has complicated the recruitment of nurses and paramedics for interviews for this project. Therefore, allied professions considered for this study were not all degree entry professions and were able to provide different

viewpoints and perspectives on this topic, beyond that of the role of degree entry or professionalisation.

Consequently, the main inclusion criteria for this participant group were that (1) professionals are currently in a position that involves working with Police Scotland on a regular basis, and (2) that they have been in this role for at least one year. This ensured that participants had enough time to experience different situations working with Police Scotland, that they had settled into their current role, and that they may have taken part in some shared or multi-agency training opportunities. Interviews, therefore, included professionals from justice social work, the NHS, the third sector, community safety, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and HE institutions across Scotland.

[3.3.4.2.1 Allied professions access procedures](#)

In comparison to the Police Scotland access procedures described above, accessing professionals from allied professions was more structured and straightforward. One reason for this may be the generally well-established research access procedures for many of the allied professions engaged with (local authorities, NHS, HE, third sector), compared to the relatively new process encountered with Police Scotland.

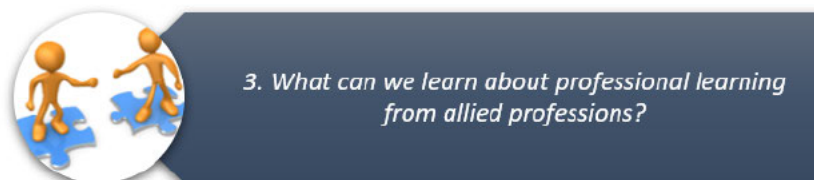
Additionally, there was more organisational interest and support to engage with research, practitioners appeared to have more autonomy in deciding if they can or cannot take part in research, and communication was timelier and more efficient. Any problems that were encountered were based on the lack of time to commit to a meeting, rather than an unwillingness (from the individual or organisation) to take part, or approvals needed to do so.

Some professionals were approached informally, through personal networks and snowball sampling, whereas others were recruited through official access procedures set by their organisation. Local councils in the central belt of Scotland were initially approached to identify participants that met the inclusion criteria. This process led to five justice social workers and two community safety practitioners being recruited. From there snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants. Combined both sampling techniques (convenience and snowball sampling) resulted in six justice social workers, three community safety practitioners, two third sector practitioners,

two NHS practitioners and two other criminal justice practitioners being interviewed, fifteen in total.

3.3.4.2.2 Allied professions interviews

The fifteen practitioners recruited from allied professions were interviewed to answer research question 3:



The use of informal personal networks and official access procedures meant that convenience and non-probability sampling was used to recruit participants. This was mainly due to accessibility and time restrictions of this PhD project. Similar to police officers, this non-probability sampling method can lead to bias in the data presented as it may have resulted in the recruitment of practitioners with particularly positive views of CPD and lifelong learning. This was reflected upon throughout the analysis, triangulation and presentation of interview data. Additionally, the snowball sampling procedures and more structured centralised access procedures followed for some allied professions resulted in more nuance and diversity of participant views and experiences, as will be highlighted in the upcoming discussion of findings. The diversity of this participant group is illustrated in Table 4:

	Profession	Years of Experience	HE before starting	HE after starting
1	Justice Social Work 1	12	Y	Y
2	Justice Social Work 2	7	Y	N
3	Justice Social Work 3	15	Y	N
4	Justice Social Work 4	9	Y	N
5	Justice Social Work 5	20	Y	Y
6	Justice Social Work 6	11	Y	N
7	Community Safety 1	6	N	N
8	Community Safety 2	15	Y	Y
9	Community Safety 3	14	N	Y
10	Third Sector 1	11	Y	N
11	Third Sector 2	5	Y	N
12	Senior Nurse Practitioner 1	40	N	Y

13	Senior Nurse Practitioner and Academic 1	30	Y	Y
14	Criminal Justice agency and retired police officer 1	1	Y	N
15	Criminal justice agency and retired police officer 2	1	Y	N

Table 4 Partner Professionals Interviewee breakdown by mode of interview, years of experience, Higher Education (HE) before starting their role, HE after starting their role.

Six interviews were conducted in offices and public spaces and nine interviews were conducted online between October 2019 and November 2020, when data saturation was achieved. Interviews were on average one hour ten minutes long, with the longest interview lasting one hour and thirty-five minutes and the shortest one lasting forty-five minutes.

Due to using convenience and snowball sampling most participants from allied professions were from central Scotland and were working in urban areas. This is important to remember and reflect upon throughout this thesis, since partnership working is often considered to manifest differently in rural areas (Wooff, 2017; Souhami, 2020). Nonetheless, three of the fifteen interviewees came from areas that can be considered rural²¹ and were able to give some local insights into their experiences. Additionally, participants from allied professions represent both strategic management roles, as well as front-line practitioner roles. Therefore, interviews offered different viewpoints on this topic from practitioners with different roles and different kinds of engagement with police officers and Police Scotland. Due to the sample size of this participant group and the convenience sampling used, it is important to remember that participants reflect on their personal experiences and whilst commenting on their organisations' approach to learning, sample sizes are too small to make definite claims about whole organisations, or indeed professions.

In addition to allied professions' views of police learning and development, this study also explored the emerging and developing police learning landscape in Scotland by

²¹ This is based on the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification, which describes areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30-minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more people as rural.

interviewing ENU students interested in joining Police Scotland upon completion of their HE policing degree.

3.3.4.3 ENU students

University students currently enrolled on the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology undergraduate degree at ENU present a new and emerging participant group in Scotland. This participant group was selected to explore the perceptions of police learning and development from a prospective new generation of police officers. Students are able to provide an insight into why people may choose to study policing at university before joining Police Scotland, whilst highlighting their expectations of Police Scotland as an employer. Whilst there are only two policing degrees available in Scotland at the time of writing, numbers of policing degrees and policing students at universities in Scotland are continuously growing. Additionally, although not all students studying Policing degrees will join Police Scotland, many students have the intention to do so when they start their degree.

Due to the timing of the study, students from first, second, and third year were recruited. Therefore, the inclusion criteria for this participant group were that (1) students had to be enrolled on the ENU BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology programme and (2) had to actively plan to join Police Scotland upon completion of their degree. While there are now (April 2022) other policing degrees in Scotland, at the time of data collection the ENU Policing and Criminology degree was the only Scottish full-time undergraduate degree focussed on policing. The fact that these students were based at the same university as the researcher also supported access procedures.

[3.3.4.3.1 ENU policing student access procedures](#)

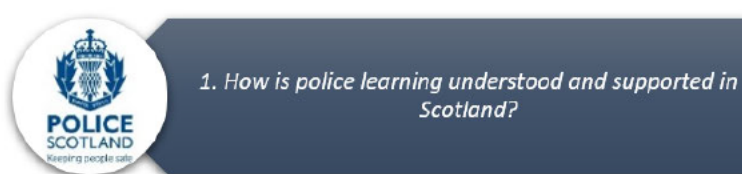
To recruit ENU students, the official ethical approval process of the university was followed, overseen by ENU's research and integrity committee (Appendix I). After ethical approval was granted, ENU students were recruited through seminars and email invitations. This was facilitated by the Director of Studies for this project, Dr Andrew Wooff, as the programme leader for this programme at the time.

Similar to allied professions, it was the ability to find time to conduct focus groups with students that presented as a problem, rather than the access procedures or their willingness to take part. This issue was confounded by doing focus groups because it

was difficult to find a time that suited all students and the researcher. Nevertheless, one focus group was conducted in November 2019, soon after ethical approval was granted (August 2019). Due to the additional pressures experienced because of COVID-19, it took over a year to recruit students for the other two focus groups. Hence, the last two focus groups were held in January and February 2021, resulting in three focus groups being carried out in total.

3.3.4.3.2 ENU policing student focus groups

Focus groups with ENU students provided an additional angle to answer research question one:



As described above, non-probability convenience sampling was utilised to access this participant group. All students were offered the chance to take part in the study, with those students who were in class on the day of recruitment, and who met the inclusion criteria, invited for focus groups. The first focus group was conducted in person in a classroom at ENU Sighthill campus, whereas the last two focus groups were conducted online through a university approved videoconferencing platform called WebEx. Focus groups consisted of between four to five students each and lasted between one hour and one hour and thirty minutes. A breakdown of focus group participants can be found in Table 5.

Focus Group	Number of Participants	Year of Study	Gender
1	4	2	4 x Female
2	5	1	4 x Female, 1 x Male
3	4	1	2 x Female, 2 x Male

Table 5 Focus Group Characteristics.

Students within each focus group were generally in the same year of study and in similar age groups. This ensured a comparable status amongst focus group participants, which can be beneficial to encourage openness and discussion (Wilkinson,

1998). Students were encouraged to discuss the topic until the moderator posed the next question or follow-up question. In-person focus groups followed an interactive approach by using an interview guide with open-ended discussion points and activities such as post-its and posters to share their viewpoints before discussing them (Appendix C). Online focus groups, due to technical limitations, used an adapted version of this interview schedule, discussed further in section 3.3.5. The interview schedule included topics such as the motivations and possible impact of HE engagement on becoming a police officer, perceptions of HE in the policing context, what learning is considered beneficial when thinking about becoming a police officer, and what expectations students might have for their personal and professional development when joining Police Scotland. It is important to recognise that this participant group, similar to practitioners from allied professions, is comparably small and only gives an idea of possible viewpoints and areas for further study rather than representing a representative sample of all HE policing students across Scotland. The limitations of this participant group will be further discussed in chapter 8.

The use of both in-person and online qualitative methods was one aspect of this study which although not planned presented some benefits to the research design. The challenges and benefits of this approach will be discussed next.

3.3.5 The use of in-person compared to online data collection methods

The use of online data collection methods supported the engagement with a wider range of participants from different areas across Scotland, while also requiring familiarity with new and emerging technologies for both the researcher and the participants. However, the use of online videoconferencing software (such as Skype) for qualitative interviewing is not a new approach to data collection (Janghorban, Latifnejad Roudsari and Taghipour, 2014). Therefore, with the increased support for public services to engage with this kind of technology and the existing literature and advice available on how to effectively use this software for research, this was a sensible alternative to face-to-face interviews during the outbreak of COVID-19, to ensure that data collection could continue.

Nevertheless, online interviewing is associated with several challenges. Indeed, some online interviews observed connectivity issues because of poor internet connections. This led to some parts of interviews being non-decipherable from the recording.

Additionally, some participants may have had caring responsibilities and other people in the home or office, which can limit the ability to speak freely and concentrate. This was observed in some interviews. However, the impact of this on participant responses appeared to be marginal, and participants were encouraged to take the time they needed to get back into a conversation if there was a disruption.

Indeed, participants may have felt more comfortable being able to do the interview from their own home, and feeling less nervous and under pressure to answer in a way that pleased the researcher (Seitz, 2016). However, since attention spans for online calls are generally shorter than those for in-person conversations (see Mukhtar *et al.*, 2020), there is often less time available to build rapport and trust, which can make it more difficult to develop an in-depth discussion. Informal conversations can play an important part when building rapport for an interview and making both the participant and researcher feel comfortable. The reduced capacity to build this rapport was felt throughout the online data gathering process. Therefore, balancing the time spent getting to know each other with the time spent on the interview was not always easy.

Compared to interviews, focus groups were more difficult to move online. This was mainly because facilitating a discussion online with few or no visual cues, or gestures, and possible connection problems, took more preparation and patience, than facilitating a face-to-face discussion with multiple participants. However, as Woodyatt, Finneran and Stephenson (2016) argued, the themes identified in online versus in-person focus groups are often largely similar. This is supported by Stewart and Shamdasani (2017) who argued that the previous differences between offline and online focus groups are slowly being eroded by new developments in technology.

To be mindful of technological challenges, online focus groups concentrated on the discussion of the topics, rather than any extra activities. The use of online whiteboards or other applications could have overburdened internet connections and would have had to be trialled beforehand, to ensure students were familiar with their use. Due to the time and resource restrictions of this project, this was not considered feasible. Therefore, the discussion of online focus groups was limited to the questions in the interview schedule. Nonetheless, online focus groups generated findings similar to that of the in-person focus group and there did not appear to be a significant difference between the two.

Hence, online interviewing techniques can, where appropriate for the topic, generate findings that are as good as their face-to-face counterparts, but save time on travel to and from interview locations. Additionally, they can, and indeed have increased the geographical spread of the sample and offer more flexibility for both the researcher and participant. Consequently, although face-to-face interviews and focus groups would have been the preferred method of data collection if time and resources were finite, the change to online interviews offered new opportunities that have largely positively influenced this study.

The change to online data collection methods highlighted the importance of rigorous ethical procedures. To ensure the research design reflects ethical practices, rigorous ethical procedures were followed and reflected upon throughout the research process, and adapted where necessary.

3.3.6 Ethical Considerations

Any study involving research with people involves a *duty of care* on the part of the researcher to consider the ethical considerations and risks involved (Israel and Hay, 2006). This project has engaged with over 400 participants in different capacities, both online and in-person. Therefore, it was important to continuously reflect on the ethical challenges presented to ensure that any findings from this study are produced in an ethically sound manner. Indeed, it is important to remember that ethical research does not simply refer to passing an internal ethics procedure, rather it is a process that involves continuous reflection throughout the research process, because methodologies or contexts in which the research is conducted can change (European Commission, 2018), for example due to a global pandemic.

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the ENU's applied sciences research integrity committee in August 2019 (Appendix I). This section will highlight and reflect upon the main ethical concerns of this study and illustrate how these have been addressed throughout the research process.

Informed Consent

All participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study, what it involved, and the withdrawal procedures in place, before being asked if they would like to take part. This was facilitated through the information sheet shared with participants, which also

reiterated the voluntary nature of this study, and researcher contact information, in case there were any questions left unanswered (Appendix D). This process avoided deception and confusion about what is expected of participant and researcher. In addition, all participants signed a consent form, to confirm that they have understood the information discussed and provided to them (Appendix E). Each interview, focus group and survey also involved a debrief, where it was explained what happens with the information participants have shared, withdrawal procedures were reiterated, and contact details of myself and the supervision team were shared with each participant (Appendix F).

Participants were reassured before, during, and after interviews and focus groups that they could withdraw at any point during the process and none of their data would be used in the thesis. Survey respondents were advised that simply closing the survey before submitting the final question would allow them to withdraw. Due to the nature of the survey, after the final submission, respondents' answers were recorded anonymously and could not be withdrawn retrospectively. Participants were advised of this before they commenced the survey.

Data Management

A comprehensive data management plan ensured that any data generated throughout this project was encrypted and stored on a password protected computer (Appendix M). As stated in this plan, data that is not required anymore for research purposes is securely destroyed in accordance with the ENU guidance.

In addition, no data or participant details were shared outside of the research team. Those parts of the study that could be anonymous by design, such as the survey, were developed as such, and therefore did not record confidential data from participants. Any information shared in free-text boxes in the survey were treated confidentially and anonymised when used in any publications, including this thesis. This process has also been followed for interviews. Participants have been assigned pseudonyms and any identifiable information has been anonymised.

Anonymity is a more contentious issue when it comes to focus groups. Therefore, clear safeguards were put in place before starting each focus group, advising participants that any information that was shared during the focus group should not leave the

(virtual) room, and no identities or personal views of others should be shared outside of their respective groups. Only where all participants agreed on these conditions did the focus group proceed.

Recognising positionality, context, and connections

One possible conflict of interest is that this project was funded by ENU and supervised by Dr Andrew Wooff, who has been heavily involved in the development of the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology as a pathway into Police Scotland. This could indicate a certain research agenda for HE entry into policing in Scotland. However, great care has been taken to avoid this focus to reflect the current literature and evidence-base on police learning and education and avoid biases and misconceptions. Indeed, the lack of consensus from a Scottish perspective as to the role of HE within police learning suggested that a focus on the different ways in which learning manifests and is promoted both individually and organisationally, through HE and other training and development avenues, presented a more relevant topic of study. Furthermore, as stated in the declaration of this thesis, this project reflects my own work and not the views of the university or my supervisors. The supervision team and the university has significantly supported this work but has not dictated the direction it has taken or significantly directed the analysis and interpretation of findings. As a matter of fact, my views have changed considerably and independently from the supervisory team over the span of this research project. Whilst I was very interested in the prospects of degree entry for policing in Scotland at the beginning of this PhD, through my research experience and becoming a special constable, I have seen a shift in my perspectives on this topic that is more critical of the role of HE for police officers in Scotland.

Additionally, the use of continuous reflection through a research diary while engaging with current and retired police officers, and other researchers in this field of study, ensured critical distance to the topic. This also helped to address the second conflict of interest (discussed in chapter 4), which relates to becoming a special constable with Police Scotland during the data collection for this project. This, although requiring careful consideration throughout the research project, enabled a more open discourse with the academic and the practitioner view on this topic. Nevertheless, as discussed previously, police culture and the socialisation process can have a significant impact on individuals within police services. Indeed, Charman (2017) skilfully demonstrated the

'pull' factors of police culture and the impact these can have on officer's self-perception, world-view and indeed the view of the police organisation. This is why reflection both individually and with the supervisory team and other scholars was important to be aware and address any conscious or unconscious socialisation into dominant police culture, which could shape the interpretation and presentation of findings.

Power dynamics and relationships

Recognition of, and reflection on, power dynamics is important in research. One such possible power dynamic could be the fact that I was an associate lecturer at ENU during this study, which meant that during the time focus groups were conducted, I was teaching several of the students in this capacity. However, to ensure that students took part in this study voluntarily, they were assured that this study is completely separate from their programme, and that taking part or not had no impact on their grades. Additionally, students were not recruited during any of my own classes, and only approached through official emails or through the programme leader, at the end of tutorials or lectures. The voluntary nature of participation was reiterated through every stage of the recruitment process, during and after focus groups.

However, reflection on power relationships and safeguards to address them can never fully eliminate their existence (Day, 2012). Therefore, although recruitment processes were transparent, there is no way to know if students felt they had to take part or not. Nevertheless, the focus groups of this study were framed in a way that empowered students, as it gave them a way to have a say in an area of research that is exploring and possibly improving the availability and use of learning and development opportunities within policing. Although this did not erode any power imbalances, it offered those students interested in becoming a police officer a voice to share their opinions and possibly improve their own opportunities in the future.

In addition to the power dynamics at play with ENU students it is also important to reflect on police and partner power dynamics. Indeed, some of the sampling methods used to recruit police officers for interviews, for example the use of gatekeepers, may have led to officers feeling that they had to take part in this study because the invitation did not come directly from the researcher but a superior officer. As Belur (2014) argued, the power dynamics at play when recruiting and accessing research participants often blur the lines between voluntary participation and agreeing to take part because of a higher-ranking officer asking them to do so. Interestingly however, due to the hierarchical nature of the organisation, sometimes utilising these power structures is necessary to gain access. As this excerpt from the research diary highlights:

When approaching a friend to share my interview invitation with police officers in her office, I was very frustrated with the way my request was met: suspicion and the feeling that they could only take part if their higher-ranking line manager asks them to do so. I don't understand the lack of agency of officers to take part in formally approved research. (Research diary 10/10/2019)

The initial publication of the survey avoided such pressures, by advertising on the news page of the staff intranet. However, the second publication, circulated by divisional commanders, may have generated more pressure to take part. Nevertheless, both for the survey and the interviews, it was made explicitly clear through the information sheet and consent form that participation was voluntary, and that the research is conducted independently from Police Scotland. However, as mentioned above, even with these safeguards in place one cannot be sure to what degree power relations, such as those based on rank, may have played a part in the recruitment of officers for this study. Similar concerns emerged when using local authority access procedures to share research requests with practitioners from allied professions through line managers. Nevertheless, every effort was made in all communications with potential participants to reassure them that participation was voluntary and participating or not participating had no impact on their role. However, I did feel that my boundary role of researcher, lecturer, special constable and student gave me an ability to better navigate some of the power imbalances at play. The more I understood about the

internal and external politics of policing, public services, HE and research, the better I was able to identify appropriate gatekeepers and approach participants in a way that avoids coercion and increases voluntary participation (further explored in chapter 4).

Therefore, throughout the research process, all precautions have been taken to ensure that this project was conducted in an ethically sound manner, keeping the research participants' rights and wellbeing at the centre of the process. In addition to ethical considerations requiring continuous reflection, it was important to also consider the credibility, validity, and reliability of this project to ensure that the findings presented are trustworthy, and worth the time that participants spent engaging with this study.

3.3.7 Validity, reliability, rigor and credibility in research

The concepts of validity and reliability help to understand to what degree findings reflect the answers sought by the research questions and aim. Therefore, these concepts indicate how consistent and accurate the research design was in advancing knowledge on the role, value, and culture of learning in police organisations, particularly Police Scotland. Validity can be achieved in slightly different ways depending on the research methods used. What might be considered valid and reliable for quantitative methods, is often considered or termed rigorous for qualitative methodologies (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011), reflecting the different theoretical frameworks associated with qualitative and quantitative research methods. Nevertheless, either terminology is focussing on "ways to establish trust or confidence in the findings or results of a research study" (Thomas and Magilvy, 2011, p. 151). The different terminology reflects how this may be done differently depending on the methodology used.

The mixed methods approach used in this study led to findings that could be considered reliable, firstly, because the themes discussed are based on different perspectives of over 400 participants, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. This ensured that themes were sense checked within and across participant groups. Secondly, themes built on topics identified in recent evaluations of the Scottish police learning landscape by HMICS (HMICS, 2020, 2021b) and the wider police learning literature. This further increases the reliability and validity of findings. Nevertheless, considering the social constructivist and interpretivist framework used, it is important to recognise that the views presented in this study are in one way or another

subjective and contextual (Whittemore, Chase and Mandle, 2001). This does not discredit participants' accounts and experiences or question their generalisability but recognises that findings presented here are influenced by the specific sampling procedures used, and the views and understandings of the researcher. This thesis does not provide enough space to explore every possible alternative viewpoint on this topic and is therefore not generalisable to all police officers, in the same sense that individual practitioner interviews are not completely reflective of allied professions as a whole. Indeed, this would miss the point and purpose of this study, which was to develop and explore a rich picture of perspectives from a particular time, place, and context.

The triangulation process illustrated one way in which to increase validity and reliability of the data (discussed in section 3.4.3). Another was piloting the survey and interview schedules and sharing emerging findings with police officers, researchers, ENU students and practitioners. This offered a platform to discuss areas for improvement and reflect upon any (unconscious) biases. Furthermore, the survey went through the official Police Scotland access procedures and was presented to the SPOC at an initial access meeting to identify questions that might need revising. This has improved the content validity of the survey, which describes to what degree questions posed in a survey reflect the realities of the field it is trying to explore (Hamed Taherdoost and Lumpur, 2016). Therefore, piloting and sense checking the survey and interview schedules increased content validity across methodologies, ensuring that questions asked are relevant to the topic and understood as such by different participant groups.

Golafshani (2003) illustrated that when utilising quantitative methods for social research it is not always easy to quantify experiences and phenomena to generate measurable outcomes. This is supported by the answers of one of the survey respondents of this study:

“This is too simplistic to capture 27 years of development... I am not providing ‘nodding dog’ answers” (Police officer, survey respondent 1)

Therefore, although quantitative research can provide a general overview of a phenomena and suggest general themes across a particular participant group, without

giving participants the chance to elaborate on their answers, the quantitative findings alone, rarely tell us enough about a phenomenon, to make substantial conclusions and recommendations. Consequently, follow-up interviews to elaborate on survey responses further improved the validity of the findings. Indeed, in conjunction with the literature, interviews, and my personal experiences as part of the organisation, the survey was one way in which to suggest and confirm valuable emerging insights into areas of police learning which differ across divisions, ranks and educational backgrounds, whilst highlighting possible viewpoints on the role and value of higher education in the Scottish police learning landscape.

Hence, although both qualitative and quantitative research have their limitations in relation to the validity, reliability, and credibility of the data generated, the safeguards put in place and the rigour utilised helped to make findings more valid, reliable, trustworthy, and credible. Therefore, although the findings will not reflect everyone's viewpoints and represent a complete reflection of the role, culture, and value of learning within Police Scotland, it does give a comprehensive overview of some of the perspectives on this topic.

As mentioned above, triangulation and the analysis of findings more broadly play an important part in developing rigorous, valid, and reliable themes that represent participants viewpoints. Therefore, the next section will outline the analysis procedures followed for this study.

3.4 Analysis

After fieldwork was completed, the data was transcribed and analysed. Each data set (police officer interviews, police officer surveys, partner agency interviews and student focus groups) was first analysed separately, before starting the triangulation process to identify overall themes. The data analysis took six months between December 2019 and May 2020. Figure 21 illustrates the multi-level triangulation process applied in this study. This model has been adopted from Creswell and Clark (2017) and uses a convergent design, where data sets have been collected concurrently and analysed separately, before being merged to a combined data set, to understand overall perceptions and experiences of learning and development. Combining data sets allows the exploration of topics from different viewpoints while identifying where views tend to agree or diverge.

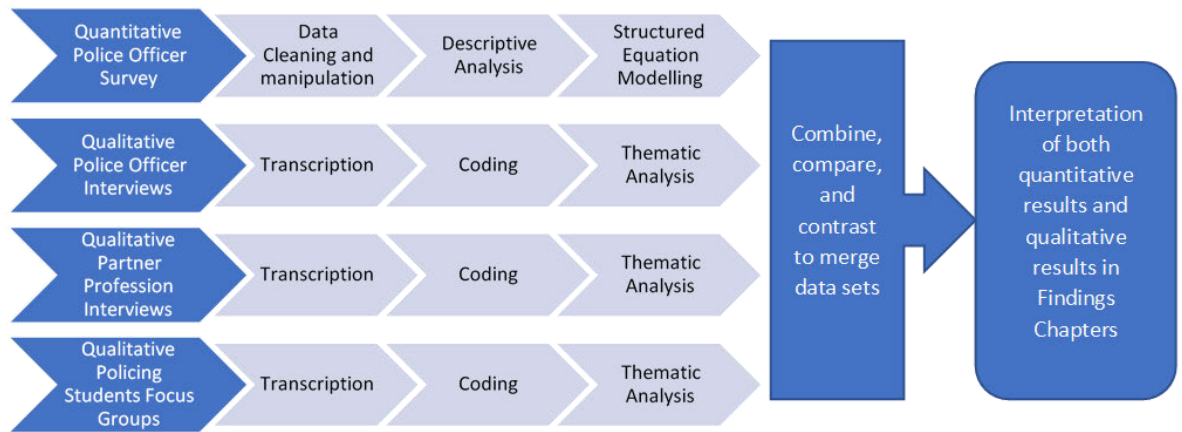


Figure 21 Triangulation Convergence model based on Clark and Creswell (2017).

In this section, the data analysis frameworks used for the different types of data collected (quantitative and qualitative) will be introduced. The research diary utilised to reflect on experiences during the data collection period provided additional contextual information that, where necessary and appropriate, was integrated into the data analysis process. This included thoughts about the time and location of interviews, interviewees demeanour, my own experiences as a special constable, and reflections on my positionality (discussed in chapter 4), providing more depth and context to the analysis. To discuss the analysis procedures followed throughout this project, each method will be discussed in turn before introducing the triangulation process.

3.4.1 Survey

The survey closed in February 2021. This is when the data was first exported from the survey platform Qualtrics and imported to the quantitative data analysis tool IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26), where it was subsequently ‘cleaned’ to ensure only complete survey responses were included in the analysis. This meant that out of the 486 survey responses on the system, between March 2020 and February 2021, 381 responses were classed as completed and were subsequently included in the analysis.

Response rates for police officer surveys are notoriously low (Nix *et al.*, 2019) and the 381 survey responses only represent 2.2% of the full-time equivalent police officer workforce in Scotland (17,288 in June 2021). Nevertheless, this response rate represents a meaningful number of officers expressing their views, especially considering that responses were obtained during a global pandemic. Additionally, as

figures 12-16 illustrated, the survey had good coverage across ranks, years of service and divisions, providing relevant viewpoints from across the force. However, this survey does not represent a generalisable or representative sample of all officers in Scotland and its data should be treated as exploratory rather than exhaustive. This helps to answer research question one, exploring views on how police learning is understood and supported in Scotland.

3.4.1.1 Data clean up, screening and coding

Data cleaning, screening and coding, although not the most difficult of jobs, are very important to ensure the data used for analysis is complete and reflects participants views accurately. As explained previously, the survey had several incomplete/withdrawn responses (105), which could not be utilised in the analysis. Cleaning the data ensures that individuals who do not fit the target criteria (those who have not submitted the answers at the end providing consent for data to be used for analysis) and those who appear to not have answered the questions thoughtfully (not indicating their demographic information or not answering enough questions relevant for analysis) are not included in the analysis to answer the research questions. Theoretically, this provides a more relevant and useful data set.

After the data was 'cleaned', the screening and editing process began. Due to the way questions were posed and the option for participants to give multiple answers to the same questions, some questions had to be combined to multiple response sets. Additionally, missing values and outliers were identified to explore their significance and where appropriate, avoid missing values or outliers that could skew the data. Once data cleaning, screening, and coding was concluded, the analysis of the data commenced.

3.4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

First, basic descriptive statistics were conducted to explore the ages, gender, rank, division, and years of service of participants. In addition to figures 12- 16, Tables 6 and 7 demonstrate the gender and age distribution of participants. The gender distribution of police officers taking part in the survey is fairly similar to the make-up of full-time equivalent police officers overall (68% male and 32% female based on data from March 2020) (Police Scotland, 2020c). This is also the case for the ages of participants taking part in the survey. In 2020, the most common age group amongst Police

Scotland officers was 35-44-year-olds (33%), followed by 25-34 -year-olds (32%), 45-54-year-olds (28%), 16-24-year-olds (5%) and 55-64-year-olds (2%) (Police Scotland, 2020c). In comparison, amongst survey participants the most common age group was 36–45-year-olds (35%), followed by 26-35-year-olds (34%), 46-year-olds and above (27%) and 18-25-year-olds (4%).

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	267	70.1	70.1	70.1
	Female	112	29.4	29.4	99.5
	NA	2	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 Gender of Survey respondents

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-25	14	3.7	3.7	3.7
	26-35	130	34.1	34.1	37.8
	36-45	133	34.9	34.9	72.7
	46 and above	104	27.3	27.3	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 Age of Survey respondents

Further descriptive statistics were completed on the educational background of officers to identify the frequency of different educational backgrounds in the sample (i.e. secondary education or HE). Table 8 and Figure 22 illustrate a breakdown of the educational background of participants (at the time of completing the survey), which highlights that the majority of participants were educated to degree level or above (53%), and almost 80% of participants have engaged with further²² or HE, either before or after joining Police Scotland.

²² “Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that’s not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree)” (UK Government, no date)

Highest Academic Qualification

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No formal academic qualifications	2	1%
	Standards/National 5s/GCSE/O levels or equivalent	24	6%
	Highers/Advanced Highers/AS levels/A levels or equivalent	54	14%
	Certificate/ Diploma of Higher Education or equivalent	98	26%
	Bachelor's Degree	157	41%
	Postgraduate Degree (MSc or MRes)	41	11%
	PhD	5	1%
	Total	381	100%

Table 8 Highest academic qualification of respondents.

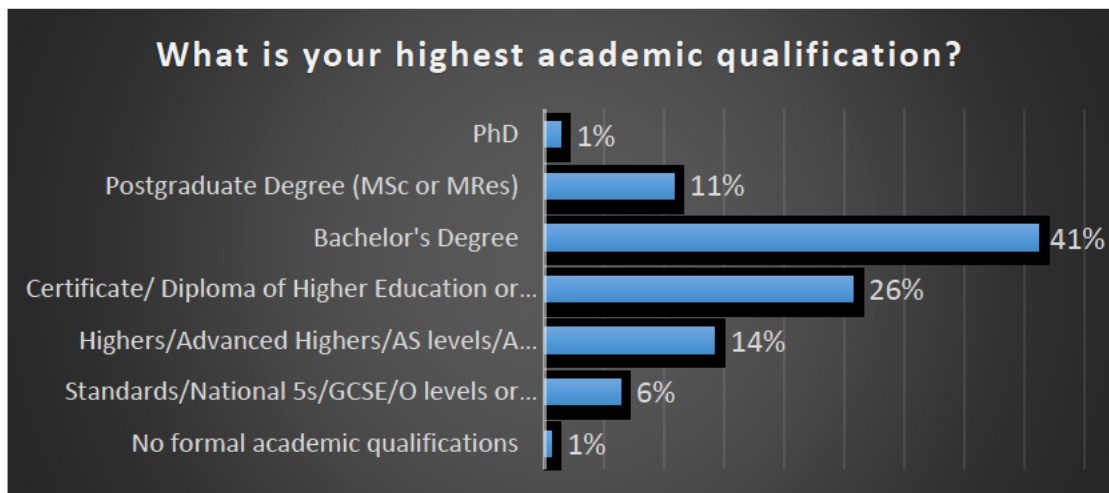


Figure 22 Distribution of educational backgrounds of survey participants.

As has been suggested throughout this thesis and will be explored further in the discussion of the findings, there is currently little official information available on the educational background of the officer population across Police Scotland. Therefore, no direct comparisons can be made to see if this is similar compared to the general officer population. Nevertheless, considering the DPSLM has been an integral part of the Police Scotland promotion process since 2007, many officers will have acquired a diploma qualification through Police Scotland. This suggests that there will be a generation of senior officers who gained an educational qualification after joining Police Scotland. Additionally, it was stated in 2016 that “38% of those going into policing already have a degree or post-graduate qualification”, suggesting that there will be a large number of officers within Police Scotland who have engaged in further and HE, similar to the numbers reflected in the survey (BBC, 2016). Furthermore, considering the response rate, and the probability and non-probability sampling

methods used, it is likely that the spread of educational backgrounds observed from participants is at least similar to that of the general officer population in Scotland.

The survey was not developed as a tool to test Police Scotland’s commitment to a particular learning framework, such as the learning organisation, and therefore did not use a factor structure to do so. It is a tool to gather viewpoints from different ranks, service brackets, and educational backgrounds on engagement and perceptions of learning within Police Scotland to supplement the interview data and explore differences between these demographics. The survey reflects the experience of the researcher and the access and time constraints of a PhD project, and therefore provides exploratory insights for research question one and two.

While exploring descriptive statistics, it was decided which data to use for inferential statistics by identifying what data and which groupings of officer characteristics would enable meaningful predictions to explore differences between groups. Therefore, through the use of pre-analysis certain demographic information, such as educational backgrounds, were condensed into new variables. Table 9 and figures 23, 24 and 25 demonstrate the new variable created for educational background (educated to diploma level or below and educated to bachelor level or above) and how this interacts with other demographics. This was suggested as a valuable split because the groups are roughly similar in size, which is important for meaningful analysis, and they represent the differences between officers who have engaged in prolonged periods of higher study (Bachelor degree or above), and those who have engaged in education up to diploma level, therefore including the DPSLM.

What is your highest academic qualification completed to date? (2 Groups)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Diploma and below	178	46.7	46.7	46.7
	Bachelor and up	203	53.3	53.3	100.0
	Total	381	100.0	100.0	

Table 9 Descriptive statistics for new variable 'What is your highest academic qualification completed to date? (2 groups) (n=381).

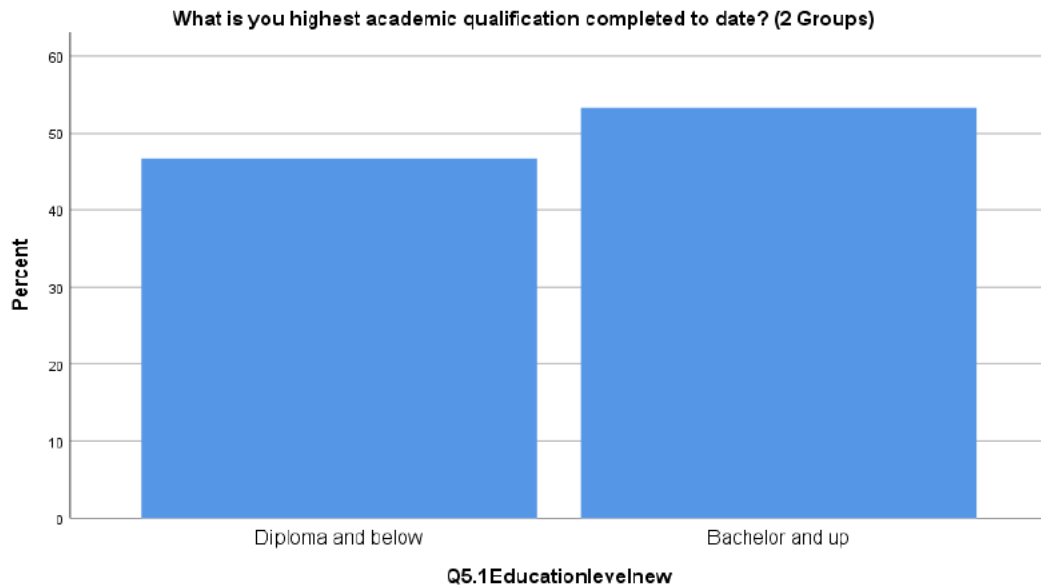


Figure 23 Bar chart for new variable 'What is your highest academic qualification completed to date?' (2 groups) (n=381).

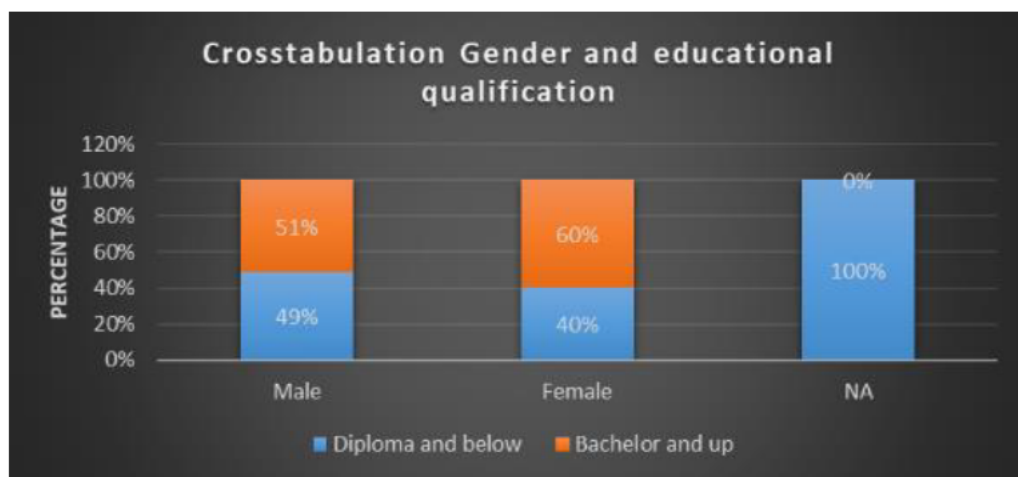


Figure 24 Crosstabulation of gender and educational qualification of survey responses

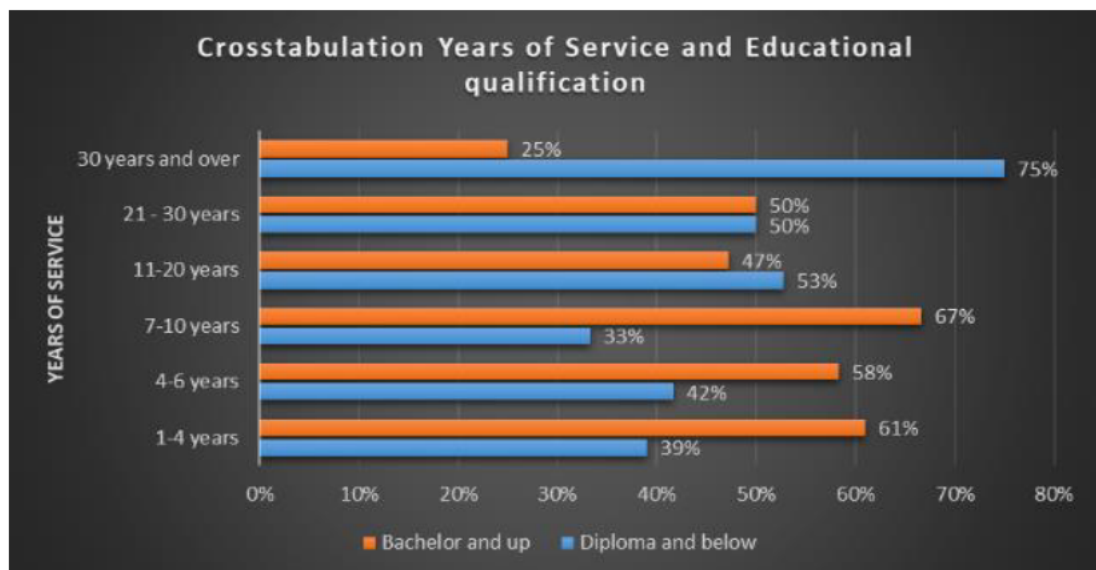


Figure 25 Crosstabulation years of service and education qualification of survey responses (n=381)

Other independent variables such as years of service, rank, and division on the other hand did not need to be grouped together because they were already constructed as grouped variables. However, due to the spread of respondents across years of service and rank, the longest service bracket (30+ years) and the highest rank (Superintendent) were excluded from analysis, because the number of respondents in these groups were too low to allow for meaningful analysis and would have skewed the data.

3.4.1.3 Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics were conducted to test for an analysis of variance (ANOVA), exploring the differences between the means of independent variables. This was in addition to comparing the distribution of dependent variables (such as engagement with or experiences of CPD) for two independent groups (such as educational background) utilising a Mann-Whitney U test. Therefore, between-subject ANOVA's and Mann-Whitney U tests were utilised to measure the variation between groups (Stockemer, 2019). This analysis helps to answer in particular research question 2 - *What is the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland and how may this vary by rank, years of service, and educational background?* – as well as research question 1 - *How is police learning understood and supported in Scotland?* - and provided broad exploratory analysis of certain characteristics which might influence officers' learning experiences. The results of this analysis and the associated post-hoc tests to identify where particular significant differences lie will be presented throughout the upcoming findings chapters. It is important to recognise that even where differences are significant, this signifies differences within the response set and should be generalised with caution given the sample size, highlighting areas for further research with a more representative sample from Police Scotland.

3.4.1.4 Qualitative Data analysis

As mentioned previously, this survey also included qualitative questions, which generated qualitative responses to analyse. Qualitative answers to open ended text-field questions were imported to NVivo (Version 12), the qualitative data analysis software used to analyse interviews and focus groups. This data was analysed following the same procedures as interviews and focus groups, which is discussed next.

3.4.2 Interviews and focus groups analysis

Qualitative data analysis is often described as messy and because “*qualitative researchers are not algorithmic automatons*” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 15), the process of analysis is often less straightforward than that of quantitative data. Indeed, it is considered a subjective process that leads to one version of themes and codes that could have been different dependent on the researcher, their ontological viewpoint, positionality, and their understanding of the research questions and purpose of the study. Therefore, “the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis, making judgements about coding, theming, decontextualising, and recontextualising the data” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007 in Nowell *et al.*, 2017, p. 2). Because of this inherent complexity, there is comparably little detailed research and guidance on how to conduct this analysis (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Nevertheless, a structured and reflective approach was used to analyse the data of this research project, utilising thematic analysis to ensure that participants voices are heard, and findings chapters accurately reflect their viewpoints as analysed by the researcher.

Thematic analysis “is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun and Clarke, 2012, p. 57). It describes the process of reducing large amounts of data into more manageable smaller codes that relate to the overall topic of the research and the research questions (Cope, 2010; Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, it involves a cyclical process of familiarising oneself with the data, coding, recoding, categorising and finding overall themes (Saldaña, 2016; Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016). This may sound straightforward but, as recognised in the literature on this topic, it is a time-consuming and often not well-defined process (Saldaña, 2016). Nevertheless, is it important to be able to present data in a more digestible and understandable way, since not all information provided by participants is relevant to the topic under investigation.

Within thematic analysis, there are different coding styles that can be used, from *manifest or descriptive codes*, which relate to themes that are obvious and/or on the surface, often directly related to what the participants said, to the predominant coding style used in this thesis, *analytic coding*, which “reflect a theme the researcher is interested in or one that has already become important in the project” (Cope, 2010, p. 283). These analytic codes (also called ‘nodes’ in NVivo) are often influenced by the

topic of research, such as identifying perceptions and experiences of police learning in Scotland and what can be learned from allied professions. While descriptive codes were also utilised, the bulk of the identified codes were based on analytic coding.

The data was analysed using the qualitative data analysis tool NVivo (Version 12). NVivo provides an effective software that can organise and simplify data, while visualising how themes and codes relate to each other (Hamed, Saleh and Alabri, 2013). Coding is a multi-stage process (Saldaña, 2016) therefore, initial codes are often not those that will become the final themes. Throughout the analysis of the qualitative data, each data set (police officer interviews, police officer qualitative survey responses, partner agency interviews and student focus groups) was coded once, before recoding these again, while discussing and reflecting on emerging themes with the supervision team. The next step involved moving from codes to categories and from categories to themes. A sample of the NVivo analysis screen can be found in appendix J. This process of synthesising was important to identify what themes underpinned participants' views and how they relate to each other. These higher order themes (also called 'higher order categories' or 'main themes'), are associated with sub-themes (or 'lower ranking themes') that explore the topic in more detail and provide nuance to the higher order arguments (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The final higher order themes that emerged from the qualitative data of this study were the established learning pathways of officers, cultures and experiences of learning, and organisational structures and drivers of learning. Higher and lower order themes, which will be discussed in the following findings chapters, are illustrated in table 10.

<i>Higher ranking theme</i>	<i>Lower ranking theme</i>	<i>Lower ranking theme</i>	<i>Lower ranking theme</i>
Organisational structures and drivers	<i>Traditionalism and the 'I been'</i>	<i>Resistance to change</i>	
	<i>Risk aversion and accountability</i>		
	<i>Hierarchy and rank</i>	<i>Leadership development</i>	<i>People management</i>
			<i>Appraisal systems</i>
			<i>Talent management</i>
	<i>Communication</i>	<i>The implementation gap</i>	
	<i>Politics</i>	<i>Budgets and resources</i>	

	<i>Organisational drive</i>		
<i>The established learning pathways</i>	<i>Initial learning</i>	<i>Frontloading</i>	<i>Classroom learning</i>
		<i>Learning on the job</i>	<i>Experiential learning</i>
			<i>Tutor Constables</i>
		<i>Socialisation</i>	<i>A new generation of police officers</i>
	<i>Lifelong learning</i>	<i>Continuous professional development</i>	<i>E-learning packages</i>
			<i>Experiential learning opportunities</i>
<i>Culture(s) and experiences of learning and knowing</i>	<i>Learning climate</i>	<i>Individualism</i>	
		<i>Communities of practice</i>	<i>Subcultures</i>
			<i>Change agents</i>
	<i>Learning beyond experience</i>	<i>Academic learning</i>	<i>Research</i>
		<i>Reflection</i>	
		<i>Access and barriers</i>	

Table 10 Higher and lower order themes emerging from the qualitative data analysis.

Therefore, although this project did not follow a grounded theory approach, the higher order themes presented throughout this thesis, reflect Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) suggested themes of conditions (the typical/established learner pathway), interactions amongst actors and consequences (individual learning experiences), and strategies and tactics (organisational structures and drivers) (*in Cope, 2010*).

Consequently, a rigorous, structured and in-depth thematic analysis was used in this study, which addressed some of the criticisms often associated with qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that the lack of continuity of thematic analysis in comparison to other qualitative approaches, such as narrative research, can limit its applicability beyond the interview context. However, the continuous sharing of preliminary and emerging findings with current police officers, both those who participated in the study and those who have not, through an emerging findings report (Engelmann, 2021b) and seminars and conferences, enabled continuous feedback on the codes and higher order themes identified, by both participants and other officers. This feedback largely confirmed the validity and credibility of the findings. After concluding the thematic analysis of qualitative data, the triangulation process began.

3.4.3 Data triangulation

As discussed previously, the purpose of using a mixed methods approach was to generate a more comprehensive picture of the role, culture, and value of police learning and development in Scotland. Therefore, both *between-method triangulation*, i.e. using different methods to explore the same topic (surveys and interviews with police officers), and *data triangulation*, i.e. using different sampling strategies to explore a topic from different perspectives (police officers, allied professions and ENU students) (Bryman, 2004), were used in this study. This was important to identify themes and perspectives that transcend the different data sets and those which diverge and why. Additionally, these triangulation methods strengthen the overall arguments developed in this study.

Therefore, a complementary method of triangulation was utilised “to gain complementary views about the same phenomenon or relationship” (Tashakkori *et al.*, 2013, p.287). This process involved coding and recoding the interview and focus group categories identified through thematic analysis (explained below) into overarching categories that relate to the research questions. Next, the analysed survey data was incorporated to add further context to the categories and explore some of them in further depth.

Hypotheses used to explore the quantitative data were driven by the analytical codes and categories developed through the thematic analysis, and vice versa. As suggested by Noble and Heale (2019), this adds richness and clarity to the data. However, it is also time consuming and complex. Therefore, it was important to ensure continuous reflection on the research aims and questions throughout the process and sense checking emerging themes with participants where possible (Cope, 2010). This process took around two months at the beginning of 2021 and was supported by continuous individual reflection and discussions with the supervision team. This helped to avoid bias and ensures that categories and themes are developed with the purpose and aim of the research in mind.

During the data analysis process, an emerging findings report was drafted which in many ways should also be considered part of the analysis, as it provided a meaningful opportunity to triangulate thematic codes and survey analysis, thinking more clearly about how the analysis relates to the research literature and the research aim.

3.5 Dissemination

One of the main aims of this research project was to ensure that the findings of this study will influence policy and practice, improving the provision of learning and development in Scotland further. Therefore, the dissemination of early findings to enable ongoing discussion with participants and key stakeholders throughout the data analysis process was important.

An emerging findings report was shared with Police Scotland's Research and Insight team and participants in March 2021 (Engelmann, 2021b). Participants were invited to provide feedback on the emerging themes and indicate if the findings presented are a true reflection of their experiences. Feedback overall was very positive and suggests that the early analysis and triangulation of findings were credible and reliable (Bryman, 2004). Moreover, this provided an avenue to influence practice and policy change. Indeed, the report is currently (April 2022) being used to influence Police Scotland's upcoming people strategy and has started conversations with other officers on how to improve the provision of training and development. In addition, one of the participants utilised the emerging findings to support their own work on a current project that requires the development of learning packages for police officers across Scotland. This illustrates how the early sharing of emerging findings can support policy and practice improvement and raise the profile of the project and its findings, whilst enabling deeper analysis of the data.

Emerging findings have also been disseminated through the 2020/21 SIPR annual report, which is shared with scholars and practitioners internationally (Engelmann, 2021a). In addition, emerging findings were presented at several national and international conferences (Appendix N), encouraging discussion about the topic with esteemed scholars and practitioners in this area of research, which further supported the analysis and interpretation of data. These discussions in particular helped me to develop more critical perspectives of the wider police learning landscape and the limits of Scottish exceptionalism in relation to the culture and value of learning in Scotland.

On completion of the project a workshop will be developed with fellow colleagues conducting research in this field aimed at Police Scotland's training and leadership team, to encourage discussion on how to improve the provision of meaningful learning and development opportunities for officers. This will be supported by providing

continued feedback to participants to illustrate how valuable their participation in this research was. This is important to encourage future engagement with research and HE which, as explored in the literature review, and discussed in the upcoming findings chapters, can still be considered unstable (Martin and Wooff, 2018). Additionally, both the findings presented here and those which due to space, time, and resource constraints did not make it into the thesis, will be shared with the research community at large in upcoming publications (Appendix O).

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter has presented the research design of this study, the research philosophy underpinning it, and explored how the data was analysed and subsequently shared with key stakeholders. The research design and the participant groups chosen, reflect the research aim; to critically assess the role, value, and culture of police learning in Scotland. It has been illustrated that, although a mixed methods approach has been adopted, a social constructivist view and interpretivist framework was applied. This framework generated a version of the findings that reflects the researcher's positionality (explored in chapter 4), as well as the participant's context and background. The different methods (interviews, focus groups and surveys) used to address the research questions were discussed at length, ensuring that other researchers can replicate the study design and learn from it. Access procedures were discussed in depth, and it was stated that although there have been efforts to improve police-HE partnerships, access and research is still largely contingent, and based on personal relationships and speaking to the right person at the right time. This is a theme that will be discussed further in the upcoming findings chapters.

The ethical procedures and processes followed highlight the desire to put police officers', practitioners from allied professions' and students' rights at the heart of the research project. Therefore, strict ethical procedures and safeguards were put in place. To illustrate how participants' voices were analysed the structured and reflective approach to data analysis was discussed at length, highlighting the value and use of triangulation to develop more nuanced thematic categories. Lastly, it was illustrated how early dissemination helped to provide further depth to the analysis, increasing the trustworthiness and rigour of the data analysis, whilst highlighting the plans for the future dissemination of project findings.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The social constructivist and interpretivist framework utilised in this study emphasizes the importance of positionality and context when conducting research. Therefore, the following chapter will provide reflective insights into my own position and how this may have impacted on this study, building on previous discussions about ethics, relationships and power dynamics. This will be done alongside important reflections on the influence of COVID-19 on this study, recognising that research does not take place in a vacuum and wider sociocultural and environmental factors can steer and shape social research.

Chapter 4: Reflections from the frontline

4.1 Introduction

Before introducing the findings of this study, this chapter will reflect on experiences conducting research firstly as a research student but also as a special constable and during a global pandemic. This expands on previous discussions of ethical conduct and the social constructivist and interpretivist framework underpinning this thesis. This is important in order to explore how my positionality may have influenced the way data was gathered, how it was interpreted and how it is presented. Utilising Brown's (1996) insider/outsider perspective and the literature on positionality and reflective practice, this chapter will highlight the value added by the dual status achieved as researcher and volunteer police officer, whilst also being an associate lecturer on the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology at Edinburgh Napier University. Secondly, it will illustrate that although the challenges introduced by COVID-19 were significant and are still ongoing, they also presented certain opportunities and benefits for this study.

4.2. Positionality: Where do my loyalties lie?

Positionality describes the researcher's position in relation to personal characteristics, "such as gender, race, affiliation, age, sexual orientation, beliefs, biases, preferences, theoretical, political and ideological stances, and emotional", which can influence access to the 'field', the researcher-participant relationship, and what and how participants share their views, and how the researcher makes meaning of the data gathered (Berger, 2015, p. 220). It is important to recognise that one can never completely remove themselves from their research, since perceptions, views, and understandings of the world will inevitably influence the way in which data is collected, analysed, and presented. Indeed, I felt that participants' perceptions of the boundary crossing initiated by becoming a special constable has influenced how some participants engaged with this study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

In March 2020, I was sworn in as a special constable with Police Scotland. Hence, I was a special constable during the data collection, analysis and write-up period. In addition to working on response shifts, I have attended both mandatory and optional training courses offered by Police Scotland. Consequently, I moved from a one-dimensional researcher role, being an outsider to the police service, to an *insider outsider* role (explained below).

Although the decision to become a special constable was based on personal and altruistic motives, this personal interest has allowed for a deeper insight into police learning practices and culture. Considering the insular nature of police organisations, often “*remaining a somewhat secretive and closed community*” (Wakefield and Button, 2014, p. 261), becoming an insider was a way to reflect on some of the elements usually hidden to police researchers. Furthermore, while I consider myself an open-minded and non-judgemental individual, throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate degree in Criminology I have developed a more cynical outlook on policing and the police organisation as services that represent power imbalances in society. Joining Police Scotland as a special constable has helped me to gain a different perspective and understand the purpose and reasoning behind certain policing styles, as well as the internal and external barriers to change and reform. As this excerpt from my research diary suggests:

Wearing the police uniform in public for the first time has been eye opening, I never really understood the pressure police officers are under and how your perception changes. When you are in charge of a critical situation and you know the negative consequences if something goes wrong, it makes sense to be extremely risk averse. Especially when you have not had enough training and experience to feel confident in your decision-making. Many of the colleagues I worked with appeared to feel that way. (Research diary 10/06/2020)

This enabled me to develop recommendations and areas for improvement that are realistic and responsive to the current policing environment.

The research diary (in ethnographic research often called field journal) was helpful to take note of new angles from which to explore the data or something to discuss or clarify in interviews after having attended policing events, training workshops, and seminars as a special constable. These field notes can take several different forms but, as described by Jackson (2019, p.7), here they represented “*ideas that are marinating*”, which would be revisited throughout the data collection, analysis and write-up. They also helped me to reflect on my experiences in the field (both as a special constable and as an associate lecturer). These notes however will not be discussed extensively

throughout this thesis, due to a desire that the voices of participants are the focal point of the findings presented. Some excerpts may be included where deemed relevant, as above, and future publications may further reflect on diary entries.

Especially in the early days of the research project, the research diary supported reflection when getting to know the team I worked with and meeting officers with a genuine interest in this research project (compared to those who felt threatened by a researcher looking into internal organisational affairs). This sparked several interesting and relevant reflective discussions which helped me to develop a better understanding of the context and culture around learning and development within Police Scotland. Reflections were expanded through discussions with the supervision team and fellow PhD students. This became ever more important the more time I spent being socialised into Police Scotland's culture and ways of being, with the research diary presenting an effective way to work through my thoughts and experiences:

I increasingly feel part of the wider policing family. I can feel the support from fellow officers and am starting to consider myself part of Police Scotland. I feel as if I have a dual identity, one which resonates more strongly with police officers every day and another which continues to question the way in which I am trained and socialised into the organisation. (Research diary 10/09/2020)

Brown's (1996) typology of police researchers (Figure 26) is a helpful tool to explore this. In this context, the project commenced being an *outsider outsider*, as an external researcher with no affiliation to the police. Therefore, there were no particular loyalties to Police Scotland in relation to what might be found, how to interpret data and the impact this could have. Indeed, as suggested above, my background in criminology has made me more critical of the powers of the state and the police's role within this context. However, after joining Police Scotland as a special constable, this positionality changed and moved towards the *insider outsider* typology, a civilian researcher volunteering in the police. Although Brown (1996) initially argued this *insider outsider* to be a civilian researcher doing consultancy work with the police, it is suggested that the term *insider outsider* best describes and illustrates both the

outsider position as a researcher, but also the affiliation with Police Scotland through being a special constable.

		Institution	
		Police	Civilian
Researcher	Police	(i) Insider insider	(ii) Outsider insiders
	Civilian	(ii) Inside outsiders	(ii) Outsider outsiders

Figure 26 Typologies of Police Researchers (Brown, 1996).

Research conducted by current and retired police staff and police officers is growing (Heslop, 2013; Honess, 2016; Atkinson, 2017; Tatnell, 2019). However, no police studies could be identified which have been conducted by special constables. One reason for this may be because special constables are often either young people seeking to join the Police full time, or ‘career specials’ who already have a career outside of policing, and use this volunteering position as a way to give back to the community when they can (Dickson, 2019). Nevertheless, discussions around loyalty and positionality could be similar to those of a retired police officer with a deep-seated connection to the police and police culture who, through retirement and engagement with HE for example, has achieved critical distance to policing (Tatnell, 2019) (*Outsider Insiders* in Brown’s (1996) typology).

Being an *insider outsider* during field work, analysis, and write-up of this thesis has added a helpful tension between a critically distanced view of police learning and development, and the on-the-job experience of learning on the beat, recognising the pressures on police officers and the police organisation, and the ‘pull’ of organisational and occupational culture. Charman (2017, p.39) argued that “we construct our identities in relation to the groups with which we interact”. Therefore, the increased engagement with officers ‘on shift’ created an identity that in many ways felt like being both a police officer and an academic and wanting to protect each in its own right. Indeed, I have started to feel more distanced from some academic colleagues because I do not feel that they represent the realities of the role of the police officer well enough in their work. The hostility I have experienced from some members of the public towards me as a special constable, particularly after the George Floyd and Sarah

Everard cases, was nothing I had ever experienced before. Whilst I did not feel appropriately prepared or trained by Police Scotland to respond to such hostility, I felt that the changes proposed by many academics of more engagement with HE and longer educational periods would also not necessarily address some of these controversies. Considering I had studied 5 years of Criminology and Forensic Psychology previously, I did not think that this gave me any advantage to handle the situations I was faced with. Indeed, simply knowing about the issues influencing policing does not help police officers deal with the realities of how this feels and how and why members of the public may approach you. This, whilst recognising that my view is only a small insight compared to that of full-time officers, gave me a better idea of the complexities of police learning, which many scholars may not get the chance to experience.

Nevertheless, an *outsider outsider* perspective also remained because many officers were suspicious of my intentions when becoming a special constable. Indeed, when the topic of the research project was mentioned to officers, it was often perceived that the only reason to come out on a shift was to gather data *undercover*. This was further intensified by the often negative perceptions of special constables amongst full-time police officers (Dickson, 2019). The paradoxes introduced through this *insider outsider* status have been described by Van Maanen (1978, p.346), suggesting that the researcher becomes “part spy, part voyeur, part fan and part member”. Depending on the situation and context one might be more prominent than the other. Indeed, Van Maanen’s point of view describes my feelings towards this situation well:

Even though I had personal reasons to join the special constabulary, I find it difficult to differentiate between my role as researcher in the field of policing, special constable and associate lecturer in policing. (Research diary 15/05/2020)

Therefore, it was critically important to navigate both worlds (academic research and volunteering for the police) effectively, introducing clear boundaries, where necessary, while identifying where the overlap between these two worlds may advance my academic work, without breaking confidentiality or actively utilising this volunteering role as part of this study.

Indeed, becoming a special constable has been invaluable to better understand where some of the secrecy and closed-off nature of police culture originates (see Reiner, 2010), recognising the difficulty in promoting transparency and understanding the need to limit what is shared with the public. Wearing the police uniform has helped me to understand the importance of public perception and how fragile it is. Experiencing this first-hand has helped me to acknowledge why mistrust between police and academia often persists (Lumsden, 2017b), whilst illustrating the genuine interest of some officers in the topic of the project, research and academia at large. Officers who shared their thoughts openly were often driven by their own frustrations with the organisation and the need to 'vent' and share experiences with someone who is interested in exploring avenues for improvement. Moreover, the first-hand exposure to police training and development, or the lack thereof, provided a valuable perspective on current officer needs and organisational responses to these.

The experiences on the beat also allowed for a better grasp of the wider structures and hierarchies within Police Scotland and how these are experienced by officers. Before becoming a special constable, participants spent a significant amount of time identifying and explaining basic structures and systems that exist within Police Scotland. However, once I achieved an *insider outsider* status, this was often not necessary, leading to more in-depth discussions about officers' feelings and experiences of learning within the organisation. Additionally, the use of relevant terminology helped to bond more easily with participants, and it often felt that officers were more open about their experiences. Nevertheless, the *Insider* status was not always openly shared or utilised in practice. It was only shared where this status was considered to aid the discussion. Indeed, I could not always anticipate how officers would react to this status and sharing it was often dependent on the rapport developed with the participant at the time. Even so, none of the participants with whom this status was shared reacted negatively or in a way that would suggest that they held back information about their feelings and experiences.

The police *insider* status was not shared with practitioners from allied professions. After much reflection it was not considered to add significant value to the discussions with allied professions. Indeed, the revelation of being associated with Police Scotland in another capacity could have negatively influenced these interviews, where partners

might not want to share more critical viewpoints of police officer or organisational behaviour and experiences in front of someone who is associated with the organisation. This perceived possible reaction from practitioners from allied professions also reflects the innate private and reticent nature of police officers, hesitant to share their employment status with others and building strong collegial bonds by keeping much of their thoughts and experiences between themselves (Westmarland and Rowe, 2018).

Rose (1997) argued that it is not always easy to identify, reflect upon and use one's own positionality in research, and indeed the ways in which to do this tend to be presented in vague and ambiguous ways in the literature. Therefore, reflection was done purposefully and structured throughout this research project, both individually and with others, identifying in what ways the research project may be impacted by my positionality. For this project, rather than treating the police *insider* role separate from the *outsider* role, in many ways the overlap between the insider outsider role is where the value of the social constructivist and interpretivist research approach lies (as explored in chapter 3). It yields a more reflective and realistic analysis and presentation of the findings, increasing the credibility and rigor of the study.

Although the boundary crossing created by becoming a special constable is an important position to reflect upon, age, gender, and other characteristics (such as having facial piercings and being German) are also important factors to consider. Upon reflection and confidentially discussing experiences from interviews with fellow researchers in a similar field (including a recently retired police officer), I did not feel that participant responses were negatively impacted by my personal characteristics. This might, in part, be due to increased gender diversity in a previously male dominated profession (Police Scotland, 2021). It might also, in part, be due to my German accent helping me to start a conversation and encouraging participants to explain to me why things are the way they are in Scotland. Overall, I felt that building rapport and developing trust, sometimes through my role as a special constable, sometimes through my nationality, and other times through shared interests, was important to make participants feel sufficiently comfortable to discuss their experiences and feelings on the topic. Furthermore, in relation to focus groups, being close to the age of students (28 at the time) was considered an advantage. I felt that

students felt less intimidated by a young moderator who, through the role of being an associate lecturer, also had previous rapport with them. Teaching on the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology programme further enhanced my ability to ask relevant and meaningful questions during focus groups. Upon reflection, the role of associate lecturer on this programme gave me unique insights into a particular facet of police learning in Scotland, whilst also being part of developing and delivering it to individuals who will join the police service in the future. This added an additional layer of complexity to the analysis of findings separating my professional experiences of associate lecturer on an HE policing degree from that of researching police learning within Police Scotland in its own right.

Beyond the impact of my background and physical appearance on data collection, it is important to reflect on my worldview and how this may have shaped the interpretation of the data. I consider myself a liberal and open-minded individual, who is university educated and from a middle-class background. While this means that my worldview may have developed differently to that of some of my participants, I pride myself on having an inquisitive and understanding mind. Therefore, rather than imposing my worldview onto that of my participants and the themes I developed, through reflection and discussions with the supervision team and participants themselves, I present and interpret the data in a way that more closely represents participants' viewpoints rather than my own. Indeed, the feedback from the early dissemination of findings confirmed this (discussed in section 3.5).

In addition to the role of positionality, it is also important to reflect upon environmental factors which influenced this research project, such as the outbreak of a global pandemic.

4.3. The impact of COVID-19

In March 2020 the Scottish Government introduced a country-wide lockdown due the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, only allowing essential travel and introducing the mandate to work from home (SPICE, 2021). This resulted in the closure of ENU campuses, a time of rapid change, uncertainty, and pressure on public services to support people affected by the virus.

Interview data collection commenced in October 2019 before the outbreak of COVID-19. However, the first lockdown, in addition to data access and collection delays discussed previously (chapter 3), further prolonged the data collection period, because of uncertainties about what contact was and was not allowed and navigating the personal and professional pressures on participants and myself. Nevertheless, joining the special constabulary in March 2020 enabled the continued development of networks within Police Scotland and staying up to date with current policing challenges introduced by the pandemic. This time of uncertainty (ca. March 2020 to May 2020) was used to develop an appropriate home office set up, reflecting on new ethical challenges involved in the adjustment of data collection methods (online), and identifying ways in which to (re-)approach participants.

The inability to meet participants in person and public services being preoccupied with adapting to almost daily changes in working conditions and responsibilities, made the recruitment of participants willing and able to be interviewed online more difficult. Additionally, having never conducted interviews online and working in a shared living space introduced additional challenges to ensure participants interviews are conducted confidentially and data is recorded and stored safely. Furthermore, the outbreak of COVID-19 adversely effected the first publication of the survey on 17th March 2020, because its publication was absorbed by the continuous stream of briefings and memos updating police officers on COVID-19 regulations and powers (De Camargo, 2021). Nevertheless, Frenkel et al., (2021) argued that whilst the COVID-19 outbreak continues have an impact, the stressors associated with it for police officers have decreased over time. This enabled the data collection to recommence after an initial adjustment period.

After lockdown measures eased, previously recruited participants were presented with three options, conducting an online or phone interview, conducting an outside walking interview, or delay the interview to be able to conduct it in-person once public health measures allowed this. The networking with researchers across Scotland and beyond throughout this research project provided me with the necessary knowledge and understanding of alternative interviewing methods. In particular, the experiences of a fellow PhD student utilising walking interviews, which proved to be beneficial when conducting interviews during the pandemic.

While the use of different interview methods was beneficial in continuing the data collection, doing this during COVID-19 presented several challenges when analysing and interpreting the data. The changing working environment required increased reflection upon participants' responses. Due to the small sample of interviewees and the fact that some participant groups, such as NHS nurses, community safety officers and third sector practitioners, have only been interviewed after the outbreak of COVID-19, it is difficult to disentangle which responses might be tainted by the changes to the learning environment introduced through COVID-19, and which are reflections of previous or broader approaches to learning and development. Every effort was made to construct questions in ways which clearly asked about general experiences of learning before the COVID-19 outbreak or, in some cases, discussing what has changed since and what might change in the future. Indeed, workplace learning environments will likely see the impact of COVID-19 for years to come (Lancaster, 2021). Nevertheless, it is also important to recognise the unique and time-limited nature of lockdowns and restrictions which do not describe the wider police learning landscape. It was therefore important to take this into account when analysing and interpreting the data, through actively taking the mode of the interview into account when analysing interviews and reflecting on this individually and with the supervision team, analysing interviews holistically rather than treating them as decontextualised text/scripts.

Furthermore, whilst utilising online data gathering has increased the diversity of the participant pool, changes introduced through COVID-19 also provided the opportunity to explore the changing environment of learning and development during this time, while reflecting on possible future challenges. Many learning opportunities have been suspended due to COVID-19 (Enciso, Maskaly and Donner, 2017), which offered officers the opportunity to reflect on how this can impact on practice. Indeed, Frenkel et al., (2021) argued that training and development could and should play an important part in preparing police officers better for situations such as this one in the future. Furthermore, Maskály et al., (2021) have identified an increase in the use of e-learning which will have long-term effects on how officers will engage in learning in the future. Therefore, although beyond the scope of this thesis, this dataset can enable tentative comparisons between pre- and peri-COVID-19 learning and development

provision and explore the impact of this on future reforms. It will help to further nuance the previously mentioned studies with insights from Scottish police officers and practitioners from allied professions, some of which will be discussed in upcoming chapters (chapters 5, 6 and 7). However, only half of the data was collected during the pandemic, therefore, no conclusive presumptions should be made based on the data, rather it may present certain viewpoints from practitioners at different times and highlight possible areas for further research.

Although the outbreak of COVID-19 has introduced several challenges in the way participants were recruited and data was collected, it offered a welcome time to reflect in more depth on aspects of particularly qualitative data gathering, which are often taken for granted (Langley and Meziani, 2020). This included for example the way to build rapport in interviews and focus groups, how to navigate environmental factors, such as poor network connections, or the presence of other people in the interview 'room', as well as the ability to safeguard participants and participants' data. Upon reflection, effective communication in-person and online was key to ensure participants felt comfortable with the data collection method chosen. This was further supported by a flexible approach and understanding between participants and the researcher that these are unprecedented times and schedules can change last minute.

4.4. Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter reflected on researcher positionality, utilising Brown's (1996) *insider outsider* typology to identify opportunities and challenges introduced by becoming a special constable, being an associate lecturer in policing, my personal characteristics and worldviews, while also considering the wider socio-cultural environment of this study and the impact of COVID-19. The boundary crossing introduced by becoming a special constable required continuous reflection on how experiences of being a volunteer police officer impact on analysis, evaluation, and the presentation of research. Indeed, experiences so far have facilitated the development of a more nuanced and appreciative viewpoint of the realities of police work and police training and development.

My personal characteristics (age, gender, nationality, worldview) have shaped the ways in which participants connected with me and how I analysed my data. While being a special constable helped me to gain a more comprehensive picture of the

different debates and controversies which influence police-academic partnerships, my open-mindedness further enabled me to listen to participants and share their views rather than my own. My accent and nationality were useful conversation starters and further enabled me to ask questions about the Scottish system and wider contextual factors that officers otherwise may have brushed over. Reflective practices and discussions with the supervision team and fellow PhD students throughout this process were central to ensure that my own conscious or unconscious biases do not creep into the interpretation of the data.

The COVID-19 pandemic added additional complexity to data collection, analysis, interpretation, and write-up. Indeed, the ongoing pressures on this project are still felt during the final stages of this project and will likely continue for years to come. Nevertheless, this change in the external research environment has opened up several opportunities for the data collection process, increasing the geographical spread of participants and learning how to effectively utilise different online data collection methods.

After highlighting the context of this study and in what way positionality may influence the way in which data was gathered, analysed, and presented, the following three chapters will introduce participants' perspectives and experiences of the role, value, and culture of learning and development within Police Scotland. The first findings chapter will set the scene by highlighting the established police officer learning pathways in Police Scotland. This is the learning provided and encouraged by Police Scotland and therefore demonstrates what the organisation suggests officers need, while reflecting on officers' lived experiences of this provision.

Chapter 5: The established police officer learning pathways in Scotland

5.1 Introduction

After identifying key debates and gaps in the police learning literature, presenting the current strategic direction and context of police learning in Scotland, and highlighting the wider debates in the workplace learning literature (Chapter 2), the research aim and questions were presented (2.7). This formed the basis to introduce the research design and discuss researcher positionality (chapter 3 and 4), providing important context and detail about the practicalities of this study and the factors influencing data gathering and interpretation. Building on these chapters and Police Scotland's ambition to be an employer of choice that *attracts, retains, and develops* its people (Police Scotland, 2021), this first findings chapter will critically analyse established police officer learning pathways. It will explore contemporary officer learning journeys, exploring initial learning and CPD, reflecting on how this learning happens in Police Scotland. Findings suggest that formal learning provisions are often not perceived as learning opportunities but exercises in organisational accountability by police officers. This highlights tensions between the organisationally prescribed purpose or aim of learning opportunities, how learning manifests in the organisation, and officers' perceptions of such learning. Furthermore, there is a strong focus on informal learning opportunities after the initial learning period which, although beneficial for some, results in a lack of access and ability to learn for others, leading to perceptions of unfair treatment by the organisation. These lived experiences of the established learning pathways in Police Scotland introduce several structures and learning provisions which do not align well with effective learning practices identified in the workplace learning literature.

The first section of this chapter explores the ways in which new recruits are socialised into Police Scotland and how initial learning sets the tone for future learning opportunities (5.2). In particular, the divergent approaches between the initial classroom-based learning and on-the-job learning will be examined, to discuss the influence of different styles of teaching and spaces for learning on police officer confidence and competence. Next, the ongoing provision and engagement with CPD will be discussed (5.3). This includes the availability and role of formal CPD

opportunities, highlighting the reliance on knowledge transfer and experiential learning, which increases the need for peer learning and communities of practice to support the translation of classroom-based learning into practice. The discussion and conclusion section will illustrate how the findings presented advance and relate to the literature on police and workplace learning more broadly (5.4).

5.2 Initial learning

To understand the value of learning and what kinds of learning are promoted within Police Scotland, it is important to consider the initial learning period. As discussed in the literature review (2.2.1), the length and content of this training has changed over time, with the most significant change being that officers do not come back to the college for another classroom-based period after joining their respective local teams. Officers spend twelve weeks at the Scottish Police College, undertaking intensive classroom-based learning, before completing the remainder of their two-year probationary period in their local teams, where they are supported, at least initially, by a tutor constable. Police officer initial learning periods have been the topic of much debate in the literature (Belur *et al.*, 2019), because they shape police officer views and perceptions of ongoing learning and development within the organisation and present an important part of the police socialisation process (Charman, 2017). This section provides a timely and important overview of how this initial learning period manifests in the organisation and officers' perceptions of this.

5.2.1 The formal curriculum: Classroom-based initial learning at Tulliallan

Police officers who have experienced previous versions of the initial learning period suggested that the reduction of particularly the second phase of the initial classroom-based learning (i.e., the first and second iteration of initial learning presented in Figure 1) is a loss of opportunity to reflect and learn for both the individual officers and the organisation. These officers argued that the time spent coming back after engaging in on-the-job learning supported the development of their skills, as it enabled them to reflect on their own and others' experiences.

“The second stage got reduced and it was only two weeks that you were back at the college, but what that did was kind of **reinforce your learning. Everybody got to share their experiences [...] and that's been helpful for me** because now I will think of that when I go to that type of incident.” (Police Officer, frontline management 7)

“I personally think that the 12 weeks (first stage) **and the 6 weeks (second stage)** [classroom-based learning] **really works**, and I **think I benefitted from going back in**. People worked in different areas, some people worked in rural policing, some people went up North to Islands and to **hear about their experiences** I think was really valuable [...] so I think it was good, **good reflection** that you’d learn.”
(Police Officer, Constable 1)

Therefore, the second phase of classroom-based learning after a period of on-the-job learning was considered an important opportunity for police officers to reiterate learning as well as reflect on others’ experiences. This is supported by Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle (Figure 7), which highlights the need for reflection and sharing of knowledge as part of the learning process. Therefore, the loss of the second classroom-based learning period limits what Kolb (1984) called the generalisation process, where learning is shared and transformed through reflecting with others, instead making it dependent on probationary officers’ own initiative or having supportive tutor constables and colleagues encouraging this process.

However, in the absence of in-depth longitudinal studies with new recruits, this study cannot with certainty argue that the loss of this second classroom-based learning period led to less reflective practice. Current probationary officers could engage in reflective practice without having this structured opportunity and reflect with probationers they have met during their initial twelve weeks training. However, the lack of structured opportunities to reflect does questions if every officer will engage in such practice, and how Police Scotland ensures that what is learned from this reflection aligns with their initial learning objectives and aims. Indeed, in comparison to officers with longer service brackets, officers with shorter service brackets (6 years or less) did not discuss or mention any time for meaningful reflection in the initial learning period. Whilst the portfolio and ongoing assessments probationers have to complete during their on-the-job learning phase in their local teams ensure that officers have met a certain operational standard to become a police officer, reflective practice, according to interviewees, can add valuable context, skills, and knowledge beyond that which the local team can provide, preparing officers for the future. Indeed, the LO literature suggests that knowledge and skill should be shared systematically and with a plan rather than informally and by chance (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008), highlighting the value of previous versions of the Scottish initial learning period.

The experiences of initial classroom-based learning at the Scottish police college, regardless of experiencing older or newer versions of it, varied significantly between officers. Some officers indicated that they really enjoyed it and thought the learning benefitted them, whereas others went as far as saying they hated it and had very negative experiences. Whilst some of this might be due to individual differences, many officers mentioned the ability to commit to the disciplined and militaristic learning style promoted by the college as a deciding factor. Indeed, for several officers this militaristic learning environment negatively influenced their perception of Police Scotland and the policing practice promoted at the college:

[When asked about how they found their initial training at the Scottish police college] “[laughing] **awful. Absolutely awful.**” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

“I loved it. **A lot of people don’t like that environment** at Tulliallan [militaristic and disciplined], but I loved it.” (Police Officer, Constable 6)

Officers described a militaristic style of learning, similar to that discussed in the police learning literature, based on instruction and discipline and bureaucratic and hierarchical notions of police organisations and policing (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011). Police officer interviews confirmed that, although this style of learning and teaching did not work for everyone, it was considered an essential aspect of the initial learning period to set certain standards and expectations:

“Yea it [**the organisation**] **has to be [disciplined]** because it’s a rank structure so what’s the point if you don’t then adhere to that. So yea there’s absolutely no point in you coming out from the college and being unclear as to who’s who and what that expectation is for you. So yes, I really think **that that has to start with that initial training.**” (Police Officer, Constable 6)

“I quite enjoyed that sort of thing, I’ve been in the guides, I’ve been in the Brownies, I’ve been used to sort of rank, that sort of competitive element to it [...] but at the college they’re still very much about [...] ironing your trousers and cleaning your boots and things like that but **that tends to sort of disappear [at the] frontline.**” (Police Officer, Constable 1)

Nevertheless, as Constable 1 illustrates, some of the behavioural aspects taught during this initial learning period (such as marching or shining shoes) disappeared once officers started working in their local divisions. This was not an isolated experience and

mentioned by officers across different service lengths, suggesting that this has been the case for many years. This highlights a rift between the formal curriculum taught at the college and the informal curriculum learned in their local teams. Whilst police culture is not a homogenous concept within and across forces, scholars suggest that it can play an important part in socialising officers into the organisation and teach them the 'hidden curriculum', which does not always reflect that which is taught at the college (Cockcroft, 2017; Willis and Mastrofski, 2017). This will be further explored in section 5.2.3.

My own experiences when becoming a Special Constable and joining frontline policing teams with a limited classroom-based learning period (3-weeks) and a lack of follow-up and reflection time with others, confirmed many officers' experiences:

Going out on the beat for the first time was eye opening, I did not feel that the training prepared me very well for the idiosyncrasies of working on the beat, the power structures at play when going out with other constables and how to adhere to what was taught at the college when the reality of police work on the ground appears very different. (Research diary 26/04/2020)

Whilst officers agreed that there is a level of discipline required in the college, they also argued that there is an equal need for more learner-led and learner-focussed approaches to teaching, and supporting officer understandings of key policing issues, developing soft skills and critical thinking skills. In contrast to more senior officers, who argued that the college already provides this, constables who have recently (within the last 4-5 years) completed the initial learning period argued that there is a heavy focus on transmission and following orders, rather than understanding and developing critical and reflective practice. Many officers argued that this is due to the rigid teaching styles utilised during this period:

"People have different obviously styles of learning, why are we not adapting [to] those, why are we not adapting the learning styles to suit the needs of the student as opposed to making the students square peg in a round hole." (Police Officer, frontline management

7)

As indicated in the literature review, for officers to learn how to transfer life experience, knowledge, and skill into practice, adult learning theorists such as Knowles et al., (2021) suggest that a more flexible approach is needed. For topics such as operational safety training or learning new legislation and police powers, where there is no previous knowledge, or it is not relatable to previous life experience, pedagogical (teacher-led) approaches can be helpful. This is because the learner is dependent on the teacher's knowledge transfer. However, where life experience is important and relevant, officers argued that the learning environment should be more reflective of their ability to relate new content to skills and knowledge they already possess. Examples of this often related to soft skills such as people skills and critical thinking skills, knowledge and experience with certain groups of people, or indeed knowledge of certain policing areas such as cybercrime, learned through a HE degree. Whilst officers felt that these life experiences helped them in the recruitment process, they argued that this experience was not utilised or acknowledged beyond this point. Adult learning theories highlight the value added by previous experience and the importance for adult learners to integrate this previous experience into their learning (Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2021). The current learning environment within Police Scotland, according to participants, therefore, often lacks the ability to connect officer skill and knowledge with the official curriculum to support transformative and innovative learning practice. Officers' responses suggest that this can make them feel devalued and their knowledge and opinion unappreciated.

Drumm (2019) suggested that teachers' (or in this case employers') assumptions about learning styles frame their decisions on what teaching style to use. Current assumptions about the need for strict and hierarchical learning environments focussed on instruction rather than understanding, officers suggest, limits Police Scotland's ability to support police officers' diverse learning needs. This is conflated by the fact that some officers assumed that the teaching methods at the college have changed, when the lived experience of officers suggest they have not, highlighting a lack of current knowledge of initial learning practice within Police Scotland amongst senior officers, which can limit its ability to recognise the need for reform and transformation in the future.

Indeed, officers argued that the disproportionate focus on a one-way transfer of knowledge, based on traditional military-style training, which dominate the 12-week training course at Tulliallan, fail to support critical thinking and transformative learning.

“Because it’s too out the norm, **they want clones**, they want people that will turn up, **do exactly what they’re told** and not rock the boat, that’s what they want but do you know what? That’s rubbish, it produces nothing, mediocrity. You know?!” (Police Officer, middle management 3)

The above quote illustrates the negative feelings that can develop when officers feel that they have no autonomy and stake in the learning process. Therefore, there is a need for Police Scotland to demonstrate to officers the purpose of why they have to learn certain things a certain way, as is suggested by adult learning theories such as andragogy (Knowles, 1973), whilst at the same time providing officers with the ability to critically assess situations to continuously improve and transform policing practice as *agents for change* (Engstroem, 2016). All participant groups agreed that a degree of autonomy and ability to question contemporary policing practice is important. However, the current transactional classroom-based learning environment at the Scottish Police College does not appear to encourage or develop this, putting the focus on the on-the-job learning period to support and develop police officer autonomy and critical thinking.

Police officer interviews further discussed the inapplicability of the information taught through the formal curriculum at the college. In particular, they challenged the way in which this curriculum is taught and presented to officers:

[Did the initial learning at the college prepare you for the realities of the job?]

“No not really, I generally felt like **it was a tick-box exercise**. Eleven weeks of being in lecture theatres and studying materials that you can study on your own is **a little bit useless** because **out on the street it’s completely different**. You deal with real people who are very unpredictable and a few books telling you how it should be is **not representative of reality**.” (Police officer, Constable 7)

In many ways, this reflects the perceived theory-practice divide, discussed in the literature review (2.4.3) and supports the transformation of the initial learning period from a purely vocational qualification to a modern apprenticeship, which aimed to expand the work-based learning for probationary officers. It might also explain the

hesitancy to expand theoretical learning through police-academic partnerships, because officers feel they already struggle to effectively translate classroom-based learning into practice. Nevertheless, interviews suggest that the issue might not be what is taught but how it is taught, its perceived relevance to policing practice, and how it relates to the informal or 'hidden curriculum' taught in local teams.

Indeed, officers critiqued the black and white picture portrayed to new recruits by the college:

[Did the initial learning at the college prepare you for the realities of the job?]

"It gives you a **very black and white picture of reality**, whereas as you know yourself life's grey and **it doesn't prepare you for that**. So it sets you up that there's absolutes and then when you go out to operational reality there's not, so I think in some ways **it tries to produce automatons** and that doesn't work in reality." (Police officer, middle management 3)

Officers discussed at length the complex and sometimes 'wicked' problems they face, requiring extensive problem-solving skills, which they were not always prepared for.

Many officers described this transition from the classroom-based learning to practice-based (or on-the-job) learning as a shock to the system and stated that they had a very steep learning curve.

"They say you don't learn to drive properly until you passed your test, it's almost like the probationer training is **this little boxed off learning about legislation and you don't actually learn the practicalities of what you need to do until you're out doing the job**, and you pick it up off the people you work with and your tutor constables at the time, and they kind of take you through the idiosyncrasy and the actual procedures you need to follow, rather than just having an understanding of the legislation." (Police Officer, frontline management 6)

"The first kind of week or two when you actually found your feet and you were with your shift that was the real kind of **culture shock** because one aspect of it is kinda [sic] learning in the classroom, but when you're actually out on the street and you're meeting people face-to-face, and you're dealing with a situation, **it's a real steep learning curve.**" (Police Officer, middle management 8)

"The learning [for probationer training] is very much here is a law, here is another law. **Most learning is done out in the street.**" (Police Officer, survey respondent 2)

These experiences call Police Scotland's current provision of classroom-based learning and its value into question. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that a certain level of 'practice shock'²³ could also be observed from other professions, such as social work:

"Petrifying, I couldn't believe that somebody thought I was allowed this level of responsibility 'cause [sic] you're just like oh crap, like I'm an actual social worker what do I do?" (Partner, Justice Social Work 3)

Although based on the view of a small sample of individuals from each profession, this suggests that a certain level of uncertainty when starting a new role is common in spite of the learning and training provided. However, as illustrated in the literature review (2.3.1), having the skills and knowledge to process new information and make evidence-informed decisions can be helpful to cushion this 'practice shock'. Indeed, Staller et al., (2021) argued the effectiveness of training is linked to its real-life applicability. The police culture and the 'hidden curriculum' officers encounter when joining their local teams and the lack of focus on the complexity of contemporary policing during classroom-based learning, results in a gap of skill and competence that can lead to 'practice shock'. The initial learning period therefore prepares officers for a black and white picture of policing that does not exist, leaving them without the skills to address the complexity of the 'real world'.

Nevertheless, the proposed way in which this initial classroom-based learning is contextualised and translated into practice is during the following probationary period in local teams, supported by the tutor constable. Respondents had a lot to say about this period and highlighted the ways in which it has helped some officers' learning journeys and hindered that of others.

5.2.2 The formal curriculum: Tutor constables and the probationary period

Once new recruits leave the college, they are assigned a tutor constable at their home station to support learning on-the-job and translating the classroom-based learning into practice. As discussed in the literature review (2.2.1), the research evidence on

²³ The shock described by participants when recognising that the realities of the job are much more intense and demanding than what was expected, discussed, and taught during the initial learning period (Holderman, 2003).

police tutor constables is sparse. However, what is available is largely questioning the structures underpinning the use of tutor constables, their training and their ability to support police officer learning (Home Office, 2002; Constable, 2017). The findings of this study provide relevant evidence to add to this literature and further questions the current use and experience of being tutored and being a tutor in Police Scotland.

A common theme amongst participants was the lack of tutor constables and especially a lack of *experienced* tutor constables. Indeed, reflecting the lack of available information on how long Scottish police officers are supported by their tutor constable, participants were not clear how much time probationary officers should have with their tutor. Nevertheless, many officers mentioned that timelines around three months or sixty shifts are suggested by Police Scotland. In reality however, especially for those officers who have more recently gone through their probationary period, this rarely happened:

“I didn’t really have a tutor much purely because of resources. I was only paired with my tutor for **maybe a couple of months** and then I started working with different people, which **made it a little bit more difficult** as well, because those people didn’t know what I knew or what I didn’t know and obviously they’d happily helped me **if I would have known what questions to ask.**” (Police Officer, Constable 7)

In line with other interviewees, this constable illustrates a clear gap in the support provided to officers to engage in learning on-the-job. Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of experiential learning, and their responsibility and agency in identifying how to do this, in the absence of official structures and support to do so. The varied periods spent with tutor constables across participants (from two shifts to three months), and the lack of official rhetoric about how long officers should spend with tutors, suggests a lack of accountability and communication within Police Scotland. According to participants, this leads to an unequal distribution of support across Police Scotland and suggests a lack of value placed on tutor constables. Indeed, during my time as a Special Constable, I have been able to witness the lack of consistency and support available from tutor constables for new probationers:

Many of the new recruits joining my team only had a couple of shifts with an experienced officer before going out with a different partner each shift. They discussed the ways in which they struggled to learn and had to often repeat themselves and their training needs to their new partner. It feels as if there is little structure and thought behind the way in which new recruits, including Specials [Special Constables], are supported in local teams. (Research diary 22/07/2020)

Practitioners from allied professions, especially those who have more recently introduced degree entry, agreed with officers in that mentors (tutors)²⁴ have a transformative role in the learning journey of new staff and enable the translation of theoretical learning into practice. In contrast to police officers however, these practitioners reflected much more positively about their experiences with mentors. They discussed the benefit of learning from mentees whilst also teaching them to think in different ways. This illustrated a supportive and appreciative relationship between mentor and mentee.

*“We had lots of students and **I really loved** that because they were coming with like new legislation, new policy, and it was always good to **increase your own knowledge** because when you’re in the job you do get a bit **complacent**.” (Partner, Justice Social Work 6)*

As this quote highlights, it was seen as a two-way relationship, which can advance the profession by engaging with new and emerging knowledge and skills not previously considered.

Indeed, Eby and Robertson (2020) suggested that simply having a mentoring (or tutoring) scheme is not enough to achieve positive outcomes and additionally, the characteristics of both the mentee (interpersonal skills, motivation) and the mentor (openness to experience, proactivity, and commitment to a transformational leadership style) can have a significant impact on its effectiveness. Practitioners from

²⁴ Although beyond the scope of this study, an interesting finding is the difference in terminology used, in the policing sphere this initial on-the-job learning phase is a teacher-focused tutoring scheme, whereas in many allied professions it was conceptualized as mentoring.

allied professions supported this claim and argued that the predisposition towards learning was important in this regard:

“You’ve got to be somebody **that’s open to learning** as well because sometimes occasionally I’ve had students who just really kind of think they know it all, or new social workers who come in, who don’t really ask questions, and that’s suspicious to me. If you’re going to have any on-the-job learning, it’s got to really be, **just soak it up like a sponge.**” (Partner, Justice Social Work 1)

Therefore, to promote on-the-job learning both the quality of mentors/tutors as well as the intrinsic motivation of probationers to learn is important. The intrinsic motivation of police officers to learn will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter (6.3.3) but the lived experiences of officers demonstrate an interest in learning from others, where this is done in a supportive and empowering manner.

Nevertheless, the changing tutor constable profile heavily influences probationer learning experiences. Officers with longer service brackets indicated that they were often able to learn from tutor constables with over 20 years’ service. In comparison, many current constables learn from tutor constables who are very near completion of their probationary period or just out of probation.

“I think **I was lucky** to work with somebody with **so much service** because certainly now it’s quite different there’s not that same level of service on the streets so **younger cops are not getting the same opportunity** to learn from somebody with that much service.” (Police Officer, Constable 6)

Indeed, one officer just out of probation (2 months) indicated that he was signed up for the tutor constable course to start supporting new recruits coming in. This changing tutor profile may suggest a devaluing of the role of the tutor constable amongst officers with longer service brackets and suggests a lack of acknowledgement of the significance of this role.

Participants suggested that the lack of experienced officers in response shifts exacerbates this changing tutor profile, by forcing constables with little experience in the position of being a tutor constable (as the officer above). Topping's (2005) argued that the use of inexperienced officers can lead to “the blind leading the blind” or “pooling ignorance” and might lead to the reproduction of practices that do not reflect ‘good’ policing or fail to develop the skills needed to respond to the breadth of

situations officers may find themselves in. Police officer experiences support Topping's (2005) findings and question Police Scotland's supportive learning environment, and their appreciation of the role of the tutor constable.

Furthermore, some participants suggested that the use of more experienced officers as tutor constables can also lead to the reproduction of traditional policing practices which are possibly outdated or inappropriate:

“You had a tutor cop who was the **wise head on the shift** who then pretty much would have said to you ‘right all that stuff you learned at the college, **forget about it here’s really how you do it.**” (Police Officer, middle management 3)

Therefore, police officers with more experience are not necessarily going to be better tutor constables. Indeed, Police Scotland might use tutor constables with shorter service brackets to avoid this narrative in the hope that younger in-service tutor constables are more likely to represent the official and most recent Police Scotland curriculum.

Even where officers are able to work with their tutor constable for sixty shifts or more, according to participants, the quality of experiences varied widely. The one-day training tutor constables receive, and its content presents one explanation for this. As this tutor constable suggested:

“The course was very sort of **practical orientated**, so this is how to fill out this sheet, this is how to fill out that sheet, **not so much about you know this is how to teach.**” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

This once again raises questions about the prestige and value of this role and how tutor constables are conceptualised in the police officer learning journey. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the tutor constable training, many officers are unhappy with the current state of this training and officers note that there is a lack of support to effectively mentor new recruits.

Nevertheless, some participants argued that they had a positive tutor experience, which was transformative and positively influenced the rest of their career. These experiences were scarce and usually associated with officers who had a more experienced (in terms of service length) tutor constable, who had a good understanding of how to support student learning:

“He was excellent at conveying information, and he was really clear about what his expectations were [...] **I really thrived under his tutorship** to start with some things, so I think that’s definitely an area that is **really critical for people coming into the job.**” (Police Officer, senior management 4)

These mixed reviews of the tutor constable role within the police officer initial learning period, suggests there is a need for further research in this area to identify what the key characteristics of a ‘good’ tutor constable are and how to identify them. In the absence of this knowledge, the current tutor constable provision leads to a lack of accountability:

“It’s just **the blind leading the blind**, you know?! And them [two officers with shorter service brackets] thinking this is important and **no one telling them anything different** and I’m just going, ‘This is nonsense’, you know and, ‘Stop, stop’.” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

Therefore, although the tutor constable programme is supposed to provide structure to the initial learning phase by providing “operational guidance and direction to the probationary Constable to assist in their development” (Police Scotland, 2020b), officers argued that this is not currently the case and much of the learning is dependent on themselves or other officers in their teams. This highlights the precarious nature of the initial learning phase within Police Scotland. On the one hand, there is the overly structured and prescriptive learning environment in the Scottish Police College. On the other hand, probationary officers leave this environment to enter a very unstructured and informal learning environment in their local divisions, often with little support to help with the transition between the two. The varied experiences presented by officers suggest an element of luck involved in the teams they join and the tutors they engage with, supporting some officer’s learning journeys and hindering that of others. This questions Police Scotland’s support for probationary officers beyond the provision of classroom-based learning at the college.

In addition to learning how to translate classroom-based learning into practice during the probationary period, the initial learning period also promotes the socialisation of police officers into the organisation.

5.2.3 The informal curriculum: Socialisation and acculturation

“I do think **a lot of police officers are institutionalised** because they go from the institution of school into the institution of policing, which [is] not quite as intense as the military and other sort of professions, but it is very structured **it’s very hierarchical.**” (Police Officer, middle management 2)

The literature on police learning highlights the way(s) in which police officers are acculturated to the organisation and learn how to commit to the police officer role and what it entails (Chan, 1996; Andersen, 2006; Campbell, 2007; Hoel and Dillern, 2021). As the above quote illustrates, officers felt that the initial learning period plays a central role in this process. Therefore, although the disciplined and hierarchical nature of the classroom-based learning was not always recognised as relevant or helpful to learn the craft of policing, it was considered a way in which to become part of the organisation (‘becoming blue’ (Charman, 2017)).

“It’s more than a job, the police, I think **it becomes a way of life** [...] as soon as you left, you’re just another name, but it was **quite hard not to have that discipline.** You go to another organisation like [new job], it is a good organisation to work for, working conditions are fabulous but it doesn’t have the discipline. For example, if somebody in [current workplace] asked for something to be done by Friday, they expect it the following Monday. In the police they would’ve got it the night before on Thursday [...]. The work ethic is totally different.” (Retired Police Officer, middle management 1)

Police officers regularly discussed the way in which they are socialised into the organisation and how this relates to their engagement with learning throughout their career. Part of this socialisation process is the adjustment to the regimented and disciplined style of working described by a retired officer above. This is often quoted as a unique aspect of policing and for some interviewees, the way they talked about it, also something to be proud of.

Interestingly, practitioners from allied professions also considered learning the more behavioural and militaristic aspects of the police organisation important and some even argued that certain benefits of this approach were lost through the ‘professionalisation’ of their own profession:

“I get really frustrated with nursing students who can’t stand up in front of me and do a power point presentation, look at somebody in the eye **because that’s something that police has that’s unique** to them, that you’ve been taught. I like that in a way because I mean some of **it feels a bit old fashioned** but there’s bits of that lost, **that’s**

been lost in nurse education in the way it is now.” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner and academic 1)

Whilst this quote focussed specifically on the ability to talk in front of people, practitioners also discussed other behavioural aspects such as the politeness of officers, the strong focus on certain dress standards and respectful manners in classroom environments. Therefore, discipline and appreciation for hierarchical structures within the initial learning period at the Scottish police college, although losing some of its value when leaving the college, according to participants, still instils certain positive behaviours, which shine through in relationships with other services and service users.

Furthermore, 75% of survey respondents agreed with the statement that training together at the Scottish Police College is important to build bonds and be socialised into the organisation (Figure 27). Whilst the initial learning environment has been heavily critiqued by officers for its content and teaching style, this reflects the vital role of this learning environment in supporting officers’ acculturation into the organisation, engaging with new recruits in a similar situation as themselves. These bonds, officers argued, can support future learning and the sharing of experiences, during the following informal and unstructured on-the-job learning period.

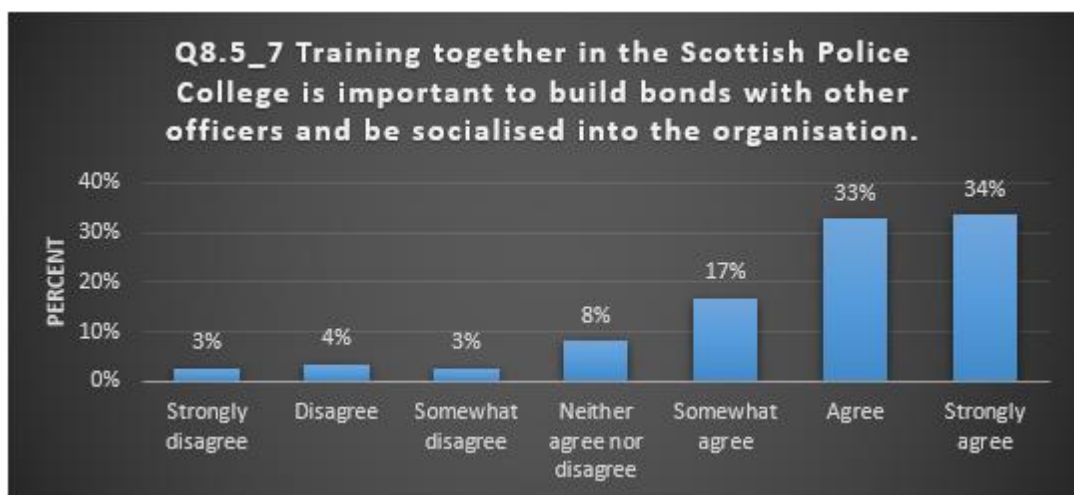


Figure 27 Survey answers to question 8.5_7 To what degree do you agree with the following statement 'Training together in the Scottish Police College is important to build bonds with other officers and be socialised into the organization' (n=381).

Officers suggested that not conforming to dominant cultural scripts (or cultural norms) (Campeau, 2017), i.e. those considered to *rock the boat*, in the sense that they did not conform to the status quo promoted by the predominant policing culture (at the college or during on-the-job learning), often experienced negative consequences. Indeed, officers felt that there was an increased likelihood of being able to take part in certain learning opportunities where they had an understanding and commitment to the prominent policing culture:

“Most of the selection processes that exist [...], a lot of them are **biased towards people who are extrovert, alpha male, dominant, passive aggressive** individuals because the exercises are engineered in that way and the assessors are looking for that.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

Therefore, although officers may decide that certain cultural scripts are not something they want to commit to during their initial training, current learning structures are geared towards officers who do. Therefore, individuals who struggle with the acculturation into dominant cultural scripts in Police Scotland might find it more difficult to develop their career within Police Scotland. For some it influenced their initial and ongoing learning period because of the impact on their relationship with their team, who are paramount to the informal on-the-job learning processes. Hence, socialisation plays an important part in the initial learning period to help officers to identify what the dominant cultural scripts are and understand how and why they might conform to them, and the repercussions if they do not. How cultural scripts influence police officer learning journeys and Police Scotland’s learning environment will be discussed in more depth throughout the following chapters.

Similarly, the adherence to traditional cultural scripts by probationary officers can inhibit organisational transformation and learning. Interviewees argued that it became more difficult to appreciate different viewpoints once socialised and accultured into the organisation:

“Sometimes **people in the organisation don’t look at it objectively** enough, because you become institutionalized with your viewpoint, so when you speak to someone who’s been in the job for x number of years, **they find it very hard to go there’s a better way**, this is so stark actually.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

This quote highlights a possible rift between officers with shorter and those with longer service brackets. Indeed, the fact that new recruits are socialised into the organisation by tutor constables with little experience may on the one hand, lead to changes within the organisation, while on the other, increase the distance between officers committed to traditional cultural scripts and those coming in with new and transforming ideas of policing and the police organisation. Officers discussed at length the feeling that the strong focus on commitment to dominant cultural scripts, from new or established officers, tends to limit innovation and openness to new ideas. Whilst this acculturation may help to shape a sense of belonging, as is one of the key objectives of the 2022/2023 Police Scotland Annual Police Plan, it may inhibit the focus on innovation and knowledge stated as a key aim in Police Scotland's 2026 Policing Strategy (Police Scotland, 2018). Additionally, where learning is limited to prescribed ideas of what has worked before, the development of authentic learning environments will be more difficult to achieve.

Having looked at the initial learning period of police officers, the next section will critically assess how officers continue to engage in learning beyond this initial period and discuss the link between initial and continuous learning in Police Scotland. Once officers have completed their probationary period, the official curriculum requires the completion of several mandatory courses, most of which are online. There has been little information available on the current formal CPD provisions within Police Scotland, and officers' experiences of these (2.2.1) Therefore, participants of this study provide a useful initial idea of what CPD within Police Scotland may look like and how it is experienced by officers to help answer research question one and two.

5.3 Continuous Professional Development

CPD has become an increasingly contentious topic within policing, in particular due to a recent HMICS (2020) inspection in Scotland, which indicated that there is a lack of investment in ongoing training and development. The findings of this study strongly support these claims and present a picture of police learning in Scotland that is lacking structure and support for officers to develop themselves, policing practice, and the police organisation. Considering the important role that the provision of and engagement with transformative CPD opportunities can have on developing lifelong

learners, the lack of this provision within Police Scotland may present a problem for the organisation in the future, as will be explored throughout the upcoming chapters.

5.3.1 Availability of CPD

The majority of survey respondents suggested that they are dissatisfied with the CPD opportunities available within Police Scotland. Indeed, 61% of officers across ranks, years of service, and divisions indicated that they are not satisfied with the CPD opportunities available for their role (Figure 28).

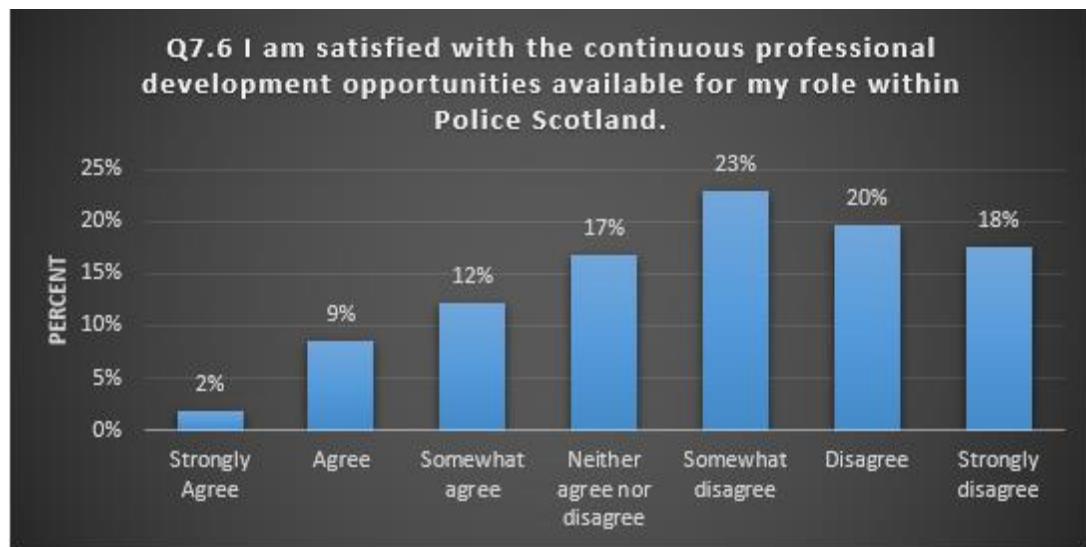


Figure 28 Survey responses to question 7.6 'To what degree do you agree with the statement 'I am satisfied with the continuous professional development opportunities available for my role within Police Scotland'' (n=381).

Qualitative answers from the survey and interview participants further supported these findings, in particular referring to optional CPD opportunities, those that are more tailored to officer needs and interests:

“There’s none. **Very little to be honest.**” (Police Officer, middle management 5)

“In the past 5-10 years optional training has become scarce and it is **very rare that officers have the chance to receive training** unless it is role specific.” (Survey response 3)

Although the difference in agreement and disagreement with the statement 'I am satisfied with the CPD opportunities available for my role' was not statistically significantly different between divisions; northern divisions (A, N, P, D and C division) were the least satisfied with CPD opportunities available for their role (6%), and up to 21% more likely to be dissatisfied compared to those divisions in the southwest and south of Scotland (L, U, K, Q, J, V division) (Figure 29). This might suggest national differences in the availability and experience of CPD within Police Scotland, which can create perceptions of unfair treatment or access to learning across the organisation, worth exploring in more depth.

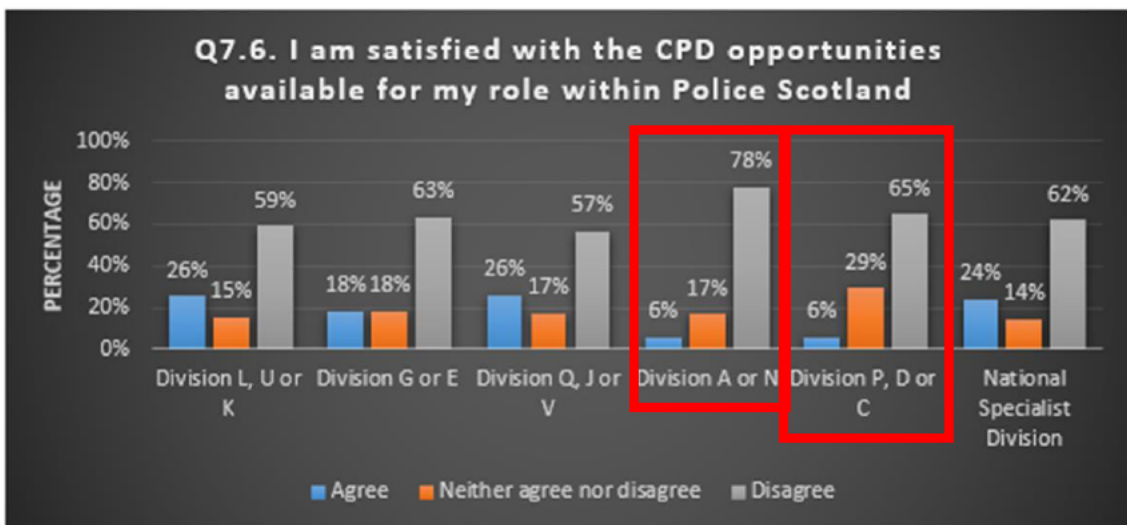


Figure 29 Survey responses to question 7.6 To what degree do you agree with the statement 'I am satisfied with the continuous professional development opportunities available for my role within Police Scotland' by Division (n=381).

Nevertheless, some interviewees indicated that they are content with the CPD opportunities available to them:

"[CPD opportunities are not available for] response [roles] but definitely [within] Police Scotland [more generally], there's just so many opportunities that I fail to see why I would leave." (Police Officer, Constable 7)

"I've been lucky right, I've put myself out there for a lot of courses and you go on stuff, the external courses that maybe a lot of people don't really want to go on, but I'll say yes to any bit of training particularly if it's about management because I'm just like that and so I've not had many no's to anything that I've asked for, so there's development out there if people want it." (Police Officer, middle management 1)

Interestingly, the second quote is from a middle management officer from A division (north), highlighting the importance of personal perception, intrinsic motivation, and

agency when it comes to CPD availability. His quote suggests that how Police officers construct and frame CPD opportunities, i.e. something offered to them by Police Scotland or something they have to or should seek out and engage with, can influence their satisfaction with CPD opportunities and Police Scotland as an employer. This is in addition to different personal preferences and availability to engage in CPD, which may influence how the mandated formats of CPD (i.e. online learning packages or centralised learning events at the Scottish police college) are perceived and judged. Therefore, geographical differences in the provision of CPD across Scotland might be more or less pronounced, but because of the individual differences in how CPD is understood, why officers engage with it, as well as a lack of clear organisational definition of what CPD is, it is difficult to identify the true extent of availability and engagement with CPD. This reflects the breadths of definition of CPD identified in the literature and the lack of clarity of its purpose and use across organisations (Friedman and Phillips, 2004; Kennedy, 2005) (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

A helpful concept to understand this is 'naïve provisionism' (Boud and Hager, 2012). Boud and Hager (2012) argued that the simple provision of opportunities may be enough for some to engage with learning and development. However, as discussed in the literature review, having opportunities available, internally or externally, does not mean every officer will engage with them or indeed learn from them. This may explain why experiences amongst participants differed so dramatically. Some officers had a long list of learning opportunities they have engaged with, whereas others felt that there were no CPD opportunities available to them. The LO literature suggests that the learning climate and culture within an organisation is important to motivate officers to engage in learning and highlight to officers why and how learning is valued in the organisation (Burgoyne, 1992; Staller *et al.*, 2021). This is as important in the initial learning phase as it is throughout an officer's career. Findings from this study suggest that there is a need for a better understanding of the role and purpose of CPD and what the role of Police Scotland is in supporting and providing CPD.

Appraisal systems play an important part in navigating the formal and informal CPD opportunities within an organisation and it is seen as a "strategic tool to achieve the organisation's vision" (Ahmad and Bujang, 2013, p. 1). This is an aspect of staff development rarely discussed in the police learning literature, but something which

police officers and practitioners from allied professions identified as central to the individual learning journey within an organisation.

5.3.2 Accessing CPD: The use of appraisal systems

Police officers regularly discussed the need for line managers to promote and support the development of officers:

“So, they should be starting and looking at staff and looking at it as an instructor. **Let’s try and develop them**, it’s trying to build them that way and then we might not have so many disgruntled cops sitting ‘I can’t get promoted, [I] hate this job’. Okay right rather than promotion what’s a bail move [the next move] for you? It’s just down to simple resource management, **simple management at a personal level.**” (Police Officer, Constable 3)

“My personal believe is that **your immediate supervisors**, Sergeants, and their Inspector, **it was incumbent upon them to develop their staff**. Because **you don’t know what you don’t know**, whereas they do know because they’ve been through it, but generally if you ask anybody for help, they will give you it. No questions asked but **nobody will offer help.**” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

As these quotes highlight, line managers play an important part in the provision and experience of CPD within the organisation. However, the provision and quality of appraisal or performance conversations, which are essential to communicate values, promote flexibility, and maximise individual potential and contribution (Ahmad and Bujang, 2013), have been questioned by many officers. Indeed, middle and senior management officers discussed the lack of knowledge of the various appraisal systems implemented, which influenced their ability to effectively support police officers.

“Then PDC came along in Police Scotland and PDC was quarterly appraisal system, **nobody really understood it very well**, we got a quite a rushed kind of introduction to it, it was overly complicated, and nobody really knew what the plan was meant to look like, so it became **tokenistic** you know, it’s something we did and that was it. PDC fell about the wayside last year, **there’s no requirement for appraisals last year.**” (Police Officer, middle management 1)

This might explain why 54 out of 71 officers who left Police Scotland in 2016 argued that performance reviews and staff appraisals were poor or very poor (Police Scotland, 2016). Some senior management officers suggested that there was no appraisal system available to provide structured regular conversations about staff development since 2013:

“Unfortunately, **Police Scotland hasn’t had appraisal systems since they started**, so I don’t know how they can really base anything other than conjecture of potential **nepotism** [on] some of that [promotion].” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

The varied responses about the availability of appraisal systems provided here suggests a lack of importance placed on these systems, as it is not clearly communicated to officers what they are, how to conduct them and what their value is. Indeed, the previous quote from middle management officer 1, highlights that these conversations are often considered tick-box exercises rather than meaningful ways in which to identify learning opportunities. This can create unequal access to performance conversations, leading to police officers feeling that they are being treated unfairly. In turn, officers often felt that nepotism rather than merit is influencing decisions about professional and personal development opportunities. Hence, where appraisal systems are non-existent or poorly managed, there is a lack of opportunities to explain to police officers why decisions about access to learning and development are made and limited ability to engage in the decision-making process. Officers suggested that this can lead to a loss of trust in the organisation to support their development.

Additionally, the lack of incentive and reward associated with performance appraisals in the organisation, has intensified negative perceptions amongst police officers:

“No, we did have a six-monthly appraisal system but **it’s totally being scrapped**, and they’ll bring in something else. It is and always has been **fairly meaningless**, yea, if you say you’re gonna [sic] do something and you don’t do it, meh [sic] don’t do it, when they give you something and you do it then, so you’ve done it. But yea **there’s nothing currently**.” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

This further highlights the tick-box understanding of these conversations and may explain why police officers often frame any learning which is not mandatory as not valuable for professional and organisational development (discussed next 5.3.3), since there is a lack of space to reflect on these experiences and identify ways in which to integrate them into practice.

Nevertheless, police officers are interested in the opportunity to receive feedback and do discuss their experiences and future ambitions with their line manager where possible:

“That kinda [sic] ability to **[continuously] appraise people** and stuff, there’s no ideal system, it’s really hard, but it’s the conversations that are the important thing not the document because how it’s badged up is neither here nor there as long as they **get a quality conversation once a year.**” (Police Officer, middle management 1)

Findings therefore suggest that there is a *want* and *need* from officers to have structured and meaningful performance appraisals. However, according to participants, the implementation of these systems has been patchy across ranks and roles. Additionally, they have often not focussed enough on the learning journey of the officer but rather on the practical and transactional aspect of completing the conversation as part of a tick-box exercise for organisational accountability.

This was in stark contrast to the experiences of some practitioners from allied professions, in particular those from nursing, social work, and third sector practitioners, who have degree entry and strong oversight from regulatory bodies. According to participants, the supervision provision in these professions was extensive and had a significant impact on practitioners identifying with the organisation and their values. Indeed, these have been identified benefits associated with effective appraisal systems in the literature (Ahmad and Bujang, 2013). It also significantly supported their learning and engagement with research and theory throughout their practice:

“I guess like a huge part of my role is like **doing supervision** with people and **giving them a bit of space to talk** about what’s going on with their work and their home lives and training, and you know things that are coming up like problems or issues, where things are going well and their development as well, so like what they’re kind of **their goals are and kind of helping them get there.**” (Partner, Justice Social Work 3)

Practitioners from allied professions therefore suggest that perceptions *and* experiences of fairness and respect, in relation to supporting access to CPD opportunities and providing psychologically safe environments to discuss training (and other) needs, increased employees’ commitment to the organisation. This can inadvertently support organisational learning and transformation along the way

(Taxman and Gordon, 2009). Therefore, although appraisal systems have promise to effectively support CPD within an organisation, its current use within Police Scotland intensifies officers' negative perceptions towards CPD and lifelong learning, by failing to provide a supportive and psychologically safe space for officers to discuss their wants and needs and reflect on how to meet them. Khalil and Liu (2019, p.53) warn that other allied professions, such as paramedicine, have similar problems around mentoring and HR management, "resulting in some of the new workforce 'burning out' and dropping out". This may suggest a wider problem across public services, highlighting the need for further cross occupational research in this area and something this thesis begins to address.

Whilst appraisal systems and performance conversations can be learning opportunities in and of themselves, as suggested in the literature review (2.3.2), CPD comes in many different guises and its framing is dependent on the organisation and its employees. This can have a significant impact on how, if, and why appraisal systems may be used and how they are perceived by police officers.

5.3.3 The role of CPD within the police and partner organisations

Practitioners from allied professions who engaged in mandatory CPD to register or re-register with a professional regulatory body, similar to some police officers, thought that CPD was important to develop personally and professionally:

"Most of the people I know want to be in a position where **they have the best knowledge to do their job as best they can**, and it can be a **crippling profession** if you're left **without the skills or resources** to do what you know you're paid to do." (Partner, Justice Social Work 5)

"I don't think anyone can do a good job unless they see themselves as **somebody who needs to learn all the time**, you know. I am really familiar with the learning organisation concept and I love it."
(Partner, Third Sector 2)

Although practitioners from allied professions, particularly those with degree entry, also identified areas where more CPD opportunities would be beneficial, compared to police officers, this was to a much lesser extent. Whilst only representing a small sample of practitioners in degree entry professions, interviewees suggest that CPD is inclusive of a number of different learning opportunities opening up new opportunities to support individual and organisational learning. Indeed, participants from these allied professions argued that CPD can include engagement with external bodies (HE) to

specialise, engagement in their own research to explore a specific area of practice in more depth, and any activity which sparks reflection on current practice or develops new expertise. These activities, in addition to mandatory and formal CPD opportunities provided through the organisation, are all considered equally as valuable and are all recognised by the regulatory body and their organisation. Therefore, for these practitioners in particular, CPD was an integral part of their development, engaged with continuously and regularly in various different ways. This flexibility provided these practitioners with agency and autonomy to engage in learning relevant to them and use it to demonstrate competency and lifelong learning, as required by their regulatory body.

In comparison, police officers argued that other than the mandatory courses available to them, such as knowledge transmission-based courses focussed on new legislation, or operational safety training, CPD is optional and not encouraged by the organisation.

“Nobody is reading the current or even the sort of seminal pieces of writing **about emotional intelligence about leadership development**, [leaders in the organisation] haven’t done it. **They don’t see a value in it because the organisation isn’t valuing it** and they’re not doing their own development.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

“If you’re happy [to] **just jog along they’ll let you**, kind of thing, you know, so if you want to do more than that they’ll support you.”
(Police Officer, Constable 6)

These quotes suggest that there is a lack of organisational drive to empower and encourage police officers to engage in CPD. Indeed, because of the lack of organisational interest in officers engaging with CPD, beyond that which is legally necessary, officers indicated that they can often not see the relevance of CPD for themselves or the organisation. As the literature review illustrated (chapter 2), this lack of organisational value placed on optional CPD opportunities can negatively impact on officer’s motivation to engage in lifelong learning. Kennedy (2005) further argued that a *transmission model* of CPD focussed on externally set standards, policies, and reforms limits individual and organisational capacity for transformation and change.

Practitioners from allied professions support these claims from the literature, suggesting that they want to engage in CPD, on the one hand, because it is valued and promoted by the organisation as a valuable activity (discussed further in chapter 6),

and on the other, because they know that there is a need for continuous engagement in learning set by the regulatory body. Interviews suggest that, at least for the particular practitioners interviewed for this study, motivation and ability to engage in learning relevant to them aligns with their occupational culture, their organisations' formal rhetoric, and the formal structures provided by their organisation. In comparison, whilst Police Scotland's official rhetoric states that they want to *empower, enable and develop* police officers (Police Scotland, 2021), officer experiences indicated that this tends to be limited to more transactional forms of CPD, focussed on specific mandatory courses. This suggests a disconnect between the innovative service Police Scotland argues they want to be, the learning culture within the organisation and police officer experiences and perceptions of this. Indeed, Wallace and May (2016, p. 518) argued that there is a need for CPD that "recognises an individual's needs and encourages self-directed learning" supported by "a positive atmosphere that makes learning easy and natural" (Örtenblad, 2015, p. 166), highlighting the central role of the organisation in its provision.

The survey further highlighted how CPD is framed within Police Scotland. Survey respondents argued that Police Scotland largely relies on on-the-job learning or e-learning packages for their CPD provision (Figure 30). It is important to remember here that this reflects survey respondents' viewpoints. Whilst they represent a number of officers across rank and file within Police Scotland, the 381 survey respondents may not represent all roles, ranks and experiences across the over 17,200 full-time equivalent police officer population.

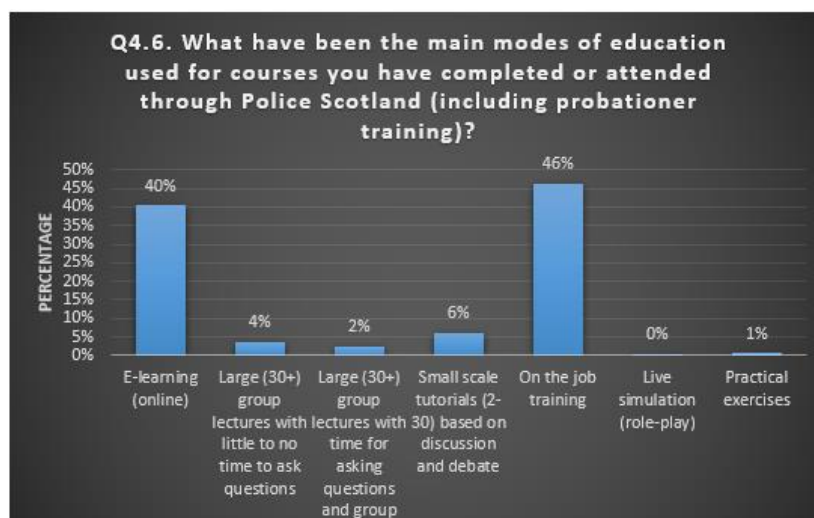


Figure 30 Survey responses to question 4.6 What have been the main modes of education used for courses you have completed or attended through Police Scotland (including probationer training)? (n=322).

Further analysis of this data demonstrated that the use of on-the-job learning increases the longer an officer is in the job, likely reflecting the structured initial learning period police officers embark on when joining Police Scotland and the limited availability of structured learning opportunities throughout an officer's career. Whilst this data does not suggest that one space for learning is better than another (i.e. on-the-job learning is better than online learning or live simulations), as will be illustrated next, the way these spaces are used and perceived by officers can have a significant impact on officer and organisational learning.

5.3.4 Spaces, places and cases of CPD in Police Scotland

As indicated above, e-learning packages and on-the-job learning present two central spaces for CPD within Police Scotland (

Figure 30). This is in addition to the promotion diploma (2.2.1), which highlights another CPD learning space that some officers engaged with throughout their career. These spaces, as will be illustrated throughout this section, frame learning in slightly different ways and communicate to police officers what learning entails and how to engage with it.

5.3.4.1 The online learning environment

The rise of online learning packages was a common theme amongst all participant groups (before and more so after the outbreak of COVID-19). Both survey respondents and interviewees recalled negative experiences of e-learning packages and their ability to support officer learning:

“Nobody, I've done about three [e-learning modules] and nobody has ever checked to [see if it had an impact], naw, because it's **all a waste of time**. I did the GDPR²⁵ one, went through that, no recollection of it.

I know about GDPR, I know about the principles about data protection but naw, so you know what I mean?! So, this kind of **tick-box stuff goes on a lot**.” (Partner, Community Safety Practitioner 1)

“I think most of our training nowadays is you get a global email that says complete this moodle²⁶ package and yea depending on whether **it's a back-covering exercise**, there may be some questions at the end.” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

²⁵ General Data Protection Regulation

²⁶ Police Scotland's online learning platform

Constable 5 highlights how many officers perceived these learning packages. Rather than a learning opportunity, it was considered a way for the organisation to have a record of who has ‘engaged’ with particular content, and therefore who should be able to use presented skills and knowledge in practice. This reflects Kennedy’s (2005, p.247) transmission model of CPD linked to the “standards, accountability and performance management agenda”, which tends to focus on organisational rather than officer learning needs.

Whilst officers understand the need for knowledge transmission models of CPD, to learn about current legislation, policy, and best practice, interviewees question the current implementation of online learning packages and their pedagogical value to embed what is learned into practice:

“No blunt as porridge, they’re rotten, every last one of them. They just give you tick-boxes, the format is exactly the same, they look horrible, there’s not a lot of thought [put] into it [...] it’s not engaging at all, it’s not intuitive and I understand why they do it, because they are catering for the masses, there’s 17,000 of us after all... but I sometimes worry that it’s a **‘tick-box’ check-and-forget exercise** and it doesn’t stick to people.” (Police Officer, senior management 5)

Additionally, when survey respondents were asked about which educational space police officers assessed as least effective to support their learning, e-learning was at the top of the list. 60% of respondents argued that, out of the modes presented to officers, e-learning currently lacks the capacity to effectively support officer learning (Figure 31).

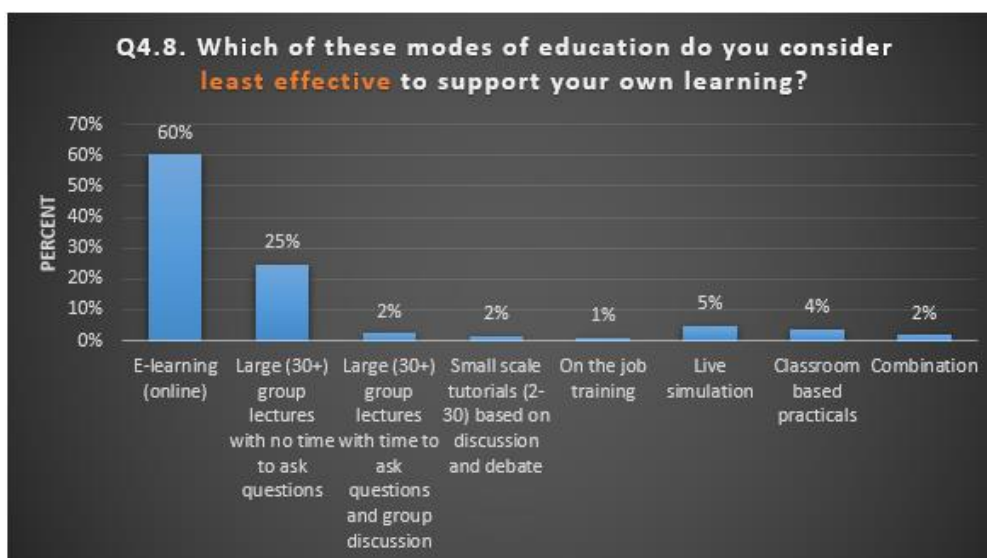


Figure 31 Survey responses to question 4.8 Which of these modes of education do you consider least effective to support your own learning? (Tick all that apply) (n=381).

Indeed, although online learning is perceived as a way to ensure organisational accountability, in reality it might leave officers vulnerable in situations where they have not fully understood or engaged with the content they were presented with online. Nevertheless, the organisation is able to argue that they have provided the relevant learning packages and are therefore not responsible for officers' lack of skill or knowledge. Critically, as Honess' (2019) suggested, an external CPD mandate which fails to explain benefits from a learner perspective can lead to a loss of intrinsic motivation to engage in learning, failing to develop lifelong learners and an organisation which fosters and promotes learning. Hence, according to participants of this study, the stated intention of e-learning packages to translate what officers have learned into practice, by developing certain skills or value systems (McLeish and Wilson, 2018; Police Scotland, 2021), is currently not achieved.

One identified barrier to meaningful learning in this space is the lack of active engagement with the information and their perceived relevance to officer roles:

“There’s **no dialogue**, so I think when people get the opportunity to go ‘but I don’t understand why’ or ask questions, challenge things, they go away from the training and go, ‘I see I didn’t agree with that but it was explained to me because I asked a question’. So I think that you know, potentially, it [a certain in-person workshop] can be made into online learning [package] but I think **if you miss out on these discussions you might miss a trick.**” (Police Officer, Constable 1)

[In response to the question if any moodle courses have been relevant to them]

“None. **I’ve never done a moodle course that I thought benefitted me.** I’ve done a moodle course because **somebody said you need to do that course.**” (Police Officer, senior management 1)

Nevertheless, officers recognised the potential of this learning space as a useful tool to provide learning for officers in more remote areas or those in busy response roles. E-learning packages can therefore present a flexible and time efficient learning space for officers across Scotland:

“[MS] Teams is a prime example, so we weren’t up to speed, [...] now we’re able to do this stuff, [...]. I don’t have to go down to Jackton²⁷ to go for that management course for a week, ‘cause [sic] it takes me

²⁷ Jackton Police College is based in East Kilbride near Glasgow and presents another centralised training centre used by Police Scotland. Whilst this training centre also provides aspects of probationer training and recruitment as well as CPD, the majority of training takes place at Tulliallan Police College.

away from the family. I can actually just do it from here, and there's webinars, [they] are not new things, they're new to Police Scotland, but they're not new, and just I think they need to **start making better use of that** because you would get a lot more uptake if you thought you can sit at your desk and **partake in something that's of real interest to you.**" (Police Officer, middle management 1)

As this middle management officer pointed out, the use of online learning environments presents an opportunity to increase engagement with learning and offer another way to promote CPD within Police Scotland. However, to do this effectively the opportunities need to be relevant and tailored to officer needs.

E-learning packages were considered even more beneficial, where they were complimented with face-to-face discussions either with instructors or within their teams (peer learning):

"We are gonna [sic] be doing moodle and then face- to- face training in all likelihood [...] in order to embed that. Yes, you cover the same thing but **you're then embedding** it and **you're also explaining the ethos behind it**, which you never gonna [sic] cover in moodle, your hearts and minds, where moodle is just about 'this is what it is, and this is what to do'." (Police Officer, Constable 8)

As this officer suggests, the face-to-face or discussion after an online learning package is central to ensure officers understand the purpose behind the learning packages. This aligns with other adult learning theories (Knowles et al., 2021), and highlights the need for adult learners to know why they engage in learning and the importance of agency in the learning process (Burgoyne, 1992). The changes introduced to increase the online learning provisions during officer probationary periods, as mentioned in the literature review (2.2.1), in conjunction with the lack of structured and formal time and space to reflect on these with others, decreases the value and impact of e-learning packages.

As suggested previously (

Figure 30), the second most common space to engage in CPD, mentioned by survey respondents, was learning on-the-job. This included both formal and informal learning opportunities experienced through peer learning, as well as secondments and acting

and temporary²⁸ roles.

5.3.4.2 Learning on-the-job

Police officers suggested that learning on the beat is where actual learning happens. As illustrated in section 5.2, experiential learning is considered essential to learn the craft of policing, reflecting a common narrative of police learning in the literature (Martin and Wooff, 2018; Cockcroft and Hallenberg, 2021).

“A lot of training for the police is **just lived experience** you go along to something; you learn how that thing has worked for you in the past and what approach you might take and then that gives you the practical application that you’re kind of learning.” (Police Officer, frontline management 1)

The online and classroom learning environments are consequently considered spaces where information is transmitted, but only through engagement with others and applying this information, is it transformed into a learning experience. This resonates with Knowles' (1973) theory of the adult learner as someone who learns best when the learning is task-oriented and problem-centred, and highlights the need for active learning environments (Healey and Healey, 2020).

Officers suggest that this kind of learning is often driven and indeed dependent on others, developing communities of practice through peer learning, where learning becomes a socially mediated activity (Topping and Ehly, 2001; Campbell, 2007). This highlights the importance of not only individual and organisational learning activities, but also team learning and the promotion of shared learning spaces.

5.3.4.2.1 Peer Learning

Participants perceived peer learning an integral part of on-the-job learning:

“...it’s very much **you pick it up from other people**, you do your own reading on it, you watch other people in action, and **you learn the good bits and the bad bits from them.**” (Police Officer, middle management 7)

²⁸ Acting roles are short-term positions which can be filled with lower ranking officers who have not yet achieved their promotion diploma or the required training to work at this rank full-time. Temporary roles on the other hand are longer-term arrangements designed to address an identified shortfall within a particular rank and can only be filled with officers who have completed their diploma (or promotion exams) but have not yet been able to secure a role in the required rank.

However, the intricacies of this process are not discussed by officers, which begs the question of how officers differentiate between the *good* and the *bad* habits they learn from peers. Additionally, as this officer highlights, this kind of learning is heavily dependent on the individual and their ability to firstly engage with peers, then identify learning opportunities, and lastly reflect on these learning opportunities. Interviews suggest that due to the lack of structured spaces available for reflection and a lack of formal support to engage in reflection and with peers, the ability to learn from rather than just experience something is currently limited and often dependent solely on individual agency.

Due to the informal and often spontaneous nature of this mode of learning (Doornbos, Simons and Denessen, 2008), its impact and use is more difficult to measure. Nevertheless, officers unanimously agreed that this kind of learning has been the most influential for their career development and learning journey within Police Scotland. This indicates that social learning and working with others is one of the main ways in which officers conceptualise on-the-job learning and how they develop their understanding of themselves as a police officer and of policing practice.

“It’s all about ... **you look at what your manager does and take the good bits and discard the bad bits** and you kinda [sic] **learn by doing**, you might make mistakes along the way, I’ve certainly made [some] in hindsight. Looking back, some of the things I could have dealt with it slightly differently. Doesn’t mean I was wrong, it’s all about learning.” (Police Officer, middle management 5)

The above quote also highlights the role of intentional peer learning, i.e., seeking to learn from others rather than spontaneously learning from them (Doornbos, Simons and Denessen, 2008). This was considered a particularly important way to learn on-the-job, when starting a new role or task. It suggests another way in which learning is reliant on officers’ initiative, rather than formal structures in place to support or promote peer learning, reflecting the shift in responsibility described by Pedler and Burgoyne (2017) in the literature review (2.4.2), that individuals increasingly tend to focus on their own learning journey separate from that of the organisation.

Where officers did mention mentoring schemes initiated by Police Scotland, experiences of these were often negative. Many programs were not well communicated or widely available:

“He was saying ‘I’m really interested in having a mentor’ and [the organisation] got back ‘that’s brilliant we’ll be in touch’ and **he hasn’t heard anything since and it’s 8 months later**. I got plenty of stories like that from my own personal experience as well, so I think sometimes we’re great at **talking a good game but following through is the tricky bit**.” (Police Officer, frontline management 5)

Indeed, some officers were begrudgingly put into a position by the organisation where they had to informally mentor someone, because there was a lack of organisational support available for certain discontinued educational programs:

“Police Scotland was supposed to supply a mentor for me, the initial person they appointed as a mentor **didn’t want to do it and pulled out** pretty quickly, and I’ve been left in a situation where **I’ve had to get my line managers to basically do the essentials** [...] without having an understanding of what it is I’m actually doing and what it is I’m required to do, so **I’m having to push a lot of the work-based learning myself**.” (Police Officer, frontline management 6)

“They’ve now **withdrawn the scheme**, they’re not gonna [sic] do it anymore, and the only person that has shown any interest in them doing it is Muggins [me], [who] gets ask to mentor her. The organisation is not interested in it anymore and she’s only in year two. So **they’ve [Police Scotland] just abandoned her** and the cohort of people that are on it, and that’s symptomatic of the organisation.” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

As the latter quote illustrates, where peer learning was supported or framed by the organisation through a mentoring scheme and then abandoned, some officers felt that they had to pick up where the organisation failed to provide structured support. This negatively impacted on learning journeys and leaves officers at the mercy of supportive line managers or peers to support them.

In contrast, peer learning which is not supported by the organisation, happening informally, is often framed more positively by officers. However, both formal and informal peer learning was dependent on how willing line managers and peers were to support learning and what peer learning meant to them, i.e. imposing traditional cultural norms and practices on officers or developing officers in their own right and in line with the official curriculum. Similar to experiences during the tutor constable phase (5.2.2).

Additionally, officers also recognised the value of informal peer learning with allied professions and other interdisciplinary groups to improve practice:

“It’s **something about networking** as well. You’re broadening that network of people because it’s not only within the organisation. I can now reach out and speak to those peers I got in this [interdisciplinary practitioner] group and **I can reach out to them when I got a particular challenge** that I might not work through with my policing colleagues, **having a fresh perspective** to it all.” (Police Officer, senior management 8)

Therefore, although often not supported through formal structures, this kind of learning is highly valued amongst officers and a significant way in which to engage in active learning (Healey and Roberts, 2004). However, the informal nature of much peer learning within the organisation led to varied experiences amongst officers. Those who had supportive and engaged peers, which helped them to identify further learning, and navigate the internal and external policing practices and culture, in comparison to those that did not have supportive peers willing to help, often struggling to find their way in the organisation and frustrated with the lack of support available to them. This suggests unequal access and distribution of support across the organisation, in some cases hampering motivation and ability to learn.

Conversely, practitioners from allied professions, especially those from graduate professions, discussed more structured ways of promoting peer learning in their organisations:

“We do peer supervision as well but it’s around **somebody that can facilitate those questions** for you and ask those questions, so we got lots of models in nursing around thinking you know, thinking differently, like how would I have done that differently.” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner and academic 1)

Something not discussed by police officers, raised by this practitioner, is the importance of the person you learn from or with, being able to *facilitate* such learning. Therefore, rather than putting the responsibility on the learner and what they do with the information they receive from a colleague, also recognising the role of the mentor and ways in which social learning is facilitated, reflected upon, and taken forward. Therefore, the provision of peer learning is not simply about putting people together and hoping that they learn from each other. Indeed, more structured and supportive environments to promote peer learning within Police Scotland could help the development of communities of practice and promote individual, team, and organisational level learning (Halmaghi, 2018). This is important considering the preference of participants for learning with and from others.

Practitioners from allied professions, particularly those with regulatory bodies, suggest that their organisation actively promotes such learning by developing safe learning spaces:

“We try and build in structures and systems for people to just talk to each other about some new idea they have heard, so we have team meetings once a month and there’s a protective space in that team meeting, you know, for somebody to talk about the training they’ve been to, a book they’ve read you know, an article, an idea that they’d like to explore you know those kinds of things, we have absolutely **systematised all of our support.**” (Partner, Third Sector 2)

In comparison to the learning described above, peer learning within Police Scotland happened largely by chance and was rarely, if ever, scheduled or planned. However, informal unstructured peer learning does not have to be less valuable than that which is structured and formalised into organisational structures. Officers and practitioners from allied professions suggested that the quality of peer interaction and how this space for learning is utilised and accessed are more important factors. Indeed, structured peer learning and mentoring which is forced, rather than presenting a meaningful learning opportunity, it is suggested, has negatively influenced mentee and mentor experiences in Police Scotland. Therefore, a mix of formal and informal peer learning opportunities, actively promoted, guided, and supported by the organisation could help to develop a learning culture which promotes active and reflective learning with others. The current focus on individual responsibility to engage in this learning however, and internal cultural barriers devaluing the need to reflect and discuss learning within Police Scotland, act as barriers to develop effective peer learning practices across the organisation.

Whilst on-the-job learning and online learning environments were the most common spaces for learning mentioned by officers, the DPSLM has presented a central learning opportunity for officers for many years (since 2007). Although it was reserved for those officers wishing to progress through the ranks, it presented a learning opportunity, which is, in comparison to other CPD opportunities, utilising HE for its delivery. Therefore, the DPSLM highlights a space for learning which aims to combine Police Scotland’s online and on-the-job learning, in addition to learning through structured and formal HE provisions.

5.3.4.3 The DPSSM and the new Sergeants Professional Development Programme

As discussed in the literature review (2.2.1), although the DPSSM is now replaced by the new vocational 'Sergeants Professional Development Programme', it has been an important development opportunity for many officers, and officers were still undertaking it during the data collection period. Police officer experiences presented here may offer part of an explanation of why this programme is changing and how these changes may be perceived.

Interviews with police officers confirmed that the introduction of the DPSSM has been largely perceived as positive:

"I think [the DPSSM] is preparing Sergeant's **better than previously** because [before] you pass your three exams, you know every definition under the sun [...], if you got your three exams you were a mover and a shaker, but [it] didn't make you a good manager, it just meant you could learn legislation inside out and regurgitate it on a piece of paper. I think the diploma is starting to get potential supervisors **thinking about some of those management issues and how they would deal with them and adapt to them.**" (Police Officer, middle management 7)

"Yea, [the DPSSM] makes you think more, so sort of trying to **critically apply some of the theory** that, you know, learning and actually **unjumble it and understand it in your mind**, as supposed to just having a piece of legislation." (Police Officer, Constable 5)

Indeed, officers and retired senior officers who have engaged in numerous internal and external CPD opportunities, argued that this external qualification was necessary to develop effective leadership in the organisation.

"So, the skills are different in leadership, and I think at that point **eleven weeks at a college isn't enough** [...]. I think as soon as you go beyond team leader, Sergeant level, you need far more than policing is able to give at the moment and that's the point where I think you start looking at European models. I think Germany, Sweden, where if somebody wants to go and attain the rank that I had [Superintendent], **they go and do a master's degree and that starts to become quite useful.**" (Partner, criminal justice practitioner and recently retired police officer 2)

Nevertheless, officers also recognised and challenged the way the DPSSM was implemented and delivered, because those who undertook it did not receive any time

during working hours to complete it, and there were generally not enough spaces available for those officers who are interested in promotion to undertake it.

“To be honest, it was a bit annoying, they said the [application] form was absolutely great, don’t change anything, just **there weren’t sufficient spaces**, so it was quite annoying because at my age and service combined **timing for me was key, so it was a bit disappointing.**” (Police Officer, Constable 6)

Furthermore, completing the DPSSM did not promise promotion but rather made officers eligible for it, leading to frustration where the work put into the diploma did not lead to the outcome expected. Buckley, McGinnis and Petrunik (1992) in their study of HE for promotion purposes in policing found that “if officers do not receive desired rewards for what they perceive to be relevant qualifications, job and career satisfaction may decline”. This may explain the frustration of some officers who felt unfairly treated by the organisation.

Nevertheless, officers questioned the applicability of the DPSSM and suggested that it was generally too formal and theoretical:

“I think the diploma, my first inclination of it was it’s the easier thing to do and then I looked into it and thought, my god **this is a really difficult thing to do** ‘cause[sic] you’re studying over and above your work time and you’re also doing all of [the] sort of submissions, different types of essay, reflective essays, knowledge just regurgitations, and exams and then you’re going and finding some quite obscure stuff and you’re having to do case studies. I think it was **a much more rounded way of identifying who is a good leader** but it’s still very much education based, **there’s not necessarily application in practice.**” (Police Officer, frontline management 1)

This quote highlights the different spaces of learning considered important for the DPSSM, theoretical as well as practical learning. However, the majority of the learning happened in their own time, by themselves, or in the classroom, and the ability to apply what has been learned in practice was not always given. This was often associated with a lack of organisational and peer support, as well as lack of know-how to engage in self-directed learning. As suggested in the literature, effective learning as professionals includes learning how to elaborate (learn by doing), expand (learn from theoretical knowledge), and externalise (combining theoretical and practical knowledge to advance the profession) learning to support the development of the organisation and occupation (Figure 5) (Simons and Ruijters, 2004). Therefore,

providing detached HE qualifications without the necessary integration and support to apply what has been learned can render learning provisions such as the DPSLM irrelevant.

Some officers suggested that there was often a delay in the ability to apply what has been learned during the DPSLM in practice and it became more relevant once officers were more established in their leadership positions:

“When you go through [the DPSLM], **it didn’t make a lot of sense at the time**, some of the stuff you were doing like theory x, theory y, a lot of stuff about emotional intelligence and stuff, and at that time it didn’t really make much sense but you see **later on** when I became a Sergeant, so maybe **more experienced as a Sergeant** rather than right at the start, **you start to understand what some of the stuff means**, about organisational change and how to take change through and referring to your diploma.” (Police Officer, middle management 1)

Therefore, it might take time for police officers to build the capacity and experience needed to translate what has been learned into practice. Additionally, as will be discussed in chapter 6, much optional learning is influenced and dependent on certain positions of power within the organisation. This might explain why certain theoretical knowledge is perceived irrelevant or not applicable initially, because within certain ranks and roles, there is less opportunity to apply learning in practice, because practice is dictated by forces out of an officer’s control. This, once again, highlights the importance of understanding internal culture and power structures and the complex set of factors influencing police learning environments, and the risks of taking the benefits or limitations of certain workplace learning opportunities at face value.

It is unclear how the new experience-based promotion process is going to address the benefits the DPSLM brought with it, such as a wider understanding of policing and leadership, reflecting on different leadership styles, and discussing common management challenges and their solutions. In addition, this change signifies a certain hierarchy of knowledge and skill in the organisation, where experience is valued over and above other forms of knowledge. Indeed, the new process changes the purpose of the promotion process from a wider focus on leadership skills and development, to a narrow focus on *Police Scotland* leadership skills, handed down from more experienced officers. Furthermore, considering the complex relationship between officers and their line managers and a lack of or understanding of current appraisal

systems (5.3.2), making the evaluation of suitability to be a leader in the organisation dependent on your line manager, as the new process suggests, could further intensify feelings of being treated unfairly or decisions being based on nepotism if not done in a transparent and structured manner. Further, it could further introduce additional challenges in navigating leaders with three different promotion qualifications (the previous knowledge transmission based exams, the transformative action research based DPSSM, and the transition based new mentoring model) (Kennedy, 2005) (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Having discussed the availability, framing, and different manifestations of CPD and their current advantages and limitations within Police Scotland, illustrating how police learning is understood and supported in Police Scotland (Research Question 1), the next section will explore police officer engagement with established Police Scotland CPD opportunities. This provides important context for the upcoming discussion of the value of different forms of learning and knowledge within the organisation, beyond that which is prescribed by Police Scotland for certain roles and ranks.

5.3.5 Police officer engagement with established mandatory and optional CPD opportunities

Reflecting on the different definitions of CPD discussed in the literature review (2.3.2), and how it can manifest i.e. formal, informal, input or output focussed, what optional (non-mandatory) CPD means to different officers varied widely, as the previous discussion of different forms and spaces of CPD has illustrated. Despite the fact that many police officers were not satisfied with the provision of CPD opportunities within Police Scotland (Figure 28), the majority of survey respondents (62%) indicated that they have taken part in optional (non-mandatory) CPD since their initial probationary period (Figure 32).

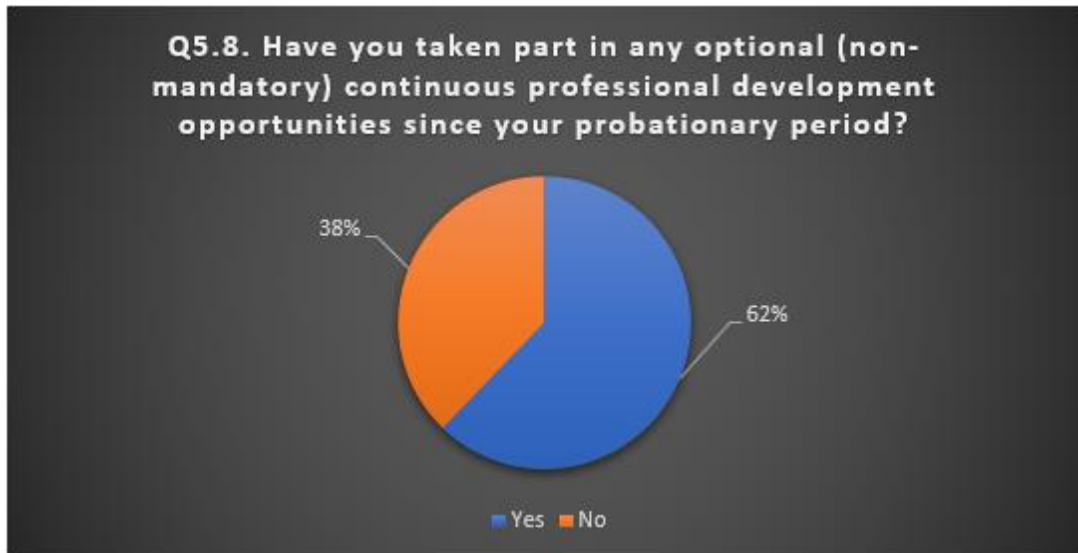


Figure 32 Survey responses to question 5.8 'Have you taken part in any optional (non-mandatory) development opportunities since your probationary period?' (n=381).

Therefore, a majority of officers have and do engage in optional CPD beyond that which is dictated by the organisation. An analysis of the variance of the mean scores between divisions for question 5.8 (above) (Figure 32), indicated that the current division of respondents had a statistically significant impact on engagement with optional (non-mandatory) CPD ($F(5, 375) = 3.433, p = .005$). Further exploration through a Tukey post-hoc test highlighted that this was specifically related to differences between the national division²⁹ and A and N division (North East & Highlands and Islands) compared to Q, J and V division (Lanarkshire, Lothian & Scottish Borders, Dumfries, and Galloway). Officers currently in a national division or A and N division were significantly more likely to have taken part in optional CPD opportunities (75% and 89% respectively compared to 62% average) [see Appendix L for a map of divisions].

There are several possible explanations for this finding. Regarding A and N division, it is important to state that officers from these divisions represent less than 5% of the survey sample and therefore differences could be aggravated. Nevertheless, it is likely that officers in more remote areas engage in optional CPD more often because the

²⁹ The national division or Specialist Crime Division describes centralised resources provided to local policing divisions, which are nationally co-ordinated. These can include major crime, organised crime and counter terrorism and intelligence (see <https://www.scotland.police.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-crime-division/> for further details)

availability of CPD opportunities are more limited compared to officers in more urban areas in central Scotland, where the Police College is located. Officers from these areas (often rural and further away from the central belt of Scotland) often discussed looking for development opportunities outside of Police Scotland, with allied professions or through HE institutions, online or in-person.

This could be aggravated by a lack appropriate training for rural policing needs (Harkness and Larkins, 2019), and research (Wu and Wen, 2020, p. 443) suggesting that rural officers often “suffer from resource or training deprivation” leading to higher stress levels. To avoid this, officers may seek out more optional CPD opportunities to develop relevant policing skills. Interviews confirmed that there are geographical disparities in the availability of training and development, which frustrates officers from these divisions, explaining the negative perceptions of CPD availability observed from A and N division previously (Figure 29) (5.3.1).

“Geography plays a huge part. For me to go to a one-day training session is just not practical and **they won’t give you overtime either**, so it means me getting up at four in the morning, driving down there, spending a day in a classroom, after getting up so early in the morning and trying not to fall asleep on the way back or an overnight stay.” (Police Officer, Constable 5, A Division)

“Sometimes there’s courses that you would like to do okay?! But because they’re only delivered at Tulliallan right?! They have to be overnights residential courses and I’d be lying if I said, on more than one occasion, I’ve been put off going on a course simply because I can’t be bothered going to Tulliallan, **the upheaval it takes**, and that increases the older you get, and you know if you get family and stuff like that, and it’s the same for job development you know, **there’s been a huge amount of roles that have moved south** to Dalmarnock, to Gartcosh, Scottish Police College, that kind of stuff, which were roles that would ordinarily have been distributed throughout all the separate forces so **you don’t have the opportunities to go out for those roles.**” (Police Officer, middle management 1, A Division)

This middle management officer also highlighted the impact of the centralization of police forces on accessing CPD opportunities, as many roles have been subsumed into centralized and national divisions. Therefore, there are less opportunities for officers to take on new roles in their divisions and attend the associated training and development opportunities for these roles. Hence, officers from more remote or less

central divisions, discussed the heavy reliance on self-directed and on-the-job learning as the main ways in which to engage with CPD, in the absence or lack of access to structured and formal learning opportunities provided by Police Scotland. This may once again support claims in the literature that there is a shift in responsibility within workplace learning environments from the organisation to individuals (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017).

In relation to national divisions and their significantly higher engagement with optional CPD compared to some other divisions (Figure 32), interviews suggested that they have a wider array of optional learning opportunities offered to them through allied professions. Due to their specialised nature and their link to current Police Scotland priorities (further explored in chapter 7), in addition to their more flexible and at times less pressurised work environments, they were able to engage in several CPD opportunities not available to response officers and those in local divisions.

“When I was in **economic crime** [...] we were asked if anyone wanted to do a course in cybercrime [...] **I put myself forward and was selected for that course.**” (Police officer, frontline management 6)

Nevertheless, experiences of interviewees across divisions varied widely and much of the engagement with CPD was influenced more by personal motivation and police culture, rather than the division of officers. Therefore, although contributing to the access and engagement with CPD, divisions are not the only factors influencing engagement with learning, as will be explored in chapter 6.

In relation to geographical differences in engagement with learning, officers highlighted some promising developments during and just before the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging more localised training, where facilitators come to officers rather than vice versa, and the use of the newly found ability to provide training online through webinars and workshops:

“I’m going out to L division which is like Oban and Campbelltown like I’m gonna [sic] take the training out to them because to get people to training you lose them for days on end, so **let’s take the training to the more inaccessible areas**, whereas you know Jackton is quite easy for a lot of people in Glasgow, but it wouldn’t be accessible for somebody that’s working on Mull. [laughing]” (Police Officer, Constable 1)

However, those officers providing or hoping to engage in such training argued that they often come up against resource and budget constraints. Participants suggested that CPD opportunities are generally the first things which are cut when Police Scotland is looking for ways to save money. The lack of investment in structured, flexible, and accessible learning within Police Scotland also sets a precedent for officers, which suggests that learning on-the-job is enough to get through, and engagement with learning beyond experience is not mandatory and therefore not necessary. This is reflected in officers' conceptualisations of CPD and the way that officers often described engagement with optional or additional CPD as *lucky* and *dependent on the individual*, not something encouraged or required by the organisation.

In addition to geographical disparities in the engagement with optional CPD opportunities, there was also a statistically significant effect of rank, identified through conducting an analysis of variance between the mean scores of different ranks ($F(3,373)=5.622, p=.001$) (Figure 32). Utilising Tukey's post-hoc test, a significant difference between means was located between constable and Inspector rank, with Inspectors being much more likely to take part in optional CPD (88%) than constables (55%). One explanation for this may be that constable ranking police officers are often in frontline policing roles and less likely to take on extra responsibility, such as leadership and management responsibilities, which might require optional CPD. Indeed, several officers argued that frontline officers do not necessarily require additional learning and development opportunities.

“I think... a lot of the job is down to your, I know these are kind of woolly terms, but a lot of the job is kind of **down to your common sense and your kind of soft skills**, your ability to interact with the public and things like that, so I guess like any role you can get by with your **fifteen weeks at Tulliallan**, and then your two year **probation learning under a more experienced cop** and things like that.” (Police Officer, Constable 4)

This quote highlights a common theme amongst officers stating that additional learning was not a requirement for response officers at constable level and that most learning happens on-the-job. This stands in opposition to the learning culture Police Scotland seeks to foster and may intensify perceptions of an unfair distribution of

learning opportunities, whilst limiting the ability to develop lifelong learners across the organisation.

This section highlighted that there are currently several barriers in developing a fair distribution of relevant learning opportunities and that much of the responsibility to identify and engage in learning is on the individual rather than the organisation.

5.4 Discussion and conclusion

This chapter presented the established police officer learning pathways in Police Scotland, addressing research question one and two, whilst utilising insights from allied professions to answer research question three. It explored how learning occurs within Police Scotland and how it is understood and supported. Police officer voices unveiled how certain formal learning structures tend to be largely aspirational and do not always adequately prepare officers for the realities of the job. Additionally, findings present a remarkably mixed experience of both mandatory and optional, formal and informal, learning opportunities, which has a significant impact on officer perceptions of the organisation and feelings of being empowered and supported.

The initial classroom-based learning environment was perceived as decontextualised from the lived experience of police officers on the street. This perceived disconnect intensifies the theory-practice divide often present in craft occupations (Wood *et al.*, 2018), which had a negative influence on police officer motivation to engage in continued learning, particularly that which is not on-the-job. The perceived divide between theory and practice was also observed in the provision of the DPSSLM. To address this, as discussed in the literature review, Police Scotland could benefit from more situated learning provisions, which more clearly reflect the realities of police work on the ground, whilst providing structured opportunities to reflect with others (Clarke, 2005).

Expanding situated learning requires more integration and engagement with local teams, line managers, and tutors/mentors to support such learning. As Moreale and Herrington (2021) argued, relationships are at the heart of policing and these underpin peer learning. Indeed, peer learning and support from trained mentors is important to work within the official curriculum and encourage the development of communities of practice (Topping, 2005; Charman, 2014). However, according to participants, this is

currently not something widely available within Police Scotland, and even where there are structured opportunities available, such as mentoring schemes, these are often perceived negatively by officers or short-lived. Therefore, this study suggests that there is a need to provide more scaffolding and long-term provisions of peer learning. Practitioners from allied professions with degree entry and the need to register with a professional body, suggested that this support and scaffolding around learning opportunities was key to support individual, team and organisational learning. These exploratory findings suggest that Police Scotland should take a closer look at the gap between the formal and informal curriculum currently manifesting in the organisation, and how to bridge this gap through active and reflective learning activities, supported by the organisation and communities of practice (Charman, 2014).

In relation to this, police officer experiences of tutoring and mentoring after the initial learning period have been varied and more recently, there has been a significant lack of tutoring provisions for new recruits, suggesting a lack of value attached to the tutor constable role. For some, this results in a lack of knowledge and skill to effectively translate classroom-based learning into practice in line with the official curriculum. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (2002) identified the importance of rigorous selection processes, quality assurance, training, resilience, and an increased recognition of the tutor role to support probationer learning. This study highlights that many of the problems in the use and experiences of tutor constables identified 20 years ago remain today. To effectively support the transition between the Scottish Police College and local divisions, there is a need for Police Scotland to revisit its current identification of training for, access to, and use of tutor constables. Furthermore, developing the tutor constable scheme by amplifying the role and providing more training and support for tutor and tutee, could improve current perceptions of unfair treatment and an unfair distribution of opportunities across probationers. Tutors also play a central role in helping new recruits identify how to and why engage in lifelong learning during and after their probationary period. This is important to provide an active and supportive learning environment which develops learning professionals and lifelong learners (Janssens *et al.*, 2017). Experiences of officers early in their career suggest that there is a need to address the barriers to effective engagement with learning and development during this period to enable the

development of positive learning habits which can support individual, team and organisational learning throughout an officer's career.

Beyond the provision of initial learning, availability and engagement with CPD also varied widely between officers, roles, ranks, and divisions. Many formal and mandatory learning opportunities were perceived as *back covering exercises* for organisational rather than officer benefit. This supports Friedman and Phillips' (2004, p.366) argument that many practitioners think that CPD is "a bureaucratic process separate from learning activities", and it would not make a difference to their practice if it did not exist. As discussed in the literature review, the NPM approach has introduced a transactional nature to some of these learning processes in policing, focusing too much on "a myth of control, and external legitimisation than any real improvement in operational efficiency" (Butterfield & Woodall, 2007, p.398). Officers suggested that this is the case within Police Scotland, and without an increased focus on explaining and demonstrating the benefit of particularly mandatory CPD for the learner, it will likely increase dissatisfaction and demotivate officers to engage in such learning in the future (Honest, 2019). Therefore, a move from transmission to transformative models of CPD is required (Kennedy, 2005).

Whilst the online learning environment presents certain opportunities to increase access to CPD for some officers, participants argued that this is not currently considered a supportive and useful learning space. This questions the planned expansion of online learning proposed in the new Police Scotland Workforce Plan (Police Scotland, 2021). To afford meaningful learning, e-learning packages should not only deliver content but support authentic learning experiences (Webster-Wright, 2009). If the purpose of e-learning packages is indeed knowledge transfer for accountability purposes, rather than learning and understanding new skills and knowledge, this should be clearly communicated to avoid frustration and confusion amongst officers, as officers suggest is currently the case. As adult learning theories suggest and is essential to develop a supportive learning environment, officers need to know why they learn something and why it is relevant to them and their role (Knowles, 1970).

In light of the lack of and quality of structured learning opportunities available, police officers argued that most of their learning happens on-the-job. Kolb's (2014)

experiential learning cycle would suggest however, that what police officers in this study consider experiential learning is often conflated with *having experiences rather than learning from them*. Therefore, officers mentioned that by simply being on the street and talking to other officers they are able to learn the craft of policing, whereas the reflective aspect of experiential learning was rarely, if ever, mentioned.

Importantly, Simons and Ruijters (2004) illustrated that without expanding and externalising what is learned on-the-job, it is difficult to develop as a learning professional and officers may miss opportunities to contribute to the development of the profession as a whole. Therefore, there is a need for a better understanding what learning on-the-job should entail and how the organisation can support the different stages of experiential *learning*, including how to externalise and share learning (Kolb, 2014).

Interestingly, officer experiences of CPD were in stark contrast to experiences from practitioners from allied professions, in particular those practitioners from allied professions with degree entry, who suggested that CPD included a wide range of activities, actively supported by their organisation, and encouraging reflection. Police officer experiences and perceptions of CPD, on the other hand, illustrated a lack of clarity in what CPD within Police Scotland is and can be, and where it can take place. For some officers CPD incorporated formal, informal, structured, unstructured, output and input-based learning, both in the classroom and on-the-job, whereas others had a much more narrow idea of CPD, which was dominated by mandatory learning online or in the classroom. This, in addition to a lack of transparency and scaffolding to identify and support CPD opportunities, such as appraisals and development discussions, intensified officer feelings of being treated unfairly by the organisation.

Nevertheless, officers who are interested in learning and skilled in identifying opportunities had few problems engaging in CPD beyond that which is mandatory. This suggests that there are opportunities available if officers have the know-how and motivation to engage with them. However, importantly these officers are often those who have had positive experiences with their tutor constables, peers and line managers throughout their learning journey. In contrast, officers with less positive experiences during their probationary period and with a lack of support from line managers are often limited to the mandatory CPD available to them. Critically, these

divergent approaches to and understandings of CPD across the force, can lead to differences in service provision, because some officers are engaged in continuous lifelong learning improving their practice, whereas others focus on what is perceived as exercises in organisational accountability, which, according to officers, lack pedagogical value. Therefore, the way in which officers are supported to identify and access CPD is important.

Coordinated and consistent appraisals and development discussions are key to regulate access to development opportunities and increase organisational commitment and feelings of being treated fairly by the organisation (Charman and Bennett, 2021). Additionally, appraisal systems have more value than simply assessing performance, as Jacobs et al., (2014, p.72) state “employees interpret their performance appraisal as a symbolic situation in which they test the trustworthiness of both their superior and organisation towards them”. This is in addition to supporting the strategic alignment within organisations and holding its employees accountable. Therefore, a lack of performance reviews, as experienced by almost all officers interviewed in this study, can negatively impact on officers’ perceptions of the organisation and in turn the organisations’ ability to effectively support them. Hence, it is suggested that there is a need for Police Scotland to revisit its current provision of performance appraisals to enable meaningful and regular discussions to identify learning needs and how to address them.

Police Scotland’s new mandatory ‘My Career’ conversations may provide the structure needed to develop self-evaluation and support police officer performance appraisals (Police Scotland, 2021). However, how exactly this new process is addressing some of the shortcomings of previous programmes, such as a lack of understanding of the processes involved and the tick-box nature of their use, is unclear. Indeed, considering the continued resourcing pressures Police Scotland is facing, and the lack of formal mentoring and peer support structures available, in addition to a lack of ability to abstract officers to learn this new process (discussed in chapter 7), there is a need for significant strategic planning. A more consistent and well supported approach to performance appraisals, aided by extensive staff training, and continuous evaluation and staff engagement, is key to ensure that this new process has the intended effect on police officer and organisational learning and development.

Therefore, although Police Scotland has the aspiration to be a LO and provides mandatory and voluntary learning opportunities, how established learning pathways are perceived and experienced by police officers suggested a lack of alignment between aspirations of learning, officer expectations, and lived experiences. Specifically, how formal learning is framed by officers, suggested a transactional and transmission model of learning, as introduced by Kennedy (2005), which lacks capacity to empower officers and develop innovative practice. Findings therefore suggest that Police Scotland would benefit from transforming the rhetoric of its current provision of established learning opportunities perceived as exercises of accountability, and tick-box exercises. A focus on more holistic approaches which bridge the gap between theoretical, classroom-based, online, and practical and on-the-job learning would be beneficial. This chapter highlights the importance of organisational culture in addressing this rhetoric effectively, and the need to not only introduce new processes from the top-down but change the official and informal discourse around learning and development within the organisation.

Building on the influences on the learning landscape presented here, the next chapter critically assesses the significant value attached to on-the-job learning in more depth by exploring the influence of organisational culture and the value and role of other kinds of learning. Furthermore, interviews and focus groups with practitioners from allied professions and ENU students highlighted a stark contrast between what workplace learning could look like, and what possible future officers might expect from Police Scotland, in comparison to what is currently available and experienced. Therefore, chapter six will delve deeper into officer experiences, and opportunities and barriers to different kinds of learning and knowledge.

Chapter 6: Culture(s) and experiences of learning in Police Scotland and beyond

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 introduced the established learning pathways of Scottish police officers and how these pathways are assessed and experienced by officers. Police officers' understandings and experiences of informal and formal learning within Police Scotland revealed tensions between the structured classroom-based learning, online learning opportunities and on-the-job learning. Furthermore, officers experienced an unequal distribution of organisational learning opportunities which, for some, created feelings of being treated unfairly within Police Scotland. Building on these findings, this chapter will critically analyse police officers' lived experiences of the culture and value of different kinds of learning within Police Scotland. By comparing police officer experiences to that of practitioners from allied professions, in addition to exploring expectations and conceptualisations of police learning by ENU students, this chapter will provide a better understanding of how different kinds of learning are perceived, experienced, promoted, and limited within Police Scotland, and suggest possible adjustments to address the changing workplace learning context and the police learning landscape in Scotland. This will set the scene for the final findings chapter, which introduces the organisational perspectives influencing police learning and development in Scotland.

This chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, ENU students' understandings and expectations of the police learning environment will be discussed (6.2). This participant group highlighted an unexplored but useful perspective in Scotland, providing exploratory insights into an emerging and growing cohort of possible future police officers. Whilst findings presented are tentative and based on a small sample, they suggest areas for future research and themes Police Scotland may wish to consider when developing their learning provisions. The next section will reflect and critically explore officers' lived experiences of learning and how police officers engage with different kinds of learning, such as those discussed by ENU students (6.3). Additionally, police officer motivations and perceived barriers and challenges to engage in different kinds of learning are critically assessed in relation to the workplace learning literature. Reflecting on these motivations and lived experiences, the next section provides an

exploration of the learning climate and emerging learning subculture(s) within Police Scotland (6.4). This section emphasizes how the restrictive formulations of learning and knowing within the organisation can develop feelings of isolation amongst officers, shifting a significant amount of responsibility for learning from the organisation onto the individual. Providing valuable nuance to this argument, the next section will introduce reflections from practitioners from allied professions on their own experiences of learning and that with police officers (6.5). Their views highlighted several similarities and differences in the engagement with and expectations of workplace learning environments. Section 6.6 will summarise the key arguments made throughout this chapter and link these to the overarching themes of the thesis in relation to the police education and workplace learning literature.

6.2 Reflections from ENU students

As mentioned above, ENU students (henceforth students) provide a relevant perspective on the topic of police learning in Scotland because they represent a growing cohort of individuals studying policing specific degrees in Scotland before applying to become full-time officers. They explicitly want to become police officers but have chosen to study a HE policing programme before joining³⁰. Therefore, their views represent possible new and emerging understandings and expectations of learning to become and learning to be a police officer in Scotland. This section will present exploratory insights on how students' reflections tie in with the established police officer learning pathways discussed previously (Chapter 5) and compare students' expectations and viewpoints with officers' lived experiences within Police Scotland (0).

Whilst students are on a HE degree in policing, they have a heightened level of awareness that learning on-the-job will play a vital role in understanding policing practice and learning the intricacies of police work.

“I think **you learn on the job**, it's [...] almost like, what people say with driving as in kind of **you learn more after you pass your test**, like not saying, you don't know the job before you start, because you can sit in a classroom, or you can be at Tulliallan, and learn all you

³⁰ See footnote 5, p.8

want, but until you actually respond to a real life call, I feel like that's just development.” (Focus Group 2, Student 8)

Therefore, similar to police officers, students, without knowing the realities of what learning at the Scottish police college entails, know that the translation of this knowledge into practice is where active learning will happen. It is interesting that students who have chosen to study for a bachelor’s degree before joining Police Scotland, still consider experiential learning essential to learn how to do the job. This highlights the strong influence of traditional notions of police learning and police as craft occupation in understanding and framing the value of on-the-job learning, even before joining the force.

Nevertheless, students stated that they also think police officers require a wider understanding of their role and the impact they can have as police officers, similar to that provided to them through HE.

“I just think that it’s important, **while they don’t have to have a degree** to go straight into the police, you have so much power as a police officer and I think that **it’s maybe a little bit irresponsible just to go straight into the police force** without [...] doing some research about just the wider issues involved in policing and the influence it can have on different people depending on their culture, or like you know race, sex, or whatever, so I just think it gave me so far **a better understanding of the influence I can have as a police officer.**” (Focus Group 1, Student 1)

“I think that [the policing degree] is going to be beneficial because **you understand and dissect the situation a lot better than somebody coming in, with, like, kind of no knowledge** and just not knowing what to expect. Like, I think you know it would make you in general perhaps more understanding as an individual of these situations.” (Focus Group 2, Student 7)

As Student 1 highlights, there is a degree of legitimacy associated with the level of learning police officers engage with. Students argued that police officers should engage in wider learning and research because they have a lot of power and discretion. Therefore, to use this legitimately, there should be a certain level of education beyond experience, ensuring that officers know the impact using their powers can have. These views reflect the wider debates in the literature around curtailing discretion through overly structured and prescriptive learning styles, or

enabling it through reflective practice and empowering learning structures (Stone and Travis, 2013; Wood, 2018). Students' perceptions also highlight the link between experiencing and knowing what an officer experiences and enabling them to dissect the situation through reflective practice, promoting active learning environments, which, according to police officers, are often lacking in established police officer learning pathways (Chapter 5).

In addition to the knowledge students think police officers should have, before or while joining, they also expect to engage in CPD, with the flexibility to develop their career as they see fit.

"Yeah, I think it's something you can progress quite far and if you're motivated enough, you know. Like, there is quite a big range of, like, how far you can go." (Focus Group 2, Student 9)

"I feel that you would need to keep learning because society changes all the time, and if you stop learning then you'll be stuck in the past compared to everybody else around you." (Focus Group 3, Student 10)

Therefore, although as student 9 suggests, there is an understanding of the need for intrinsic motivation to engage in such learning, learning also needs to be driven by the organisation to ensure that they are not *"stuck in the past"*. Indeed, students argued that CPD is important and should be supported and actively promoted by the organisation:

Student 10

"[CPD should be] optional but pressed onto you, yeah, I mean, a kind of weighted decision in one direction but ultimately, you can't make anybody do anything they don't want to."

Student 12

"Yeah, I think they should [engage in mandatory ongoing learning for registration similar to nursing], because I feel like policing is always changing, and as we've seen in the last 18 months or so, we [the police] definitely should have some sort of thing like that. And also, I feel like a lot of people, because there is no degree, some people might see the police as an easy option, and then just stick in and not progress very high, if they had to put the actual work in every 3 years or so [CPD for registration], to kind of prove that you're still capable and still want to do the job, then I think that couldn't do any bad."
(Focus Group 3)

Student 12 highlights the need for continuous learning not only for the organisation and the individual officers, but also for police legitimacy, as it “proves that [police officers are] still capable”, while stressing the importance of organisational structures to encourage continuous learning. Therefore, students expect and propose a supportive and encouraging CPD environment within Police Scotland is important for officers and the public to provide a high-quality police service. However, the current lack of structured and supported CPD opportunities highlighted in the previous chapter suggests that students’ expectations may not be met.

Interestingly, students argued that engagement with HE through a policing degree would enable them to question outdated and problematic practices and negative aspects of police culture:

“...[we can] **use that knowledge to pick [that] apart**, see if we got taught something, or one of the officers made like an ‘off the hand’ comment about something and you know, you happen to pick up on that and, you know, realise whether that’s problematic, or it could be, if someone like a trainee was learning and using that comment in practice, which maybe wasn’t the best way to go about doing things, but **we have kind of knowledge to fall back on** and we’re able to sort of just look up to the person that’s above you, like ‘oh my god they’re the best person’, you know, and idolise them, and whatever they say is correct you know, we have sort of knowledge to pick that apart you know, **realise when what they said is not actually maybe correct.**”

(Focus Group 1, Student 1)

Therefore, these students are aware that a lot of learning may happen informally within Police Scotland, but this may not always be based on the best available evidence-base, knowledge, or skillset. Students hope that having previous knowledge and the ability to critically assess information from their degree, will help them to be more removed from the situation and identify what cultural and organisational practices and habits are justified, and which ones may require revision. Indeed, Campeau (2017, p.70) argued that "the dominance of old-school ideas grows increasingly precarious as the reigning myths lose legitimacy for the new, diverse, more educated officers who are entering a career marked by increasing professionalism, accountability and externally rooted oversight over which police have little control". Nevertheless, research from England and Wales highlighted a strong and prevailing influence of traditional police culture despite changing educational

standards, often acting as a barrier to transformational change (Hallenberg and Cockcroft, 2017; Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019; Cockcroft and Hallenberg, 2021).

Indeed, although students discussed the need to be critical of learning from peers, they are aware that their views may change, or experiences may differ, once they join and see what behaviour is rewarded within the organisation. This reflects an understanding of the impact socialisation and acculturation can have on new recruits, as discussed in the previous chapter (5.2.3):

“I think that, you know, when you’re actually a police officer, and you’re doing the things that police officers actually do, it will **change the way that you view kind of like your academic coursework**, and stuff like that, **and the opinions that academics have**, and the opinions that actual police officers have, so I think it will give you, it’ll give us a **greater insight into policing as a profession** rather than just kind of as like a philosophy.” (Focus Group 1, Student 1)

This reflects some of my own experiences as a special constable, discussed in chapter 4. Therefore, without having first-hand experience of policing and police learning within Police Scotland, students raise several important themes in relation to the police learning context. Firstly, they recognise the importance of active and contextualised learning in the workplace, whilst demonstrating the wider recognition that police officers need to be *learning professionals*, able to utilise and combine theoretical and on-the-job learning effectively to address the ‘wicked problems’ of the 21st century (Simons and Ruijters, 2004; Grint, 2010). Students argued that they receive a significant amount of this critical theoretical knowledge throughout their degree. When comparing this to the previously discussed focus on practical and legal knowledge in the official curriculum of Police Scotland (chapter 5), students introduce an interesting and different way in which police knowledge may be transferred and expanded. Acknowledging the growing number of policing HE students in Scotland and the lived experiences of officers discussed next, Police Scotland could benefit from this wider appreciation of police learning and may want to expand their engagement with HE to do so.

Secondly, students argued that police officers should engage in ongoing learning and development not only for their own practice but also to ensure legitimacy and accountability for the organisation. Indeed, they suggest that CPD should not only be

an individual endeavour, but something actively supported by the organisation. The previous chapter highlighted that this organisational support is currently often lacking. Therefore, students may struggle to find ways in which to sustain and advance their skillsets and grow increasingly disappointed and disillusioned by the organisation when they join Police Scotland. The literature suggests that this can lead to a drop in the quality of service provision and a lack of motivation to engage in learning in the future, whilst increasing the feeling of being treated unfairly or not being valued by the organisation (Roberts and Herrington, 2013; Charman and Bennett, 2021).

Thirdly, students raise interesting questions around the possible impact having a degree in policing could have on being socialised and acculturated into the organisation. Focus groups suggest that there may be a risk that the pull of police culture is too strong and that what is learned in HE is framed in a way to fit the organisational cultural narrative, not leading to the transformational aspirations of many HE policing degrees (Christopher, 2015b). The fact that students are aware of the strong culture within policing and the way it may change their thinking may present an opportunity to support a transition between HE and policing that recognises the positive aspects of police culture, providing context and support for on-the-job learning, whilst identifying ways in which to retain critical distance where appropriate and necessary. It is important to remember that due to the scope of this study and resource and time restrictions, this participant group was limited to students from one Scottish University, representing a certain demographic and viewpoint, therefore, only providing exploratory insights into themes that would benefit from more in-depth research in the future. In particular research following students' pathways into policing and how experiences and viewpoints may change.

The following sections will provide a more in-depth assessment into what students may encounter when joining Police Scotland and how the lived experiences of officers' engagement with different forms of learning highlight how learning is understood and operationalised in Police Scotland.

6.3 The lived experience of different kinds of learning in Police Scotland

As discussed in chapter 5, although there are structured and formal learning opportunities within Police Scotland, officers argued that most of their learning

happens on the street and through engagement with other officers. Additional learning over and above experiential and mandatory learning was often considered overachieving and trying too hard:

“We’ve been very very critical of, I’ll use the term loosely, **badge hunters**. People just wanting to get a qualification and then never use it.” (Police Officer, Constable 3)

“There is a slight sort of **inverted snobbery** in the police, where again it comes back to that, it’s all about **time served**, it’s all about how old your boots are and how many fields you’ve stood in, hours on end, protecting a locus, or how many murders you’ve investigated, that’s the important thing, **not book learning**.” (Police Officer, middle management 2)

As the above quotes suggest, the focus is on experience, whereas learning through other means, such as HE, external agencies, or internal structured courses, are often not considered relevant or accepted as an established way in which to learn the art and craft of policing. Therefore, this kind of learning is rarely rewarded:

“So, four years later, **everyone acknowledged it was great** [a policing course developed based on extensive academic study], **gone nowhere**, and don’t get me wrong, I’ve not had the stuffing knocked out me in terms of I wouldn’t do anything else, but you just build and build and build these things and then **you just get no buy in at all**. We didn’t come up with it at the top, they don’t like bottom-up stuff at all.” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

“I think we have **so many talented people** but all we’re looking at is people going ‘**look at me, look at me**’, you know, with their hand up and that’s the people that are getting promoted.” (Police Officer, frontline management 7)

Hence, not only is additional learning not promoted or rewarded within the organisation, according to participants, it is actively discouraged by a pervasive culture which does not appreciate or want officers’ input in individual or organisational learning processes. This lack of participative engagement in the learning culture within Police Scotland, it is argued, results in a perception of the organisation creating an unfair learning environment, where some officers are favoured over others, not based on merit but on the cultural capital attached to experience and rank (explored further next and in chapter 7). This questions the previously discussed ability of ENU students to integrate and use their wider understanding of policing and police culture in

practice, whilst suggesting that Police Scotland lacks the participatory learning environment which could enhance their workplace learning environment and practice.

6.3.1 The centrality of experience and experiential learning

“If I’m being honest there’s a lot of **assumed understanding and assumed learning**, but assumption in this job is a real dangerous thing to do.” (Police Officer, Constable 3)

As this officer suggested, due to the focus on experience within the organisation, there is a lot of *assumed learning* taking place, without the necessary safeguards and scaffolding to ensure that firstly, officers do *learn* from experience, and secondly that what they learn aligns with the goals and values of the organisation. Chapter 5 highlighted the ways in which this lack of support and scaffolding, particularly at the beginning of a police officer’s career, can negatively influence police officer learning journeys in the future.

Moreover, it is not only the focus on learning on-the-job in general which officers considered superior to other forms and spaces of learning, but in particular frontline policing experience.

“There’s a thing with promotion that you get, oh you’ve been in the CID you need to go **back to uniform** [response policing] and get some **operational experience**, and I’m going like this, why the hell would that help to deal with murders, you know, they’ve got great experience because of not giving someone a ticket for car parking, well who cares? You know.” (Police Officer, senior management 5)

This senior manager emphasised and reflected several officers’ viewpoints that the focus of current structures within Police Scotland is on *having experience* rather than *learning from experience*. This suggests a disconnect between what might be needed for a role (certain knowledge and skills) and what is asked of officers (experience of frontline policing).

In fact, almost 50% of survey respondents agreed to some extent that you learn everything you need to be to be a good police officer through experiential learning and working closely with other officers (Figure 33).

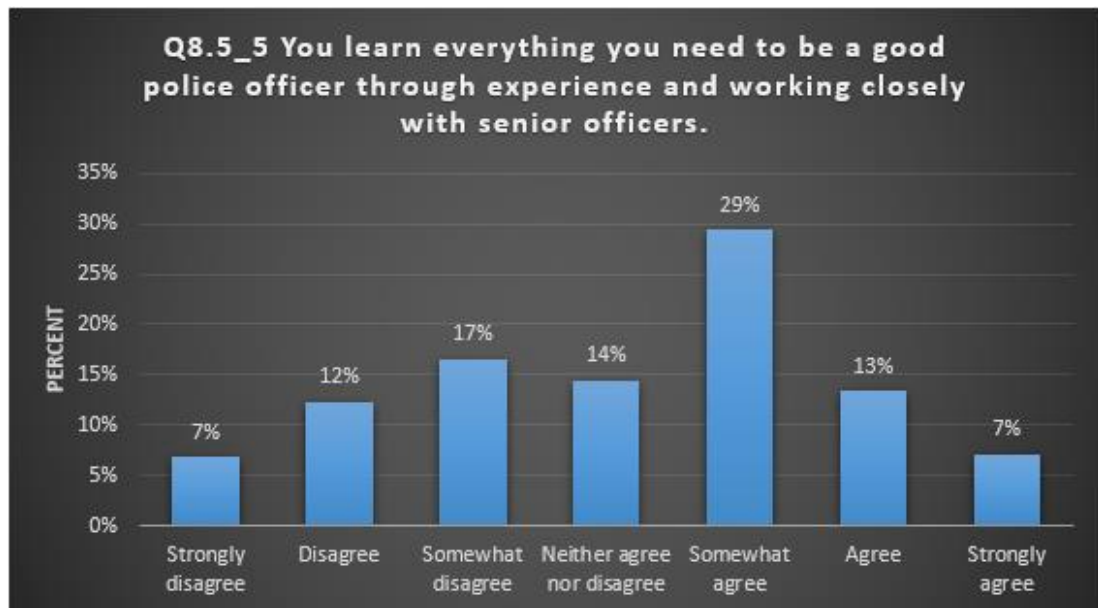


Figure 33 Survey responses to question 8.5_5 To what degree do you agree with the statement "You learn everything you need to be a good police officer through experience and working closely with senior officers" (n=381).

To identify if the focus on experiential and peer learning differs between service brackets, a Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted to compare levels of agreement with this statement between officers with less than 10 years' service and those with 11 years' service or more. Results indicate that a statistically significant difference between the two groups exists ($U=9153.5$, $p=.001$). Further exploration indicates that those officers with shorter service brackets (less than 10 years) have higher rates of agreement with this statement (i.e. you learn everything you need on-the-job and through peer learning), whereas those with longer service brackets (11 years or more) were more likely to disagree with this statement (i.e. you do not learn everything you need through learning on-the-job and from peers). This suggests that the longer officers are in the organisation, the more likely they are to see the need for learning opportunities beyond informal peer learning and learning on-the-job. This may reflect a better understanding of longer serving officers of the 'wicked problems' faced by the police, requiring the need for theoretical and craft knowledge and effective partnership working, as well as the lack of structured support available for senior officers in the organisation (discussed in chapter 7).

Similarly, to identify differences in responses to this statement (Figure 33) based on educational background, a Mann-Whitney U-test was utilised to compare officers who have completed a qualification up to diploma level to officers who have completed a bachelor's degree or above. This test highlighted a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($U=13271$, $p=.000$). Officers with bachelor's degree or above were more likely to argue that learning through experience and from others is not enough to be a good police officer, compared to those officers who have not yet engaged in prolonged periods of academic study through HE. One explanation, suggested in interviews below, is that officers with HE degrees recognise the value of additional learning as opportunities which can bridge the perceived gap between theoretical and on-the-job learning, appreciating the benefits of a more holistic, integrated understanding of learning. Conversely, these differences in perceptions of what learning is needed, required, or indeed valued by officers and the organisation, may lead to increased frustration amongst those officers who wish to engage in more holistic learning, when it is neither encouraged nor rewarded.

One reason for the focus on experiential learning is its ability to develop credibility within the organisation. Therefore, although some officers favour a more holistic approach to learning, unless it is recognised as a reputable way in which to gain some form of capital within the organisation, it is unclear why Police Scotland would offer or support such learning and why officers would engage with it.

“You can develop that credibility in terms of how you perform but people will often make their mind up before you arrive, so I think there's a credibility issue there, as well and if you have that **recent operational experience**, you can evidence operational experience, then I think you're **primed to be more credible**.” (Police Officer, middle management 7)

In addition to operational roles, there are also certain development roles, which offer prestige and a way in which to develop credibility. However, only those officers who understand the 'hidden curriculum' which underpins career development in the organisation, seem to know the value of these development roles and indeed what they are. Interestingly, a lot of these roles were within the training and development departments of Police Scotland:

“I was learning a lot, but it was seen as a **developmental role** which in hindsight I totally get and I’m grateful for but at the time I was not appreciative of it at all.” (Police Officer, frontline management 5)

Interviews reflected on several hierarchies that are at play when it comes to experience and engaging in experiential learning, largely suggesting internal opportunities are the most important and those offered through HE the least relevant. Figure 34 was developed to highlight these hierarchies. Police officers suggested that operational policing experience is considered more relevant than office-based policing experience, which is considered more relevant than external experience within the criminal justice sector. This external criminal justice experience is seen as more valuable than other external learning, such as that done through HE. Indeed, this perceived hierarchy of experiential learning has been recognised as a key barrier in recent studies evaluating the Degree apprenticeship (PCDA) introduced in England and Wales, stating that policing students on this pathway struggle to utilise academic learning in practice, further feeding a theory-practice divide within policing (Watkinson-Miley, Cox and Deshpande, 2021). Interviews highlight that this hierarchy influenced how officers are identified for certain roles and ranks, and what learning they are encouraged to engage with. The hidden nature of these hierarchies made it more difficult for officers, particularly new recruits, to identify what learning to engage with to advance their career and might question the value and impact of the ENU policing degree.



Figure 34 Hierarchy of Experiential Learning according to participants.

Officers often felt that their previous experiences and knowledge (from HE or previous jobs) were not recognised by line managers and the organisation, and not considered valuable or useful in the policing context:

“There’s police officers in general have a lot of skills because they bring skills from the outside in and we don’t always channel that properly ... you know, build on what you have, you know, there’s people that have got so much skill **and it’s almost like it doesn’t matter because it is not been taught by the police**, so we can attempt to discount it or forget about it.” (Police Officer, frontline management 7)

“I really do sympathise with cops doing postgraduate qualifications off their own backs just now because I would say **95% of bosses won’t give a monkeys** if I’m being honest.” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

“I think there is definitely **work that the police as an organisation can do** to support people better (to use knowledge from higher education) and that in my experience is **pretty poor**.” (Police Officer, middle management 2)

As these quotes highlight, officers were cynical about Police Scotland’s support for learning, in particular that which is not operational and academic.

Furthermore, police officers argued that this focus on *having experience* rather than how learning from experience is applied in practice, often made them feel unprepared when starting a new role:

“**There were still gaps** and you just **hope one of these gaps isn’t critical** and label the risk at a time when there is no one else available to ask.” (Police Officer, senior management Officer 7)

The above quote reflects the discussions of the previous chapter (Chapter 5) that the occupational risks associated with police work are largely carried by individual officers, leading to increased pressure to perform within an organisational culture that provides little support to do so. Indeed, reflecting on the quote at the beginning of this section, after a certain number of years on the job and in particular in certain ranks, officers are *assumed* to have the knowledge and skills to do certain jobs. With a lack of meaningful appraisal systems and development conversations (5.3.2), it is argued, Police Scotland lacks important safeguards to identify learning needs and ensure officers are indeed as capable and competent as they are assumed to be. The focus on experiential learning

from the frontline in expense of other learning which may be relevant to certain jobs intensified officers' feelings of a disconnect between roles and ranks and associated skills and knowledge. Therefore, this exploratory study suggests that whilst learning does happen in Police Scotland, the lived experiences from officers highlight certain barriers to more effectively marry up the policy narrative to support and empower staff learning and development, officers' experiences of learning, and what the literature and other professions suggest might work to develop effective workplace learning environments.

Nevertheless, as has been illustrated throughout chapter 5, police officers do engage in additional and optional learning beyond mandatory and on-the-job learning. How this additional learning is conceptualised and experienced by officers, will be explored next.

6.3.2 Experiences of other kinds of learning within Police Scotland

So far, it has been illustrated that experiential learning is generally considered to be at the top of the learning hierarchy within Police Scotland. Nevertheless, survey respondents proposed several non-operational topics of study which they argued are important for new recruits to learn in the initial probationary period, such as an understanding of the causes and prevention of crime, the law, court proceedings, and workload management (Figure 35). Although figure 35 only features responses from officers with 1-6 years' service, to reflect the contemporary needs of officers, these answers were similar to those given by officers with longer service brackets.

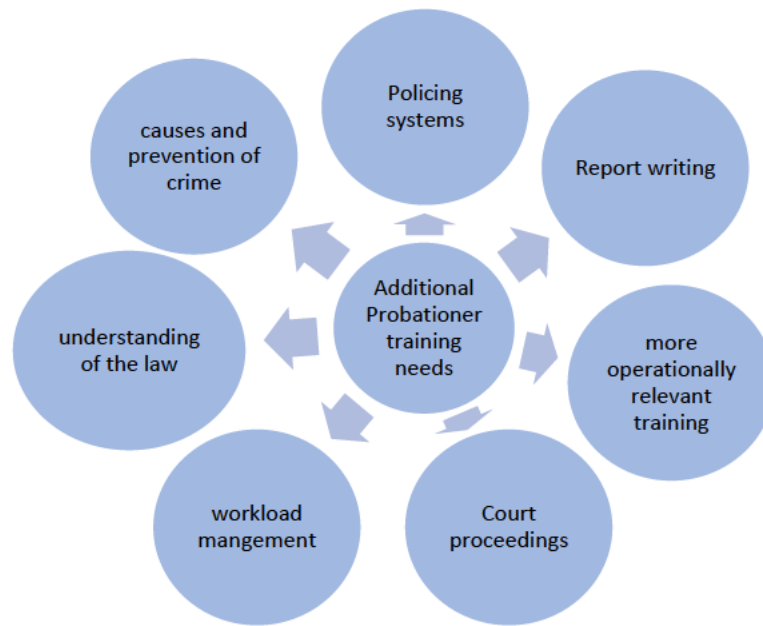


Figure 35 Survey responses to question 4.3 ‘Were there any skills or knowledge you would have liked to learn in your initial residential training period?’ [Responses from officers with 1-6 years’ service to reflect contemporary needs and the the most recent curriculum].

Interestingly, the topics identified in Figure 35 reflect many of the views expressed by ENU students, who also argued that a wider understanding of policing and the causes of crime are necessary to develop knowledgeable and legitimate police officers. This suggests alignment with what some future officers think they may benefit from and what current officers feel they need to be taught.

This is further supported by survey respondents who suggested that developing a wider understanding around crime prevention, victimisation, and partnership working is important to further improve policing practice (Figure 36).

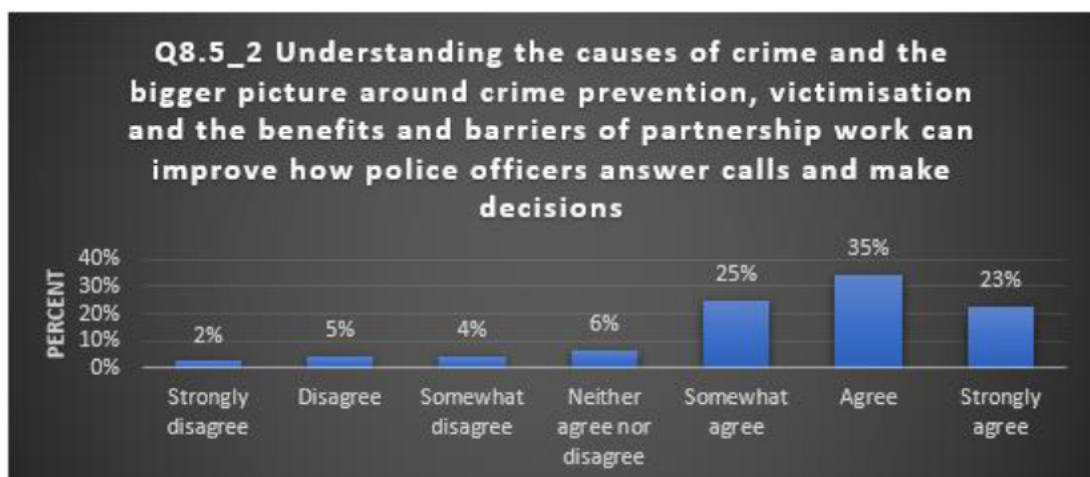


Figure 36 Survey responses to question 8.5_2 To what degree do you agree with the following statement: ‘Understanding the causes of crime and the bigger picture around crime prevention, victimisation and the benefits and barriers of partnership work can improve how police officers answer calls and make decisions’ (n=381).

79% of survey respondents disagreed with the statement that there is no need for extra training and education after completing the initial probationary training (Figure 37). Therefore, although experience and experiential learning is what is rewarded and holds prestige within the organisation, officers recognised that additional learning is required to do the job. This aligns with the current research on CPD and lifelong learning, which highlights the central role of active learning to combine *knowing* and *doing* leading to transformative practice (Kheir and Wilbur, 2018; Healey and Healey, 2020).



Figure 37 Survey responses to question 8.5_12 To what degree do you agree with the statement 'There is no need for extra training and education after completing the initial probationer training, since most skills and knowledge are acquired through the experience of being a police officer' (n=381).

Consequently, officers suggest that the current hierarchy of experiential learning and learning on-the-job loses its value and officers seek a more holistic understanding of policing and policing practice. However, current proposed changes to the official curriculum, such as the phasing out of the DPSLM, suggests that there continues to be some resistance to promoting and supporting learning beyond operational experience.

Furthermore, interviews illustrated that when the organisation does expand their learning provision and engages with or provides HE to officers, this often felt tokenistic and half-hearted:

“She [an officer doing an MSc supported by Police Scotland] said to me ‘the organisation supports us to go on the programme and then it stops, there’s no other support’, ‘I says what do you mean?’, She

said' well so I went to the university and I then met the instructors and they said **'we'd been pulling our hair out**, your organisation have put people here, but then there's no organisational support for that individual, yea **you release them to come**, but in terms of work projects, **there's no work project and they're not buddied up** or mentored by someone with those qualifications[...]' so I'm sitting scratching my head thinking this isn't right." (Police Officer, senior management 8)

"I was able to bring my academic learning into practice, but the force was not particularly interested in that. So even though they had paid for me to do this MBA, there wasn't really much interest other than that, and when I completed it, [...], there was no recognition, there was no 'well done this is really good', it was completely invisible and in fact ever since then, it's never been recognized as anything other than **'oh just one of those degree things that you do that actually doesn't have any relevance to reality'**." (Police Officer, senior management 2)

The examples above illustrate a recurring theme, where officers were supported to engage with HE by the organisation but either did not receive enough support to do so effectively, or there was no recognition of this engagement after they have finished their course. Frequently, officers argued that they were able to implement some of their learning in their immediate practice (especially where officers had higher ranking positions with more autonomy), but beyond their role they found it difficult to find someone in the organisation who will listen to them. This highlights a disconnect between the espoused organisational interest in developing police-HE partnerships and the lived experiences of officers. Hence, findings from this study demonstrate the complex myriad of factors influencing police officer learning journeys and in particular translating this learning into practice. Bartkowiak- Theron (2019, p. 222) argued, it is "paramount that those involved in police education research and curriculum design take into account the specifics and idiosyncrasies of jurisdictions". This study therefore states that some of the local idiosyncrasies within Police Scotland currently prevent the effective integration of HE into Police Scotland learning environments. As the LO literature suggests, individual learning is not enough to generate organisational change and develop communities of practice and self-legitimacy (Cierna et al., 2017). Hence, in relation to research question two, the lived experiences of officers would suggest that Police Scotland would benefit from more integrative and long-term approaches to HE and theoretical learning, rather than what police officers felt was ad-hoc and tokenistic engagement.

Nevertheless, these findings explain why survey respondents largely either disagree (51%) or neither agree nor disagree (30%) with the statement that Police Scotland (as an organisation) values academic knowledge and uses it in practice (Figure 38).

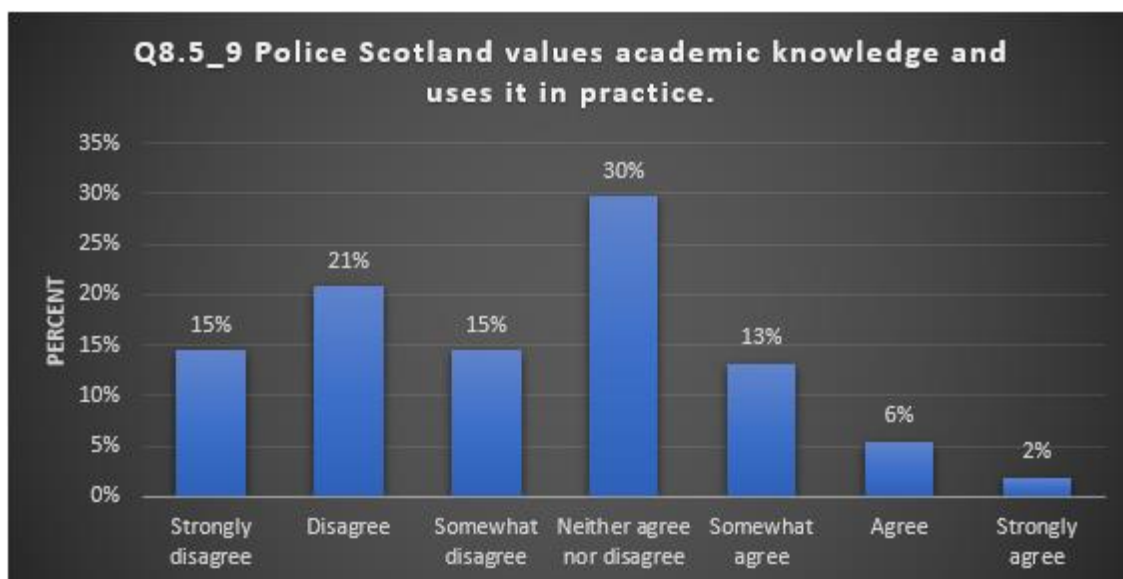


Figure 38 Survey responses to question 8.5_9 To what degree do you agree with the following statement: 'Police Scotland values academic knowledge and uses it in practice' (n=381).

Officers' levels of agreement with this statement between those who are educated to degree level or above and those who have completed diploma level studies or below was compared using a Mann-Whitney U test. A statistically significant difference between the two groups could be observed ($U=14951, p=.004$). Further analysis highlighted those officers with a bachelor's degree or above were significantly more likely to disagree with the statement that Police Scotland values academic knowledge and uses it in practice. These results suggest that individuals who have spent prolonged periods of time in HE, had a more critical view of the value Police Scotland places on academic knowledge. In comparison, those officers who have not spent prolonged periods of time in HE, may not yet know if Police Scotland does or does not value academic knowledge. Nevertheless, this suggests that there is little actively promoted engagement and value placed on academic knowledge, considering that only 21% of all respondents agreed with this statement. This indicates that even officers who have not yet engaged in HE, recognised a lack of value placed on learning through HE. This might be explained by the historic backdrop of anti-intellectualism in police organisations (Ramshaw and Soppitt, 2018) and the previously discussed prestige of experiential and on-the-job learning.

Indeed, interviews revealed that HE is not considered beneficial or necessary for frontline policing roles:

“In response [policing] it’s very difficult to take account of these things purely because of how the job is constructed. I think nothing, **no university can teach you how it is to work with people** day in and day out. **Nothing can prepare you for that but years of experience** and facing it yourself.” (Police Officer, Constable 7)

This quote reflects ENU students’ perception that much of the learning required to be a police officer will take place on the streets. The continued construction of on-the-job and theoretical learning as polar opposites however, can act as a barrier to recognising the possible benefits of combining the two. As this middle management police officer suggested, academic knowledge could be relevant and beneficial, but its value has not yet been demonstrated to operational police officers:

“In more operational roles it’s, should we say, **less supported and less of an interest** and so I think part of the challenge is **demonstrating to operational colleagues the value of research, the value of learning, the value of sort of evidence-based policing** and demonstrating what works, and therefore what we can learn from it, and sort of bringing the two things together.” (Police Officer, middle management 5)

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is not necessarily the *knowing* which officers struggle with but how to translate *knowing/thinking* into *doing*, *i.e.* as suggested by active learning theories (Healey and Healey, 2020). Indeed, this translation of knowledge is needed to develop learning professionals able to elaborate, expand, and externalise learning and knowledge, supporting individual and organisational learning to address the complex problems police officers encounter (Simons and Ruijters, 2004). In addition, the ability to reflect and integrate theoretical knowledge into day-to-day practice as part of the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1976), encourages the self-development required within Learning Organisations (Burgoyne, 1992). The integration of the topics police officers would like to know more about at the beginning of this section (Figure 35), may be one such way to support police officer reflection and understanding of their role. This may in turn lead to improved policing practice and job satisfaction. However, considering the exploratory nature of this study, more research in this space is needed to understand the impact of the integration of additional subjects and learning environments in Scotland.

Figure 39 highlights that the majority (61%) of survey respondents agree that academic knowledge is important to improve practice and use evidence-based approaches to policing. This finding suggests that whilst the organisation struggles to value and utilise academic knowledge, many police officers can see a role for academic knowledge in policing.

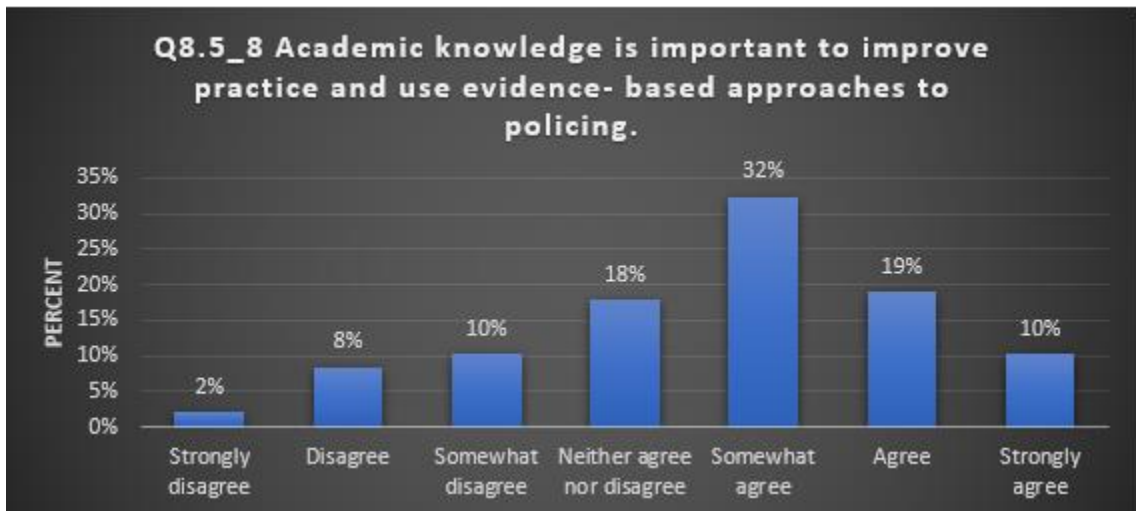


Figure 39 Survey responses to question 8.5_8 To what degree do you agree with the following statement 'Academic knowledge is important to improve policing and use evidence-based approaches' (n=381)

Interestingly, when comparing the mean scores of agreement with this statement with officers who have completed a bachelor's degree or above, and those who have completed education up to diploma level, there is a statistically significant difference between the two, as determined by a one-way ANOVA $F(1, 379) = 8.743, p=.003$. As the clustered bar chart in figure 40 highlights, officers who have a bachelor's degree or above were more likely to *agree* or *strongly agree* with this statement, suggesting that their previous experience with HE has positively influenced their view on the relevance and value of academic knowledge for policing practice. This indicates that more and longer exposure to HE may help to break down the perceived theory-practice divide within policing (Belur, Agnew-Pauley and Tompson, 2018).

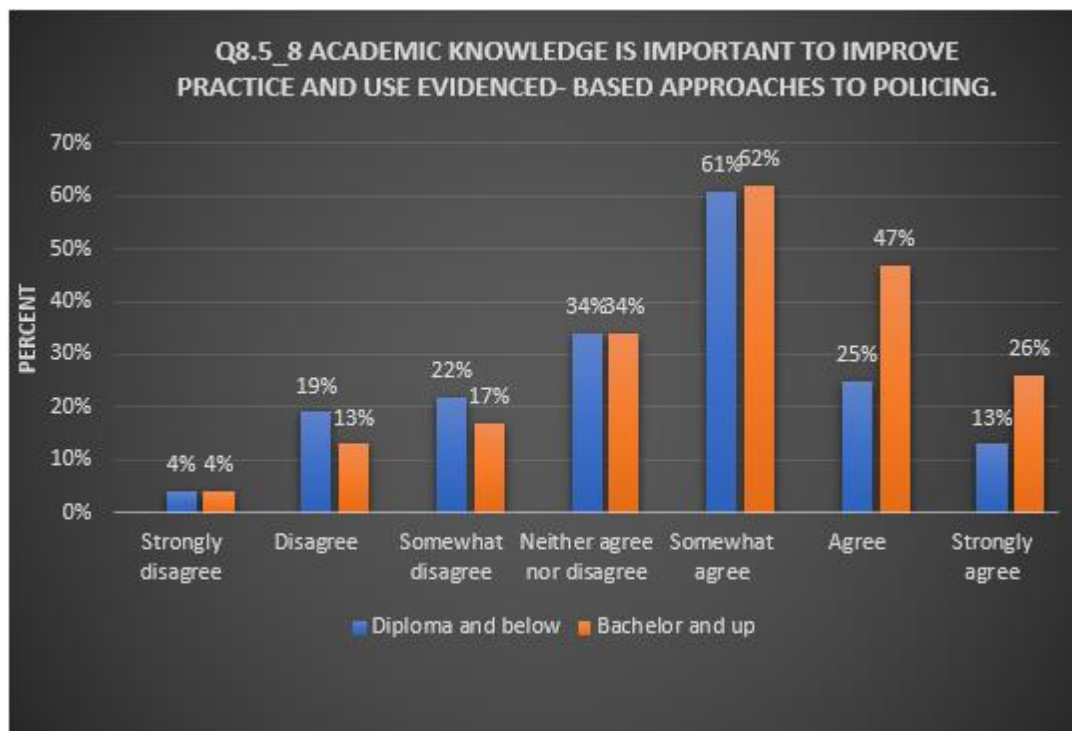


Figure 40 Clustered bar chart illustrating levels of agreement with the statement 'Academic Knowledge is important to improve practice and use evidence-based approaches to policing' based on educational background.

Therefore, whilst some officers argued that HE provides little value for response policing roles, there is a recognition amongst officers, in particular those who have previously engaged in prolonged periods of HE, that academic learning can support both specialist and response policing. However, as reflected in the police education literature (Honey, 2014), the cultural prestige associated with experience and the lack of organisational support to engage with and integrate academic learning, continues to feed the binary between theory and practice.

These experiences and perceptions of different kinds of learning and knowing within Police Scotland, inevitably influence police officer motivations to engage with different learning opportunities. As Staller *et al.*, (2021) suggested, motivation is important for training effectiveness and can further influence the ways in which officers engage in ongoing professional development, which the literature suggests supports the development of lifelong learners and workplaces as learning organisations able to address contemporary and future challenges (Lancaster, 2021).

6.3.3 Motivations to engage in lifelong learning

Many officers, across rank and file, discussed their motivations to engage in learning

and development, suggesting that they generally have intrinsic motivation to do so:

“I’m **always interested to learn and listen** because that’s what you do, that’s **the best way to get better and better** and better, because there will be things that certain folk do in certain areas that’ll be better for us and likewise for other people.” (Police Officer, frontline management 4)

Furthermore, the survey highlighted that of those officers who have engaged in optional non-mandatory development opportunities (n=130), this engagement was based on both personal development wants as well as professional development needs (Figure 41).

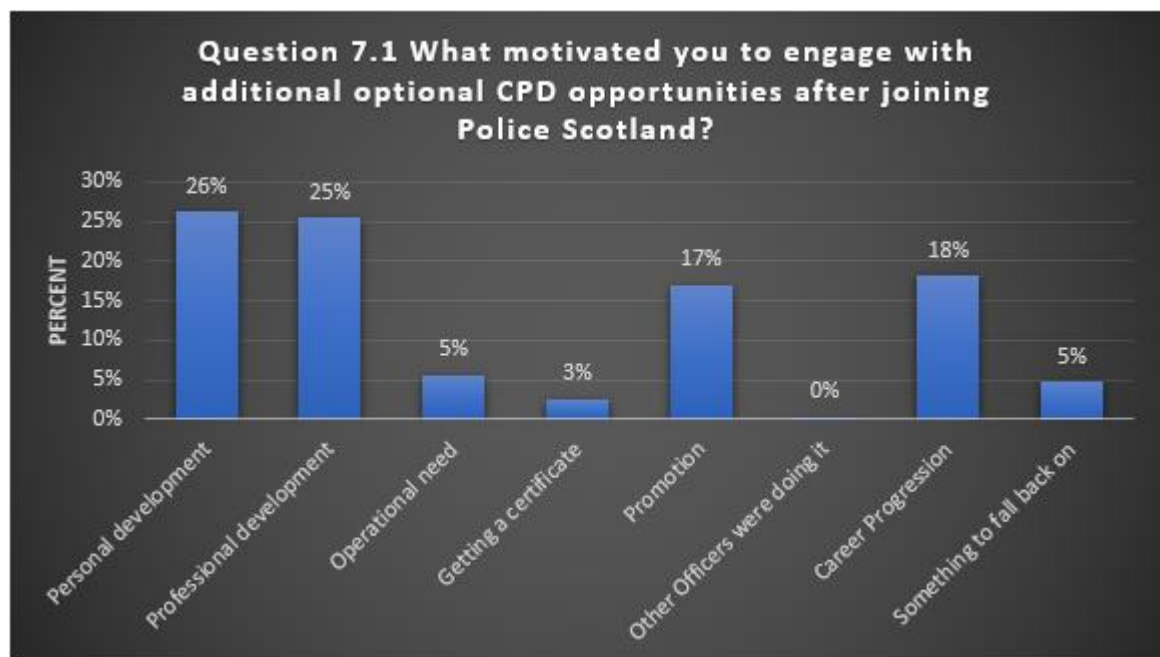


Figure 41 Survey responses to question 7.1 'What motivated you to engage with additional optional CPD opportunities after joining Police Scotland?' (multiple responses possible) (n=130)

This suggests that officer motivation to engage in lifelong learning within the workplace is driven by both intrinsic motivation, *engaging in learning based on personal interest*, and extrinsic motivation, *“doing an activity to retain rewards”* (Tjin and Tsoi, 2017, p. 19), such as promotion or career progression (17% and 18% respectively). However, certain extrinsic motivations such as the need for optional development opportunities to increase operational competence (5%), receive a certificate (3%), or have something to fall back on (5%) were considered less important. Whilst representing a small sample of officers and providing select answer choices which might be limiting, these exploratory findings suggest that there is a real interest amongst officers to develop as lifelong learners and that the engagement with

optional learning is not always driven by a desire to gain qualifications or leave the organisation. The intrinsic motivations mentioned by officers can lead to meaningful engagement with learning that creates self-determination (Honest, 2019). However, the wider structures and culture of the organisation, providing and supporting ways in which to translate learning into practice or reap its benefits (i.e. promotion), are also important and considered drivers of learning (Wolfe and Nix, 2017).

Officers felt that there is a lack of clarity with what optional learning officers could and should engage with to advance their career. This lack of clarity and the lack of acknowledgement by the organisation of much of the optional learning officers do engage with, leads to frustration amongst officers and in some cases could be a contributing factor in officers leaving the organisation:

“[He had the opportunity to work for a] big company in IT security and he’s excelled, within 6 months he was a team leader, within a year he was I think head of Scotland or something like that and then, couple of years later, he was sort of the lead for Europe, [...] he is sad that it turned out the way it did because he was a passionate police officer. He joined for the same reasons that lots of us do sort of altruistic reasons but they [Police Scotland] treated him badly, **they didn’t value the education, didn’t value the skills that he had and didn’t afford him the opportunity to progress** to develop in his specialist subject.” (Police Officer, middle management 2)

Equity theory presents a helpful concept to explore this in a more depth way. This theory examines the relationship between rewards and effort in comparison to others, and the perceptions of being treated fairly (Skiba and Rosenberg, 2011). The lack of clarity and transparency within Police Scotland when it comes to career progression and access to learning opportunities, introduces what could be called an *under-reward* for many who engage with optional learning opportunities in the name of career progression. Skiba and Rosenberg (2011) argued that this can lead to adjustments such as decreasing their input through less engagement with learning or putting less effort into their job. Where neither input nor output (reward) is adjusted, workers may ultimately leave their job to receive the rewards they expected and restore equity. Therefore, according to some officers, the previously discussed focus on and hierarchy of experience and learning within Police Scotland (Figure 34), and the lack of perceived recognition of some forms of learning, was highlighted as an unequal learning environment in some cases leading officers to leave the force.

Another common theme amongst officers was the significant delay of many mandatory CPD opportunities and the impact this has on motivation and engagement with learning:

“I think that’s part of the problem with a lot of it, that **the training is done at a much later point** so you’ll get promoted to Sergeant, temporary Sergeant even quicker now than back then, but you’ll **not get any of these courses until later on in your service**, even if you ask for it right at the start it’ll probably still take that time, by which time you’ve already got 10 months maybe of job experience, where you **probably don’t need it quite so much anymore.**” (Police Officer, middle management 1)

As this officer highlights, mandatory CPD, even where requested by officers, is often so significantly delayed that it is perceived irrelevant, which can hamper motivation to engage with it and limit its impact (Kang, 2007; Staller *et al.*, 2021).

Indeed, one of the main reasons to engage in HE after joining Police Scotland was to prepare for promotion (29%, n=87), which reflects the introduction of the promotion diploma (DPSLM) in 2007, which officers had to complete to be eligible for promotion. 17% (n=50) felt that HE can help them develop specialist skills and knowledge. Based on interview responses these are likely those specialist skills not provided through Police Scotland’s mandatory and optional CPD opportunities (Figure 42).

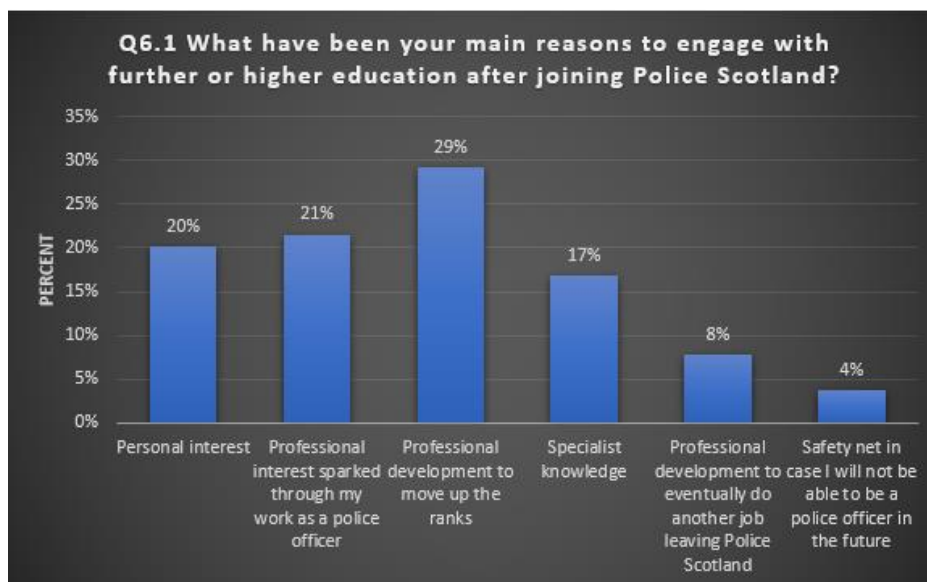


Figure 42 Survey responses to question 6.1 What have been your main reasons to engage with further or higher education after joining Police Scotland? (multiple responses possible) (n=130)

8% (n=23) of survey respondents indicated that they engaged with HE after joining Police Scotland in preparation to possibly leave the organisation in the future or a safety net in case they have to leave the organisation for other reasons (4%, n=11). Interestingly, police officers, particularly retired police officers, feared that the knowledge and skills gained through years of experience as a police officer will not be enough when leaving Police Scotland, and they argued that HE provided more recognised qualifications for future careers in other areas. This is despite the fact that those officers who have left highlighted that many of their experiences and learning from within Police Scotland was relevant and transferable to new situations. This suggests that officers often do not recognise the skills and knowledge they possess, intensified by the lack of appraisal systems in place and structured opportunities to reflect on experiential learning.

This suggests that there is much learning, skills, and knowledge within the organisation, but officers are not always made aware of how to access, articulate, and identify these effectively. This may explain their engagement with other learning opportunities, which have more evident ways in which to illustrate knowledge and skill level (degrees, certificates). As this survey respondent indicated:

“I kept trying to pass the old promotion exams and repeatedly failed them so I completed an OU Business Studies course **to prove to myself that I wasn't thick** but rather the old exams were aimed at those who could memorise pointless chunks of legislation.” (Police Officer, survey respondent 3)

This quote highlights the desire of officers to demonstrate their skills and knowledge and have them recognised, often through HE qualifications. Nevertheless, interviews also revealed that this engagement with HE is perceived more positively if it is optional rather than mandatory, due to the risk of alienating officers who are not, as one officer stated, ‘academically minded’. Nevertheless, the lack of value placed on learning through HE by the organisation, has led some officers to feel as though they have to engage with HE on their own accord and without organisational support, even though much of the motivation to do so is driven by the desire to improve policing practice. This suggests a lack of appreciation of different kinds of learning by the organisation, which the LO literature suggests can be beneficial for the growth and success of organisations and employees commitment and development (Garvin, Edmondson and

Furthermore, the motivations of police officers presented in this section highlight that the drive to engage in additional and optional learning is rarely driven by wanting to leave the organisation. This is in contrast to findings from a recent study exploring degree entry into policing, which suggests that there are some institutional anxieties within Police Scotland that the provision of HE for police officers may be used to gain qualifications to then leave and move on to better paid jobs (Tatnell, 2022).

Contrastingly, this study suggests that officers engage in additional learning (including HE) with or without the help of the organisation, with the majority doing this without the intent to leave. However, police officers do seek the acknowledgement and support from Police Scotland to apply this knowledge where it could advance practice. Without developing supportive organisational structures to enable this, Police Scotland fails to promote a learning climate which is open to new ideas, shares knowledge effectively across the organisation and promotes critical reflection to advance practice (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008).

As explained above, whilst there is motivation to engage with learning over and above that which is mandatory, this can often be hampered by the barriers encountered when doing so or when trying to apply or share this learning across the organisation. This has led to frustration amongst officers because the application and sharing of knowledge is heavily dependent on roles and ranks in the organisation. The next section will critically analyse the lived experiences of some of these barriers and the structural and cultural barriers influencing them.

6.3.4 The barriers experienced when engaging in different kinds of learning and knowing

The previous section highlighted that there is both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to engage in learning beyond that which is provided by the organisation. However, “the individual’s motivation to engage in the [organisational] learning process depends on the extent to which the organi[s]ation facilitates access to knowledge and information” (Janssens *et al.*, 2017, p. 95). Additionally, it is suggested that to develop the expansive learning environment required to address the increasingly complex and interdisciplinary policing context of the 21st century (Beighton and Poma, 2015), Police Scotland has a role to play in actively facilitating both the learning process and the

sharing of this learning across the organisation and with others. Police officers identified several barriers to engage in interdisciplinary and multi-agency learning and how to share relevant knowledge and skill effectively across the organisation. One of these barriers, reflecting a common theme in the literature on police culture (Reiner, 2010a; Charman, 2017), was the perceived insular nature of Police Scotland in comparison to other allied professions:

“I would argue that often times the police can be **quite an insular organisation**, you know, you go and work somewhere a council or somewhere like that **there’s automatic reaching out to other organisations, there’s a lot of learning**, there’s a lot of placements.”
(Police Officer, Constable 4)

Therefore, whilst working in partnership is recognised as a central element of contemporary police work, and promoted in the official rhetoric of the organisation (Police Scotland, 2018, 2021), officers highlighted that being open to learn from and with partners continues to be difficult. Officers suggested that the opportunities to do so are limited and that where this does happen, this is based on individual drive rather than organisational support. This is despite the fact that the Christie Commission (2011) suggested that multi-agency training and learning is important to break down the above-mentioned perceived silos to develop a public service ethos. This supports the demand for *learning sectors*, where practitioners are part of expansive learning environments addressing the cross-cutting ‘wicked problems’ faced by contemporary public, private and third sector services together rather than individually (Weber and Khademian, 2008; van Dijk and Crofts, 2016).

Indeed, those participants who have taken part in multi-agency learning opportunities, have observed a significant positive impact, breaking down barriers and developing a shared language. This, as suggested in the next quote, is considered one way in which to engage in preventative rather than reactive policing:

“You **become a bit more open** I think to look at different ways of doing things, and acknowledging that you know, the **police is a small part of that** and actually if you work better with social work at maybe an earlier stage, with education, or health, or other organisations, **[it] actually prevent a lot of things** happening in the first place.” (Police Officer, middle management 5)

However, the time and space to engage in such learning is limited within Police Scotland. Indeed, survey respondents identified several practical barriers to engage in both multi-agency and other internal learning opportunities (Figure 43).

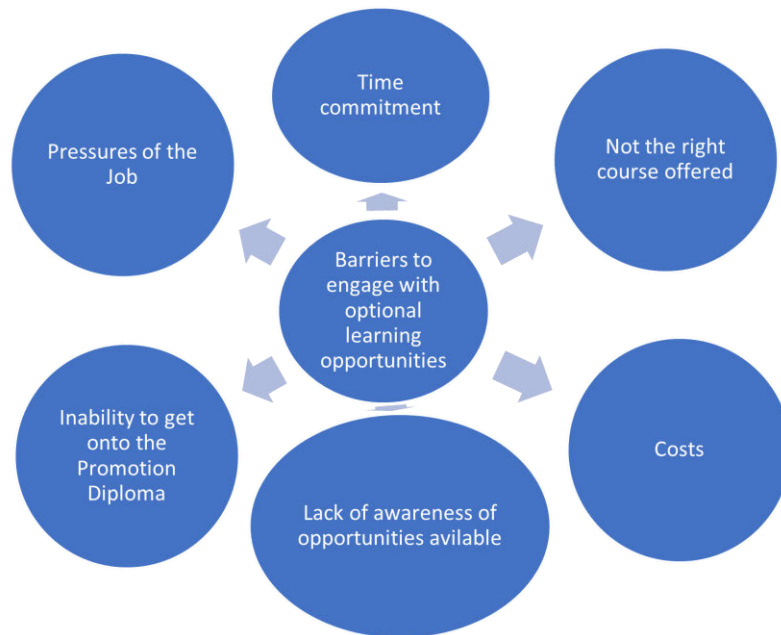


Figure 43 Survey responses to question 5.10 'Why have you not taken part in any additional optional training/ education/ continuous professional development opportunities?'

These barriers include the time commitment and cost associated with such optional additional learning, as well as a lack of awareness of opportunities available, the 24/7 nature of the job not allowing the abstraction for optional learning, and the lack of availability of opportunities relevant for their role. These barriers present a significant challenge for officers to engage in ongoing lifelong learning, including that which is offered outside of the organisation in a multi-agency setting, which can involve additional travel and requires the ability to identify a time and space that works for all agencies involved.

One of the most common reasons for not being able to engage in optional learning opportunities was the abstraction from the frontline, which may explain the lower rates of engagement with optional CPD amongst constable and sergeant level officers (Figure 32). This was not just seen as an organisational issue, but also discussed as something line managers are very aware of:

“Yea it [taking part in courses] was actually, to be frank, to be really frank, **no importance placed on it**, you know courses, people going in courses were, was more of an **embuggerance**, more of an issue because you know [...] **You’re losing a resource**, as supposed to what you’ll get back having done the course, you know, and I think part of that is because some of the courses weren’t nae that great.” (Police officer, senior management 1)

This quote highlights several interesting points in relation to how learning is perceived by senior officers and promoted by the organisation. On the one hand, the current quality of courses available, for some, is considered to lead to an inconvenient and unnecessary loss of ‘resources’ (officers) on the ground, highlighting the lack of space and time to engage in learning. On the other hand, officers discussed the short-sightedness of line managers often not understanding or seeing the benefit certain learning opportunities could bring to the department and policing practice. This questions the ability of leaders in the organisation to act as role models and can set a precedent amongst officers that optional learning is not relevant or appreciated (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008).

Indeed, interviewees indicated that police officers’ ability to engage with CPD opportunities is largely dependent on their line management.

“We were **lucky enough** that we had good local management, who were prepared to give you that opportunity. There will be plenty of people across this organisation, **who don’t get that opportunity**, because resources are too tight.” (Police Officer, frontline management 1)

Officers considered line managers as gatekeepers to many learning opportunities and often felt at the mercy of their willingness to support their personal and professional development needs. Although the above officer described a rather positive experience which enabled learning, many interviewees discussed different experiences and even felt intentionally held back by their line management to retain resources in their own business area. This highlights officers’ feelings and experiences of being treated unfairly by their line managers which often extends to negative feelings towards the organisation. Hence, in relation to research question two, the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland often appears to be negative, due to cultural and structural factors impacting engagement in learning. In contrast, Myhill and Bradford

(2013) suggest that more procedurally just or fair management practices can influence officers' commitment to the organisation. Indeed, participatory practices based on shared and participatory leadership, as a central element of a LO (Burgoyne, 1992), can help develop a more expansive learning environment which "provide[s] the basis for the integration of personal and organisational development" (Fuller and Unwin, 2004). The current perceived lack of participatory power of many officers (particularly those in lower ranking positions) however, often denies officers the ability to engage in a wider learning environment which could support individual, team, and organisational learning. Indeed, during my time as a special constable I have been able to witness the lack of influence and participatory engagement, particularly of frontline officers, in their development and organisational decision-making processes:

Today, one of my full-time constable colleagues told me that they, and a number of others, are moving to a different station. Some of these colleagues have only been here a few months since leaving the police college. None of them seem happy about this move or understand why they have to leave. It also feels counterintuitive because it will introduce a lot of unrest in the team and means I have to rebuild relationships for my own learning journey. (Research diary 30/08/2020)

The way in which line managers act as role models is heavily influenced by the learning culture and climate within the organisation. As mentioned previously (5.2.3), there is a sense within the organisation that officers have to commit to dominant cultural norms to be able to have access to and be chosen for certain learning opportunities within the organisation.

6.4 Learning climate and culture(s) within Police Scotland

As discussed in the learning organisation literature, a supportive and psychologically safe environment, which appreciates differences and offers time for reflection, is central to create transformative learning opportunities for the individual, the team and the organisation (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008). Therefore, the underlying climate and culture of learning can have a significant impact on how structures and experiences of learning manifest. The next section will provide an overview of some of

the key characteristics of the current learning culture(s) and climate within Police Scotland, which will provide a deeper insight into the lived experiences of officers discussed so far.

6.4.1 Structure, culture and agency: The focus on personality rather than skill

Due to the importance of relationships and line management support to access learning opportunities, the way in which officers present themselves within the organisation and build relationships is paramount to secure access to internal (and sometimes external) learning opportunities. Indeed, officers argued that the selection processes for ranks and roles tend to be geared towards certain personality types, such as those reflecting the key characteristics of police culture, i.e. “solidarity, crime-fighting, masculinity and suspicion” (Charman, 2017, p. 133), rather than reflecting the skills and knowledge needed for the applied role. Because of this, some officers suggested that certain colleagues have moved through the ranks without having the *emotional intelligence* to be in a senior position within the organisation:

“We’ve had a succession of people who’ve been successful but then get to Superintendent, Chief Superintendent [...] and we have promoted a range of people in these senior positions, **who are not comfortable with emotional intelligence**, who are not comfortable with understanding and working in difficult sets of circumstances, who **don’t have the mental acuity** to be able to do some of those things [required of them], so there’s been a bit of a crisis in terms of leadership development.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

This echoes what has been discussed previously that although Police Scotland promotes having a representative workforce, giving anyone the opportunity to join, some roles and ranks require more extensive knowledge, skills, and abilities, which not every officer has, and which may require more extensive learning opportunities to get there. Furthermore, this suggests a lack of safeguards in place to ensure that officers are developed based on their future prospects of succeeding in a role, rather than their reputation amongst other officers and the organisation. This may be explained by the general lack of or tick-box nature of appraisal systems and development opportunities (5.3.2). Whilst it is important to remember that this is based on a small sample of officers’ views, my experiences as a special constable and engaging with officers across ranks during the course of this project, would suggest that there are many very aware and capable leaders in the organisation.

Critically, officers with little experience or a perceived lack of competence going for certain roles can lead to an increasing number of officers unclear about how to support their own development and that of their team(s):

“The organisation as it stands is geared towards those who can **talk a good game** and again feel free to use this, the organisation **mistakes confidence for competence** and it doesn’t matter if it’s the promotion process or someone just speaking to [you] in a one to one setting ... sometimes there’s no substance behind what they will say but because it sounds good then they’re well thought of and **they’ll be marked for jobs.**” (Police Officer, frontline manager 5)

The focus on confidence and what one officer called ‘type A personalities’ once again strongly reflects traditional ideas of police culture and their importance within Police Scotland (Reiner, 2010a; Charman, 2017). This suggests that these traditional cultural ideas of what a police officer should be like continue to dominate Police Scotland’s selection processes. In particular, if committing to this personality type can open doors and ensure access to learning and development opportunities throughout their career.

However, although some officers adjusted their behaviour to commit to current accepted cultural scripts, other officers felt less inclined to do so. Where this has limited their ability to develop and progress within the organisation, they often started to engage with learning externally. Nevertheless, not many officers felt that they had the ability to stand up against the dominant organisational narratives of what kind of behaviours and stereotypes are rewarded within the organisation:

“As an organisation that, as I say this always comes down to the style of leadership, and one of posture of the organisation, is still one of **discipline, fear and compliance as opposed to trust, empowerment, entrepreneurship** and the values that we see within society, where people are rewarded for being innovative, creative, showing that they’re an entrepreneur.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

Hence, to access desired optional learning and development within the organisation it is important to subscribe to the dominant cultural narratives within Police Scotland, which focus on experience, status and hierarchy, strongly reflecting traditional notions of police culture (Reiner, 2010a). Consequently, officers’ agency in their career development and engagement with professional development is often limited.

6.4.1.1 Officers' agency and organisational structures

To understand the role of agency within Police Scotland, it is important to understand the context of the organisation. The centralisation of Scottish police forces led to significantly leaner rank and management structures within the organisation and reduced police staff roles significantly. On the one hand, this resulted in fewer higher-ranking roles being available. On the other hand, it has led to an increase of officers with certain skillsets or ranks being moved within the organisation, depending largely on organisational need rather than individual aspiration. However, as findings from this study highlight, one does not always have to exclude the other. Whilst the lack of agency in controlling one's career is not solely a result of centralisation, according to participants, it was intensified by it and has led to several tensions when it comes to the Police Scotland learning environment.

One of the key motivations for officers to join Police Scotland was the diversity of development opportunities, which were considered one of the main perks of the job:

"I think the good thing about the police is **that you can change every few years so you're not stuck doing the same role all the time and unless you stick yourself there, by either not showing that you want to change, or that you know you're not putting yourself forward for courses that will get you development, then I think you can pretty much change every, I've probably changed, **the maximum of being anywhere has been 5 years but usually three as a maximum.**"**

(Police Officer, middle management 1)

As this participant highlights, where officers take responsibility and actively promote themselves as interested in certain roles or development opportunities, many have been able to secure support and engage with these opportunities. However, officers were less clear about how one can make themselves known to the right people. This ambiguity made it more difficult for some officers to identify how to progress within the organisation and secure support from line management, highlighting the importance of the previously discussed socialisation period and peer learning (Chapter 5). This suggests a lack of understanding of the cultural scripts within the organisation, such as the commitment to certain personality types, which drive decision making and access to learning and development, and the importance of having the right peers and line managers willing to support officer learning journeys.

Interestingly, those officers who had intrinsic motivation to engage in learning and development opportunities, had increased capability to navigate the muddy waters of organisational learning and development structures, even where this meant making their own opportunities, engaging with learning externally, or in their own time.

“In terms of controlling your career, **it is what you want to make of it**, if you **show a bit of willing[ness] and your attitude’s good** and you have a basic aptitude you will get where you wanna [sic] go.” (Police Officer, senior management 5)

Nevertheless, officers often described being placed into new roles or ranks. This could be sudden and unexpected, driven by organisational demands, making officers feel as if their agency in their career development is taken away from them.

“The one thing you learn in the police, if you’ve got about the same service as me, is **nothing’s forever** and you can get a phone call tomorrow to say, you’re starting somewhere else on Monday, which again is one of the good things about the police, I really enjoy it, **there’s nothing definite and you’re always on your toes** and you’re always may be waiting for a move so **again that’s both a positive and a negative for me.**” (Police Officer, middle management 8)

As this officer indicated, this is not necessarily perceived as negative as it opens up new opportunities to learn and develop. However, where officers are moved without the necessary support and scaffolding in place to ensure that they have the necessary skills and knowledge for these roles, this can lead to steep learning curves and officers feeling added pressure and stress:

“**That can be challenging** especially when you’re moving into an area where you don’t know anyone [...] if you go into another division in a promoted rank and **you have no guidance and actually people are kind of hostile** to the idea anyway because they don’t really like, ‘who are you’, actually can be quite difficult because **you don’t know what your job is, you don’t know who to speak to, you’re not sure who to trust**, so that can be, that was a challenging.” (Police Officer, senior management 2)

Therefore, although changing roles is framed as a positive learning opportunity, the reality of this experience, when in the process of moving and starting a new role, can be stressful and due to the lack of clear career trajectory, police officers mentioned they struggled to know how to prepare and learn for upcoming roles to alleviate some of these stressors. Interviewees suggested that this lack of preparation often requires

officers to act in ways that reflect an 'expert status', demonstrating confidence and competence which may not always reflect reality:

"I was put there [laughing] the tradition of policing. So my **background is completely different** to that and that's very usual for the police to put you into something that you have **no experience of and then regard you as an expert**, but I managed to crack on."
(Police Officer, middle management 6)

These experiences highlight a lack of organisational structures to support continuous learning and the ambiguities of individual learning journeys, which are largely dependent on the officer themselves having to identify and engage in learning for a role they do not know much about, in an environment that is not always welcoming.

This questions the commitment to a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment required in a learning organisation. The literature suggests it should be an environment which "encourages people to speak up, ask questions and share ideas" (crf research, 2019, p. 3). In contrast, officers discussed the ways in which they sometimes have to hold back ideas and thoughts to ensure that they maintain the support from their line management and stay in a certain role, even where this might improve policing practice or officer wellbeing. Therefore, findings suggest that the placement of officers in different roles is sometimes used as a structural and cultural mechanism to control officers, in particular those who tend to *rock the boat*:

"I've got to be very careful [be]cause if you upset your boss too much you could potentially find yourself moving onto somewhere else, **that's just the nature of any employment nowadays.**" (Police Officer, Constable 3)

The ambiguity around why and when officers might move roles suggests a lack of transparency of decision making processes within the organisation, which questions the organisation's pledge to "encourag[e] corporate and individual transparency and accountability" as part of Police Scotland's 2026 strategy in their commitment to be a learning organisation (Police Scotland, 2018). Participants suggest that this lack of transparency leads to feelings of frustration based on a lack of participatory power, knowledge of and influence in decision making processes. Indeed, some officers feel that they are constantly at the mercy of line and senior management to stay or be moved again, leaving officers feeling a lack of control and influence over their career, development and learning journey.

Nevertheless, whilst there is often a lack of agency involved in staying in certain roles, officers also discussed the strategic use of organisational structures to move into certain roles and ranks. Officers who have the previously discussed prestige in the organisation, through a certain level of experience and years of service, can utilise the organisational structures geared towards them to secure certain roles and ranks. This also links back to the idea of 'development roles' discussed previously (6.3.1), where officers access certain roles specifically to advance their career. However, the strategic use of these roles can lead to a lack of commitment to advancing practice in these areas, as they are seen as pure career advancement opportunities (as mentioned in a previous quote also called 'badge hunters'). Therefore, whilst some officers have agency in applying for and securing roles, depending on their experience and commitment to dominant scripts, the focus on career progression can get in the way of meaningful reflection and development. This lack of commitment to certain roles or lack of preparation and learning for particular roles, can inhibit the development of a business area significantly and participants suggest, can lead to projects being discontinued or restarted with little continuity and long-term planning. The continuous movement of officers across the organisation can also halter individual officer development, as this officer illustrates:

"I mean especially on my team I've seen it more often than on any other team, supervisors come and go and even if you've spoken to one supervisor today that isn't to say that he or she is gonna [sic] remember to tell the next supervisor what you're looking at, so **you have to repeat yourself again and again, so it is a constant battle."**
(Police Officer, Constable 7)

Therefore, the diversity of roles officers can engage in either by utilising their own agency and committing to dominant cultural scripts, or when being moved by the organisation, can support engagement in new learning opportunities they may not have previously considered, whilst in the best-case scenario also share learning between business areas. However, officers also mentioned several negative knock-on effects on individuals, teams and current projects. This can be explained by the focus on moving people based on their years of experience, commitment to dominant cultural scripts and organisation need, rather than an explicit focus on the commitment to the business area at hand or the skills and knowledge they possess.

Engstroem's (2016) expansive learning environments (2.3.2) present a helpful theory to better understand the opportunities and barriers of officer experiences. Engstroem (2016) argued that to develop expansive learning environments it is important to address a temporal dimension, which focusses on the importance of not only learning from the past but developing pro-active, long-term learning processes that prepare for future challenges. Focusing more extensively on this dimension would enable Police Scotland to ensure that officers are prepared for future roles and pro-actively engage with relevant learning for their career and the improvement of policing practice. In line with the literature on the LO, this concept helps to highlight the tensions between organisational structures, cultural scripts and individual agency in the Scottish police learning environment. This section has highlighted the significant negative impact current structures can have on individual, team and organisational learning and the need for better alignment between the three spheres (individual, team and organisational learning needs) to allow supportive learning structures to develop.

The continuously changing occupational environment, driven by organisational needs, can significantly impact on officers' access to and engagement with learning. Indeed, it is leading to feelings of isolation and the development of learning subcultures within the organisation.

6.4.1.2 Isolation and learning subcultures

Officers across ranks and roles discussed feelings of isolation in their learning experience, especially when starting as a probationer or in new roles, where they felt deskilled and unsupported by the organisation. In addition, the previously discussed focus on certain personality types and officers who commit to dominant cultural scripts can inhibit the psychologically safe environment needed to ask for help when mistakes happen or there are gaps in knowledge or skill development. This is in contrast to the strategic objective of Police Scotland to "be open to hearing and learning about mistakes" (Police Scotland, 2018, p. 35). Officers suggest that this is due to the adverse impact sharing weakness or mistakes can have on their credibility and cultural capital within the organisation, which plays an integral part in their ability to develop their career and engage in professional and personal development within the organisation. As this participant highlighted:

“It’s totally a safe place [the learning environment within Justice Social Work] but I don’t know if police get that because I know [my husband who is a young in-service police officer] is coming home quite a lot and felt as **if he doesn’t know what he’s doing, he’s maybe not done something right**. He felt quite unsupported and **that must be quite a shitty and quite lonely place to be** when you’ve got all this pressure.” (Partner, Justice Social Work 6)

Indeed, there is a lot of emphasis on the individual to figure out how to learn the skills and knowledge needed for certain roles within the organisation, with little support from communities of practice, mentoring schemes or protected time to share and discuss learning:

“A lot of police , especially promoted police officers, **get through their shift despite the organisation not because of it**, [...] I went out as a shift Inspector because I’ve been a shift cop for so long and a shift sergeant for so long, so I was a shift Inspector without even the need for additional training but I went to a new area and suddenly you realise you’re covering an area that’s, [...] you know probably 360 square miles [...] I’m there for the entire night and there’s no CID on, so if it’s a rape or a murder you’re it, **you don’t get trained in that**.”
(Police Officer, senior management 7)

As this senior manager highlights, due to the focus on individuals’ *assumed learning* from experience, officers are encouraged to think that they can do any role within the rank they have applied for. However, since *experience* does not equal *learning from experience*, officers can often feel overwhelmed by the new and emerging demands they have in their new role. This is intensified by the individualised learning environment and focus on perceptions of confidence, which limits police officers’ ability to share areas of weakness and ask for support when they need it. This reflects central aspects of police culture, with links to authority, suspicion, machismo and isolation (Reiner, 2010a), highlighting the strong influence of traditional cultural scripts on the current learning environment within the organisation, in opposition to the open and supportive learning environment proposed in the LO literature. As Lancaster (2021) argued, whilst individual learning and agency is important, there needs to be a level of support from the organisation to help employees understand the options they have and learn what they want and need to learn for particular roles.

Interestingly, those officers working with international police forces, discussed the positive experiences of sharing their skills and knowledge elsewhere, supporting officer and organisational learning internationally:

“We ... deploy [officers] [...] in Zambia, a Scottish Government programme, it’s also linked into NHS work, it’s not a standalone we don’t do anything standalone **we don’t do anything in isolation**, but we select people to **deploy them abroad for non-operational work, for training or mentoring.**” (Police Officer, senior management 3)

Indeed, officers mentioned countless ways in which they share their skills and knowledge with outside agencies and how Police Scotland is involved in training and development with police forces in different countries, developing extended communities of practice. This highlights elements of an expansive learning environment where cross-disciplinary and international learning is encouraged, supporting the development of other organisations.

Conversely, when it comes to learning together within the organisation to develop communities of practice, opportunities appear more restricted and experiences more negative. Many officers discussed the lack of space and ability to share and disseminate knowledge and skill:

“**Would I like to be passing on my experience to people coming through? Of course I would**, and I have various peers that are as experienced if not more experienced than me that I think [would like to do this too], do I think we’ll get the opportunity to do that?! No. You know so you’ve got all these good operational people that are sound, but **they have opinions. That’s not what’s wanted**, they want a curriculum, they want it to be very rigid and they want, [...] they won’t want that sort of innovation approach and I’ve been around the block too many times you know, I would be very pleasantly surprised if that happened, I don’t see it.” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

As the above quotes illustrates, there are few opportunities to reflect on and develop a practice repertoire or organisational memory within Police Scotland as opportunities to learn together are limited. Therefore, the often solitary internal learning environment, focussed on officers finding their own way within the organisation, with little structural support, limits the opportunity to build communities of practice (Wenger, 2011). This is intensified by the lack of control over career development, discussed previously, which limits the ability to build relationships, which are central to communities of practice and peer learning, whilst negatively influencing the development of organisational memory. However, learning does not happen in isolation and to develop an organisation willing and able to learn, the organisation has a role to play in facilitating learning beyond the individual, since within the workplace

self-legitimacy and individual, team and organisational learning are inextricably linked (Cierna *et al.*, 2017).

Although senior officers mentioned that their officers could come forward to discuss policing practice, it was unclear what official or indeed informal structures are in place to actively support this. Indeed, the current environment was often described as hostile by fellow officers. This suggests a disconnect between the supportive learning environment senior officers think exists and the more negative or limited lived experience of this in their teams:

“My view would be particularly over the last 10 years, maybe 15, it’s become about **individuals and their fiefdoms** for a lack of a better term, and **keeping good people round about them**, rather than what’s best for the organisation.” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

“I think there is constraint sometimes if people are still within the job [rather than retired], **they don’t want to be seen to be critical, they’re frightened** at the fact that if they say something, there is not anonymity round about it, **if they say something critical they are being held back**. So, there’s a bit of emperor’s new clothes quite often within, particularly within Police Scotland, has been since its inception, where **you don’t tell, you don’t speak the truth to power and you don’t tell the boss bad news.**” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

Whilst this was a common theme for many officers, some officers who have a particular interest in driving learning within the organisation forward have developed smaller learning subcultures within Police Scotland. Within these subcultures there is a real interest to critically assess policing and the role of the police organisation and develop new and innovative ways in supporting individual, team, and organisational learning, building communities of practice:

“I would say **definitely within the CID** yea so people want to do things like their advance investigators course or a forensic course so yea in our environment yea definitely **I would say there is a learning culture**, because they want you to progress and learn as well so it’s in everybody’s interest to do that I would say. [...] So yea I think in the CID definitely there is a learning environment, **I have found everybody to be quite supportive of that.**” (Police Officer, Constable 6)

“**We have done it [being a learning organisation] in silos or departments or in operational environments** ... as elements of an organisation rather than a holistic organisation and I really do think

we're on the cusp of that [becoming a learning organisation] now."
(Police Officer, middle management 3)

Therefore, some areas of policing do have and create learning opportunities and a positive learning culture. However, this is often dependent on someone's specialism, department, or rank, which highlights a lack of organisational commitment as the second quote above suggests. As Serrat (2017, p.58) argued, the role of the organisation should be to "provid[e] the motive, means, and opportunity for learning", whilst avoiding silo's and unnecessary hierarchies. Findings presented so far suggest that access and experiences of learning are still largely influenced by siloed learning cultures and perceived unnecessary hierarchies.

Indeed, practitioners from allied professions frequently mentioned that some Police departments are more engaged in learning and attuned to the needs of the public and partnership working. They argued that frontline police officers generally had a more limited awareness of key issues around policing and were perceived to be less likely to be engaged in either shared learning opportunities or self-directed learning:

"I think there are bits about personality disorder training, and mental health training, that some police have and really get a hold of and **the police [officers] that don't are much more challenging for us to work with.**" (Partner, Justice Social Work 2)

This may be explained by the perceived lack of necessity for learning beyond experience for frontline officers discussed previously. It highlights the impact of siloed learning cultures (subcultures) and unequal access and distribution of learning opportunities on effective partnership working.

In addition to subcultures within certain departments and ranks, Heslop (2011b) highlighted the subcultures that can emerge when police forces have started to engage further with HE. As the officer below indicates this cultural division can also be observed in Police Scotland:

"I would **hesitate to describe it as a subculture, but that's my personal introduction and things like that**, so I'm in contact with maybe half a dozen other cops in Police Scotland who have a similar profile that I do, and that's via personal email and things like that, so I would argue that **there's a limited crossover between academia and Police Scotland operation**, just now certainly when I talk about SIPR, Scottish Institute for Policing Research, most cops don't know what that is and in terms of you know attending SIPR symposium and

postgraduate events and things like that I would, certainly not speaking for other people here, but my impression is that they wouldn't, it would never cross their radar." (Police Officer, Constable 4)

The lack of interest in and value of HE and academic partnerships within Police Scotland, discussed previously (6.3.2), has therefore driven the development of what can be called academic subculture(s) within the organisation. This is a space where those officers involved in academic study (pracademics) can share their experiences and learning. Therefore, this is one way for these officers to develop small communities of practice and address the more hostile aspects of internal learning environments, where academic studies and engagement with additional learning is not rewarded nor recognised (6.3.2).

Indeed, those officers who do engage with external research bodies recognised their benefit to policing and would like to see this engagement replicated across the force.

"I think you know SIPR [...] they did an event down in Edinburgh last year about drugs and it's brilliant to go into those sorts of things you know, [...], it was useful to go to it, but **that's the kind of stuff that we could be going to a lot more as it informs you better, makes you understand what's going on in the society side of things [...]** but I still think **we're narrow operationally** in our views about what's going on in society and **we can't arrest our way out of everything** you know." (Police Officer, middle management 1)

Therefore, although survey respondents suggested that academic knowledge is not always valued within Police Scotland (Figure 38), the academic subculture within the police is growing and might aid the wider integration of different kinds of knowledge and skill within the organisation. Pracademics and academic subcultures within Police Scotland, may present an opportunity to improve police-academic partnerships and support the further integration of academic knowledge into on-the-job learning and vice versa. Indeed, there are other internal structures which signify a step change towards recognising the value of academic knowledge for Police Scotland, such as the introduction of the ART and the active engagement with SIPR. However, to meaningfully integrate academic knowledge, as has been discussed throughout this chapter and indeed touched on in previous chapters, pracademics and other internal groups interested in academic research, need to have a certain capital within the organisation to support and implement it. Furthermore, as discussed in the literature

review (2.6.2), there is a risk that having this development of academic subcultures creates more distance between officers who engage with HE and those who do not (Macvean and Cox, 2012). Hence, whilst pracademics can support each other and develop police-academic partnerships in their business areas, their value to Police Scotland is limited by the internal dynamics and structures that limit their wider impact as change agents.

6.4.1.3 Change agents

Some interviews clearly highlighted that certain officers act as change agents within their department (and sometimes the organisation) and have developed a remarkably different approach to learning and development to that of the rest of the organisation. As illustrated above, this is often done without the support of the organisation and sometimes even despite perceived barriers created by the organisation or the organisation's learning environment.

“So I facilitate a lot of research into the organisation but that's because **I meet people** going to conferences and stuff and I like to think I'm fairly helpful you know, and **I'm running an academic evaluation** [...] just now, I'm asking [X] grand of the organisation [the university], **but there's no interest [from Police Scotland]**, you know, I'm running it and I'll get the report done but you know [...] started it from nothing. So, they've not done that before, and don't get me wrong **I got buy in [from Police Scotland] when I took it to the table** and everything but **no one's asking me 'how is it going'**, wanting interim reports or anything like that. I'm doing that sort of stuff but above me? No [interest]!” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

Huey and Mitchell (2016) argued that pracademics can be an important resource for police forces and act as knowledge brokers between the world of academia and policing. However, as the above quote highlights, and as Huey and Mitchell (2016) suggested, they tend to be an underutilised resource and their research knowledge and experience is often undervalued by the organisation. This reflects the perceived disconnect between academic knowledge and policing knowledge discussed previously and demonstrates the pervasive nature of established notions of what learning and knowing within policing is and can be (2.6).

Furthermore, officers stated that the ability to be a change agent in the organisation is heavily influenced by rank and character, and therefore not all change agents are pracademics and not all pracademics are change agents. It requires a certain kind of

person to drive changes forward and they need to have a certain amount of credibility (rank or years of service) to do so.

“For this most recent project, [this officer] has very much driven the training side of things. I think it needs somebody strong and somebody who’s kind of willing to kind of **break the mould**, [...] **with confidence** and not just being told ‘no we don’t do that’, or ‘we can’t do that’, well let’s get around it then, how can we solve this and that. So [this officer] is obviously **that type of person** you know what I mean [...] and you know it probably wouldn’t be as well received as we’ve had so far without that **driving force**.” (Police Officer, Constable 1)

As this quote illustrates, the ability to be a change agents links back to the idea of *doing rank* in a hierarchical organisation that requires line management support to drive things forward (Davis, 2018). However, it also highlights the ability of overcoming some of the bureaucratic and cultural barriers within policing where there is a will to do so, and an ability to know how to approach leaders in the organisation and gather support. Indeed, the development of academic subcultures within Police Scotland may be a space where officers can exchange experiences and access support to do this, by learning the cultural scripts required to navigate this landscape. Therefore, change agents are important because they engage in and support learning which is aligned with that of a learning organisation and a transformative model of CPD and organisational learning (Senge *et al.*, 1999; Kennedy, 2005; Örténblad, 2015). By doing so, they act as role models to other officers.

Nevertheless, the responsibility placed on individual change agents to drive the development of a supportive learning environment is not enough to create lasting change within an organisation (Willis, 2016). Additionally change agents’ personal, rather than organisational, relationships with external agencies and HE institutions, are time and context dependent and may inhibit the sharing of learning across the organisation without the necessary organisational support and structures. Consequently, officers discussed that learning is often lost, lacking the capacity to develop organisational memory (Örténblad, 2018), whilst leading to frustration amongst both officers and practitioners from allied professions that projects and good practice is often discontinued. This can negatively impact on effective partnership working and future proofing the organisation.

Indeed, as the next section will demonstrate, reflections from practitioners from allied professions highlight some of the different experiences of learning in other agencies, as well as some of the specific perceived barriers to effective partnership and multi-agency learning and working.

6.5 Reflections from allied professions

This section explores the view of allied professions working closely with Police Scotland, *to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland*, “working collaboratively to keep communities safe, sharing a collective responsibility to deliver preventative services that improve outcomes for individuals” (*Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012*; Scottish Police Authority, 2022). Indeed, this new and emerging perspective of allied professions on both their own learning environment and that of Police Scotland, provides a valuable insight into current perceived opportunities and barriers to address the above aims. Furthermore, it enables Police Scotland to reflect on what other organisations in the same sector are doing to develop lifelong learners and encourage individual and organisational learning. Whilst practitioners provide an important perspective on this topic, especially in giving an insight into external perspectives of learning within Police Scotland and their own organisation, it is important to remember that practitioner participants were identified through convenience sampling. Hence, findings presented here are exploratory in nature.

6.5.1 Conceptualisation and experiences of learning from allied professions

Similar to police officers, practitioners from allied professions recognised that the role they perform has changed over time requiring additional and more comprehensive engagement with learning. Indeed, the standardised engagement with HE was perceived as a valuable and positive development:

“Nursing is you know a very human job, it’s working with people, very similar to police. It’s a very very similar idea but **our job has changed to what it was in the 80s**, very much like what policing has done, it has changed you know the law for policing in Scotland is very different now. It’s not just about catching criminals, **so we need to think about police training in a very different way as well.**” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner and academic 1)

As this senior nurse stated, for many interviewed practitioners, the way that public sector organisations engage and respond to the public has changed significantly over

time, increasing demand and justifying changes in training and development regimes both for allied professions and policing.

In comparison to police officer lived experiences (5.2), particularly in relation to the initial training period, practitioners from allied professions highlighted experiences of integrating both formal academic learning and informal learning into their practice, utilising reflection as a central tool. Nevertheless, similar to police officers, learning on-the-job and through experience was still considered an essential aspect of learning, as supported by adult and active learning theories (Kolb, 2014; Healey and Healey, 2020), which highlight the central role of learning *in* the workplace, not just *about* the workplace:

“I would say it’s kind of like driving, it’s like you passed your test but you really only learn how to drive, when you’re driving, **your studying can only help you so much ,and your placement can only help you so much, because you’re a bit protected as well** [...], whereas when you kind of go into practice, **it’s a bit scary** and it’s really daunting, but I remember being really really excited.” (Partner, Justice Social Work 6)

Nevertheless, practitioners argued that there is generally an appreciation of both experiential learning as well as academic and theoretical knowledge within their profession. They named several reasons for this, such as the link to the professionalisation of their occupation, ensuring that their practice is underpinned by a certain standard, and understanding the scientific evidence available to continuously improve their practice in an increasingly more complex environment. These are some of the key characteristics of a profession discussed in the literature review (2.5.2):

“I think that it’s **important to maintain a level of professional standard** and that having to have a degree or a postgrad ... especially with **assessed placement is such a core part of making sure that actually generally the profession is alright.**” (Partner, Justice Social Work 2)

Therefore, similar to ENU students’ viewpoints, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, for many practitioners of recently professionalised occupations, the structured engagement with HE, and the need to register and re-register with a professional body, was considered a way in which to legitimise the service and prove internally and externally that the profession and professionals within it, are continuously learning and improving practice.

In addition, practitioners argued that the integration of academic and experiential learning was actively supported and even promoted by their organisation and assisted critical thinking across teams and departments:

“The longer you’re in practice the more you realise the theory absolutely underpins everything you do, even if you don’t really realise it, so like you just take a wee step back and reflect on it, you’re like actually that’s what’s happening here, and this is what’s happening there, or could this be happening, could I think about using this approach with that person so you, as you grow as a social worker, you get the opportunity to start applying the theory beforehand, instead of thinking about it afterwards, you know.”

(Partner, Justice Social Work 3)

Therefore, practitioners from allied professions discussed the importance of actively engaging and being part of the research that advances their practice. This is in contrast to the previously discussed experiences from police officers, some of which have been supported to do research, but often failed to implement any changes or improvements due to a lack of interest across the organisation. Indeed, even those officers who could be considered change agents within Police Scotland were faced with several organisational barriers to implement their work, highlighting a lack of organisational support to implement academic or theoretical learning.

Partners, particularly those from occupations more closely aligned with HE through requiring degree entry, also argued that they benefitted from a more structured and flexible approach to CPD and lifelong learning, which was tailored to their career, guided by them, and supported by their organisation:

“That way, that allows you, if you know what direction you’re going in, you can focus on the areas of academic learning that will support you with that, and the police are the same as health, in that you can work, you know, you could be out in the community, there’s now school-based campus police officers, you know, there’s adult workers, there’s child work, so there could be specific modules that will support them to develop in the part of policing that they want to do, you know, if it’s CID whatever it is, there are very different ways of working, and the same is within health, you could built your learning around the direction that you want it to go in, and that would be useful.” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner 1)

For some practitioners, as illustrated above, the direction someone wants to take their career, led them to complete certain HE courses, supported by their employer. Indeed, the practitioners from degree entry professions interviewed for this study highlighted

an almost seamless connection between their personal and professional development and the engagement with various different forms of learning within and outside of the organisation. This reflects an openness to new ideas and a willingness by the organisation to reward flexibility by recognising and acknowledging these different forms of learning (Burgoyne, 1992; Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008).

Interestingly, practitioners from different occupations appreciated the value placed on learning and, more importantly, on time for reflection and engagement with mandatory CPD. This might reflect the different way in which CPD is implemented in some allied professions, where the organisation is perceived to have a vested interest in the personal and professional development of the practitioner. This is in comparison to the mandatory 'learning opportunities' police officers described, which often lacked added value for the officer and were a perceived *back covering exercises* by the organisation.

"I've always done more development hours than I need to do for my registration so yea, so I don't really start with the amount, **it's quite a helpful and reflective exercise to look back on it**, yea and see what are all the development activities, the personal development, professional development activities that I've taken part in over the year." (Partner, Third Sector 1)

The above quote highlights that although the engagement with CPD is mandatory, for example through requirements from a regulatory body, this does not limit practitioners' approaches to lifelong learning, and, for many, is not the driver of such engagement. Instead, practitioners' intrinsic motivation to continuously develop and improve their practice is supported by a mandatory but flexible CPD framework. This illustrates a key difference in the way in which CPD is conceptualised in some allied professions compared to Police Scotland.

In addition to a flexible and supportive learning environment portrayed by many practitioners, interviewees regularly discussed the importance of safe learning spaces. According to them, this supports the development of communities of practice and an open and honest space for employees to discuss their experiences and reflect with others (Wenger, 2011):

"I was very happy to see that within that organisation, we, you know, given the work that we do, there needed to be a **safe training space**, where people could share concerns about practice, not reputationally

risky disclosures, but in order to [discuss certain issues], so **our internal training [has] set up an environment, where people can raise difficult questions and difficult situations.**" (Partner, Third Sector 2)

It enables an open and honest learning environment which, the LO literature suggests, can enable individual, team and organisational learning in the workplace. This presented a different experience to that of officers interviewed and surveyed in this study, where officers often felt that admitting to mistakes or sharing weakness may inhibit their future development prospects. In comparison, some practitioners from allied professions, particularly those from organisations with degree entry, found that their organisation actively seeks to explore difficult areas of practice and develops environments where employees feel safe to air questions and concerns. This can, and according to participants has, significantly supported learning within their organisations. Furthermore, the provision of these safe spaces enabled more structured and formal ways to engage in peer learning, which can provide valuable time to reflect. This is in comparison to the often unstructured and informal nature of peer learning within Police Scotland, which due to the luck involved in being able to engage in peer learning, or being tutored or mentored, could lead to feelings of organisational 'injustice'.

However, similar to the pressures faced by Police Scotland, explored further in the next chapter, partners increasingly struggle to have the time to engage in CPD and ongoing learning and development, within and outside of the organisation:

"I just I can't even release my staff for this [learning] just now sometimes you've got a really proactive management team that wants to develop their people, but you cannot release them and for me that needs to be looked at." (Partner, criminal justice practitioner and retired police officer 2)

"It's taking them away from delivering the frontline service and we're tighter than we've ever been in terms of our ability to manage the frontline service and have capacity." (Partner, Third Sector 1)

Therefore, although practitioners from allied professions highlight several differences in their learning environment and cultural appreciation for different kinds of learning compared to that of Police Scotland, they are facing similar challenges, which limits the

ability to provide the flexible and inclusive learning environment they have started to build. The close working relationship between the partners interviewed in this study and Police Scotland, whilst enabling interesting and helpful comparisons, also supported the exploration of Police Scotland's learning environment as perceived and experienced through practitioners from some allied professions through daily practice and engagement in shared learning environments.

6.5.2 Practitioners' perceptions of Police Scotland's learning environment

Practitioners interviewed in this study had diverse experiences with Scottish police officers. These were largely positive but highlighted several areas for improvement to advance partnership working and the service to the public. Indeed, there is agreement amongst practitioners that police officers require a wider understanding of policing and the impact their actions can have on the community. These perspectives reflect the recommendations of the Christie Commission (2011) and the wider recognition of the changing role of the police officer, responding to the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century (Grint, 2010). Similar to ENU students, practitioners suggested that this is unlikely to be learned on-the-job and necessitates engagement with theoretical knowledge:

"Theories about responses to offending being proportionate is so important because quite often we'd be arguing for a less restrictive approach to something because we think it's sufficient to manage risk and **the police are thinking about the crime that they might have to deal with and how dreadful that will be if something happens.**" (Partner, Justice Social Work 2)

"They're [police officers] on joint training courses with us and **some of them really definitely didn't get it** and start thinking about well why would a women accept a man back [domestic abuse training], could we not just blame her for this you know, there's huge amounts of stuff around there that **we're still battling with trying to get out there and kind of greater education, that would be fantastic.**"
(Partner, Justice Social Work 2)

Indeed, some practitioners argued that more engagement with HE through academic learning may be beneficial to develop a better understanding of different aspects of policing practices, similar to their own experiences with HE:

“I think, **if they did more academic stuff**, and then maybe a wee bit more understanding about human behaviour and what underpins people making certain [decisions], you know attachment theory, life history stuff like adverse childhood experiences, all of **this may actually support them [police officers] to come at things from a wee bit more [of a different angle]**, you know?!” (Partner, Justice Social Work 6)

This supports the literature on active learning environments and developing learning professionals who are able to learn on-the-job, whilst also effectively reflecting on their experiences, and *expand* on this learning through theoretical knowledge, leading to higher learning outcomes (Simons and Ruijters, 2004; Kolb, 2014; Janssens *et al.*, 2017; Healey and Healey, 2020).

Another common theme amongst allied professions was the negative impact of police officer turnover, in particular when officers with little knowledge and skill in a certain area started working with them, as explored in section 6.4.1.1. This often significantly disrupted partnership working and established relationships between agencies:

“It’s been raised with the chief constable [...], it’s been raised by other chief executives of the Scottish Police Authority, you know because what the feeling was with that area, **with that frequent change of area commander, area commander would come in, have a good time and then want to change things again**, therefore **developing those relationships you know tend to be somewhat difficult.**” (Partner, community safety practitioner 2)

“A lot of my friends who are cops will say we learned all this but actually **we bring these skills into a different area that nobody is interested!** You go learn about something else and you upskill yourself in that, and **there’s not a translation of their learning into other areas.** So, **it’s all kind of blocky if that makes sense. They just move on to the next, the next, the next, and none of them seem to link up.**” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner and academic 1)

As these quotes highlight, although officer turnover is sometimes framed as a learning opportunity to import new perspective and skill into different areas, allied professions experience this differently. Practitioners suggested the turnover of officers in their area leads to a lack of consistency, which inhibits the development of effective working relationships. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that a lack of workplace mobility, which may help the development and retention of relationships with partners, is often perceived as a restrictive element of workplace learning (Boud and Hager, 2012). Therefore, an element of agency and moving across the organisation to learn new skills

is important for both personal and professional development. However, this needs to be effectively supported by the organisation and should be driven by individual needs, skills, and knowledge rather than movement controlled from the top-down (Boud and Hager, 2012), as is currently often the case in Police Scotland. A more holistic, supported and participatory approach to officer turnover would avoid the disconnect felt by many of the practitioners interviewed between the officer wants and needs and the role that they are placed in.

Indeed, many practitioners argued that having new officers move into particular roles, especially when they did not choose to be there, or had no background in that area of practice, held back their collaborative work for months if not years:

“I think they [...] really need to pay attention to the impact of moving people around and moving people into jobs that don’t have the proper expertise.” (Partner, Third Sector 2)

“So currently the DCI [Detective Chief Inspector] [...] she’s been with us probably since about last October/November time and I would say we’re up in running now [June], so that’s a chunk out of a two year period and if she’s moving on in two years you know that means that we’re only really getting 18 months of very solid work on the subject before we’re kind of back to square one.” (Partner, Third Sector 1)

Therefore, a lack of consistency and support for officers transitioning between roles introduced significant challenges to develop shared goals and processes and identifying a shared language between services. This however, is important when developing effective partnerships, which is a key objective of Police Scotland and the wider public sector (Christie Commission, 2011; van Dijk, Hoogewoning and Punch, 2016a; Police Scotland, 2018; van Dijk *et al.*, 2019a).

To address the current perceived barriers to effective partnership working, practitioners discussed the value and importance of shared multi-agency training to support the development of a shared language and practice. Indeed, some areas of practice already had this provision, and these were considered the *gold standard* by many practitioners, leading to very positive outcomes for practitioners and service users:

“Often **the best training** is training that brings a **multi-agency approach** and when I worked in the local authority that was really the standard of practice. It is that you know in child protection in domestic abuse, in housing and homelessness in a whole variety of settings you know, **the gold standard was multi-agency training not only because everybody needs to know the same stuff when we’re working together**, but also because it **creates a shared language and it creates a trusting relationships**. [These are] the foundation of people changing their practice in response to new information and skill building.” (Partner, Third Sector 2)

Indeed both police officers and practitioners from allied professions discussed the value of shared and multi-agency learning spaces to open up discussions and understand each other’s viewpoints. However, the previous sections have highlighted that this kind of learning is often dependent on individuals and their rank and role. It is not yet something that is widely available to officers, despite its clear benefits to address the complex problems the public sector is faced with in contemporary society (Brown and Brudney, 2003). As Charman (2014, p.108) suggested, learning from and with others is just as important as individual occupational cultures, and within the development of communities of practice across services, it is important to focus on “the social, emotional, relational and collective features of workplace learning”. Therefore, findings presented in this section indicate an important insight into features of workplace learning both within allied professions and how police learning is perceived by partners. This has demonstrated where current differences and frictions between police and some allied professions have emerged and illustrated how more expansive and supportive learning environments may support effective partnership working and workplace learning in the future.

6.6 Discussion and conclusion

By exploring ENU students’ perceptions and expectations, as well as police officers’ and partners’ lived experiences and perceptions of different learning environments, this chapter highlighted different viewpoints concerning the Scottish police learning environment. It explored how Police Scotland’s learning environment may compare to that of allied professions, how ENU students plan to utilise their own learning in practice, the impact of the perceived Police Scotland learning environment on partnership and multi-agency approaches, and how police officers experience learning within the organisation. Hence, touching on all three research questions. The findings

suggest that there is a learning culture within the organisation that is perceived to reward experience and rank over and above skill and knowledge. Therefore, Police Scotland is perceived to undervalue learning beyond that which is assumed to happen on-the-job. This was in stark contrast to the experiences of some practitioners from some of the allied professions engaged with, where the organisation was perceived to actively encourage the integration of theoretical and practical learning and by doing so, more closely align with the learning environment ENU students described and expect when they seek to join Police Scotland in the future.

The hidden and not well understood hierarchies of learning within Police Scotland leads to inequity within the organisation and frustration and confusion amongst officers. This study found that this is further intensified by an isolated learning experience in an environment that often lacks the ability to create and support communities of practice and encourage interagency learning and working. Many of these findings stand in opposition to some of the expectations of ENU students and Police Scotland's official rhetoric and question Police Scotland's ability to provide relevant and supportive learning environments for these recruits of the future. Nevertheless, Police Scotland benefits from a highly motivated workforce that is interested in learning. Indeed, in some departments and business areas these intrinsically motivated officers have developed expansive and supportive learning environments that reflect key characteristics of a LO (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008).

Survey respondents and interviews highlighted that officers engage with HE based on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. However, this engagement is not always valued by the organisation and tends to leave officers frustrated with the way in which Police Scotland engages with and recognises academic or other external learning. This has led to the development of academic subcultures within Police Scotland. Therefore, whilst the organisation does engage with academia, of which SIPR is a prime example, this engagement is often through ad-hoc, priority-based projects, rather than sustainably integrated academic education for the development of police officers and policing practice.

If Police Scotland is to “use evidence to design and develop services which address the current and emerging demands [...] and ensures that resources, capacity and skills are in the right place to deliver high performing and innovative services” in line with the Scottish Government Strategic Policing Priorities (Scottish Government, 2019), there seems to be a need for Police Scotland to revisit the currently often limited understanding of learning and development within the organisation. Whilst the evidence on the benefits of degree entry for police officers continues to be mixed (Brown, 2020), traditional and contemporary learning theories highlight the importance of integrating knowing and doing through active learning (Healey and Healey, 2020). Simons and Ruijters (2004) argued that this is important to develop learning professionals and encourage individual and organisational learning (Figure 5). Hence, whilst degree entry might not be the answer, more comprehensive and meaningful engagement with policing science and other relevant knowledge and theory would undoubtedly enhance police officer skill and policing practice, if integrated well into learning on-the-job.

Willis and Mastrofski (2017) argued that rather than devaluing experiential learning or craft knowledge, it is important to understand where craft and theoretical knowledge meet, and how adult and workplace learning theories can support the positive learning processes already in place in Police Scotland. The fact that Police Scotland has officers engaged in the wider external learning landscape of policing through bodies such as SIPR and the CoP, in addition to structural changes such as the introduction of the ART, demonstrate valuable starting points in addressing the perceived theory-practice divide. However, the development of academic subcultures, whilst providing a supportive learning environment for some officers, is currently still limited in its wider impact on the organisational learning environment and developing organisational memory. Additionally, as Willis (2016) suggested, pracademics, as part of these subcultures, cannot single-handedly transform police learning and indeed too much focus on these individuals may take away from the wider benefits of police-academic partnerships.

Nevertheless, findings suggest that shared learning opportunities or interprofessional learning could break down current barriers to understand, enhance communication, and increase collaboration between services (Charman, 2014; Mulholland, Barnett and

Woodroffe, 2019). Additionally, multi-agency training is perceived to lead to advances in practice that will ease the pressures individual services are currently facing and lead to more effective service provision in light of the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century (Friedman and Phillips, 2004; Wallace and May, 2016). This would support the recommendations of the Christie Commission (2011). However, officers have highlighted that whilst sharing learning externally is something Police Scotland is heavily involved and skilled in, the provision and engagement with learning for their own employees was significantly limited by officers' ability to commit to dominant cultural scripts and their rank and role, as well as the top-down approach to officer turnover. This limits the ability to develop organisational memory and provide the above shared and multi-agency learning opportunities equally across the force.

Indeed, findings from this study show that traditional cultural scripts of policing and police learning still have a very strong influence on officers' learning experiences (Reiner, 2010a; Charman, 2017). This suggests that even where new recruits with policing degrees come in, such as the ENU students, they may be subsumed into a culture which increasingly steers them away from what they knew before and what they have learned during their degree. Additionally, as will be explored in the next chapter, some aspects of the command-and-control culture within policing are important for officers to learn to understand the value of hierarchy and power relations within the organisation. Although the LO literature has not traditionally focussed extensively on policing, it could help to break down unhealthy power relations, identifying ways in which to provide equal opportunities to learn and develop for all employees in a safe and supportive learning environment, whilst identifying effective ways in which to retain those aspects of command-and-control which are required in a police organisation to keep officers and the public safe.

A recent metanalysis of the literature on CPD within nursing, illustrated the importance of a supportive environment to encourage and support engagement with CPD across the organisation (Mlambo, Silén and McGrath, 2021). This generally supportive environment within the nursing profession was mentioned by several practitioners in this study. Practitioners from allied professions also discussed resource pressures which limit the ability to engage in learning. However, the strong links between these professions and their research field, as well as the recognition that

learning beyond experience is necessary for legitimate professional practice, were perceived as important to ease some of these pressures and develop a supportive learning environment. Practitioners therefore illustrated alignment between the organisational and structural narrative around learning and the personal and professional motivations to learn, which, they argue, assists individual, team, and organisational learning.

Interestingly, a focus on learning on-the-job by moving into new roles and the perceived lack of agency driving this turnover can limit the development of an expansive learning environment (Engstroem, 2016). However, Fuller and Unwin (2004) demonstrate that some of the approaches to learning discussed by police officers are aligned with more expansive rather than restrictive workplace learning environments (Figure 44), such as *widely distributed skills* and *the opportunity to learn new skills*. Nevertheless, the limited *opportunities of boundary crossing* by promoting shared learning environments and interprofessional learning, *valuing diversity of thought and skill*, and the *controlled environment* in the way that officers can access or find out about learning opportunities, are currently still proving restrictive in Police Scotland. Indeed, whilst officer turnover could distribute skill and knowledge across the force, officer' and practitioners from allied professions' experiences suggested that this is not always the case and the lack of organisational support and time spent in certain roles limited officers' capacity to implement change, share learning effectively, and develop organisational memory.

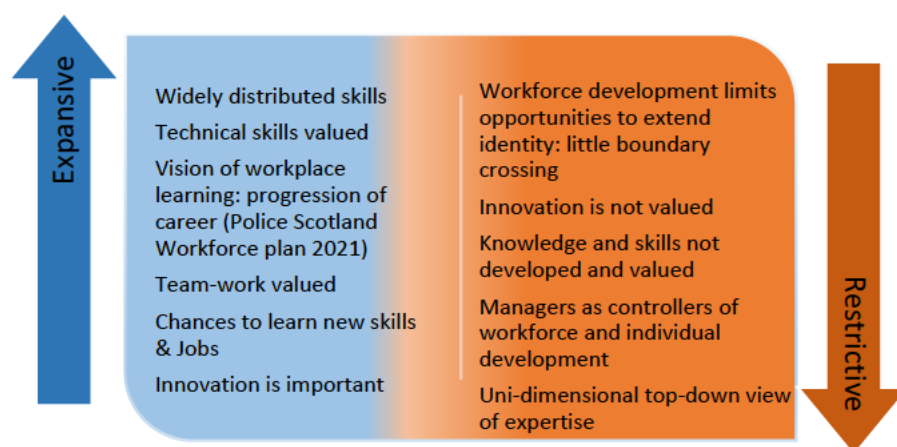


Figure 44 Police Scotland's current efforts in relation to more expansive or restrictive learning environments as adapted from Fuller and Unwin (2004).

Indeed, the high officer turnover within Police Scotland often made officers feel deskilled and unsupported. Additionally, current formal and informal structures and cultures around learning and development limit police officer agency in developing themselves with support from the organisation, leading to increased external learning that is kept separate from organisational or team learning. Many police officers, however, argued for a more significant role for the organisation in the police officer learning journey.

Consequently, although the official rhetoric of Police Scotland presents expansive learning environments, and there are learning subcultures within Police Scotland which align with expansive learning environments, officers still experience a strong 'pull' from traditional police culture. This traditional police culture and the traditional policing scripts they promote often result in hostile learning environments and stands in opposition to the supportive, empowering, and more holistic learning environments promoted in the LO and workplace learning literature. Instead, officers are asked to present themselves as strong, confident, and able to deal with any problem they encounter, with a lack of safe spaces within the organisation to share areas of weakness, enable reflection, and learning from experience or other means. As argued in the literature and confirmed by all participant groups, both self-directed as well as team and organisational learning is important to develop lifelong learners ready to address the challenges of the 21st century (Cierna *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, the next chapter will critically analyse and explore the organisational structures and characteristics that influence the Scottish police learning environment, adding another layer of analysis to explore research questions one, two, and three.

Chapter 7: A learning organisation: Organisational and structural factors influencing the learning environment

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 explored the lived experiences of formal, informal, voluntary and mandatory learning and development within Police Scotland, reflecting on the viewpoints and experiences of ENU students and practitioners from allied professions in more detail in chapter 6. These reflections on (police) learning in the workplace presented different lenses through which to explore and understand police learning, identifying some of the opportunities and barriers to develop the Scottish police learning environment. The findings presented so far have started to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis: *(1) How is police learning understood and supported in Scotland? (2) What is the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland and how may this vary by rank, years of service, and educational background? (3) What can we learn about professional learning from allied professions?*. Adding another important layer of analysis to the lived experiences of officers and partners and the perceptions of learning about policing and implementing such learning by ENU students, this chapter will explore organisational structures and how organisational learning is promoted and manifests in Police Scotland. By doing so, findings presented in this chapter help to identify some of the possible reasons for the lived experiences of learning discussed in earlier chapters, and explores the link between organisational, team and individual learning dynamics in Police Scotland.

The chapter will be structured as follows. Firstly, the traditional and often restrictive nature of police culture, identified previously, will be explored in more depth, to highlight the ways in which it influences and limits transformative and innovative learning within the organisation (7.2). Moreover, the influence of risk aversion and accountability on the current learning landscape within Police Scotland will be discussed, to highlight its often negative impact on Police Scotland's ability to meaningfully engage in transformative and innovative learning. Secondly, this chapter will explore the hierarchy and rank structure within Police Scotland (7.3). Findings presented will question how leadership in the organisation is conceptualised, how leaders are developed, and what impact the current leadership structures and learning

opportunities have on individual and organisational learning. Thirdly, the current lack of transparency and communication across the organisation, as well as the identified implementation gap influencing police learning will be explored (7.4). This will highlight the way in which current organisational structures negatively influence much of Police Scotland's efforts to improve individual and organisational learning. Fourthly, this will further be nuanced by a discussion of the impact of the politicisation of policing, providing some explanation as to why there might be an unequal distribution of learning opportunities across the service (7.5). Lastly, the overarching theme of organisational drive to promote and engage in different kinds of learning will be discussed, to identify when and how learning is or is not supported across the organisation, and how this resonates with practitioners from allied professions and ENU students (7.6).

7.2 Traditionalism and the 'Ay been'

"The 'ay [Always] been', we had a previous deputy chief who came up with this phrase, which I thought was fantastic. [...] He talked about the '**ay been**', [a new line manager] presumed it was some sort of apple product [but] it was explained to him: '**no we do this boss because it's always been done this way, it's I've been this way so, well I've done it this way and will do it this way [in the future]**'. 'But this way is a really stupid way why are you doing it this way?'. So, that is something we suffer from. So, the [purpose of the] learning organisation to sort of not just maintain the 'ay been', to actually move past that, [...] to do things differently." (Police Officer, frontline management 1)

This quote presents the concept of the 'ay been', which describes the strong pull of traditional police culture and practice. The 'ay been' describes the ongoing reproduction of traditional practices, due to what Campeau (2017, p.69) referred to as *cultural inertia* - "a reluctance to adapt to changing environmental conditions". The 'ay been', as a concept explored by police officers in this study, suggests that because policing practices, and therefore learning associated with them, have worked before, they will continue to work in the future, even if the context of policing and its remit has changed over time (Flanagan, 2008; Neyroud, 2011b; Ramshaw, Silvestri and Simpson, 2019). According to police officers, this cultural inertia often acts as a barrier to reform and innovation. This is reflected in the previous findings chapters exploring

the cultural capital attached to experience, and the relative reluctance to integrate other forms of knowledge and skill that might advance policing practice.

Indeed, practitioners from allied professions highlighted the ways in which Police Scotland is perceived to use evidence in a way that fits dominant cultural narratives:

“They like to say that they are evidence-based, and I think that they might find one piece of evidence that fits into the way they want things to go but that’s not to say that they are evidence-based and I’m not sure they totally value research.” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner and academic 1)

As this senior nurse practitioner suggested, whilst there is engagement with the evidence-base, this is perceived to be used and moulded in a way that fits the traditional narrative of policing, rather than used as a learning opportunity which may instigate change and innovation.

Therefore, the influence of the ‘ay been’ narrative within Police Scotland may impact the way in which HE is appreciated and engaged with, despite its promise to promote transformative learning in police organisations (Christopher, 2015b). Evidence from the survey highlighted that there is an even split between police officers believing that education to degree level could have a positive influence on policing practice and those who do not (Figure 45). The strong influence of the ‘ay been’ culture may be one reason why some officers might not appreciate the benefits of HE for policing (Figure 8), as it does not seem necessary to change something that is perceived to work. This may also explain the relative lack of significant changes to the initial learning period over time, discussed in chapter 5.

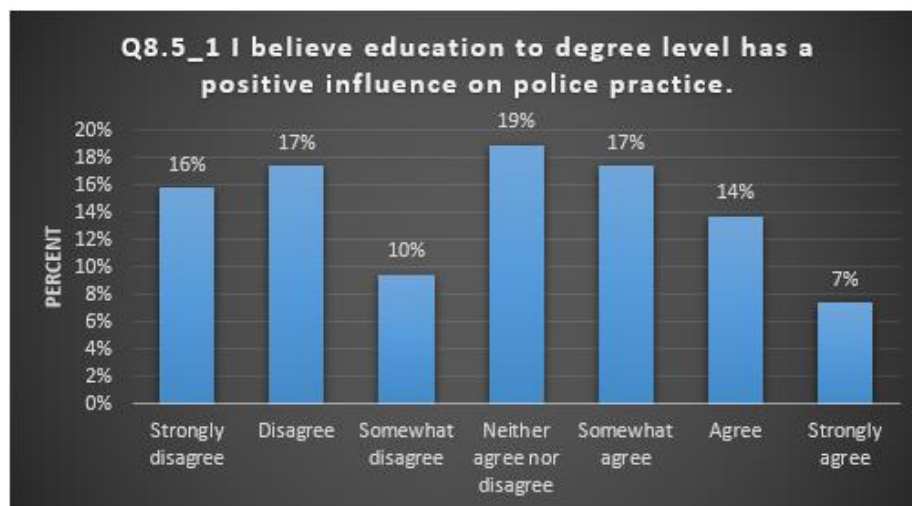


Figure 45 Survey responses to question 8.5_1 To what degree do you agree with the following statement: 'I believe education to degree level has a positive influence on police practice' (n=381).

However, as previous chapters highlighted, officers' lived experiences of learning and its impact on practice vary greatly within the organisation, which left some officers feeling as if they are being treated unfairly not only by other (generally higher ranking) officers but also the organisation as a whole. This suggests that a more widely transformative and honest appreciation of different kinds of learning would benefit individual officers and the organisation, recognising that previous ways of learning on-the-job may not be beneficial or enough for officers to learn the craft of policing to address contemporary problems, and career aspirations.

Interestingly, when police officers were asked if they can see a wider role for HE (not limited to degree level education) for their own professional development, the majority of officers (66%) said yes (Figure 46). This highlights a gap between individual officer's interests in relation to learning and development, and organisational responses through the 'ay been' culture, which tend to reject the need for change, in particular in relation to increased engagement with HE for police officer development (Martin and Wooff, 2018). This can negatively influence Police Scotland's ability to respond to the constantly changing and transforming wicked problems of the 21st century and the wider police learning landscape (Weber and Khademan, 2008).

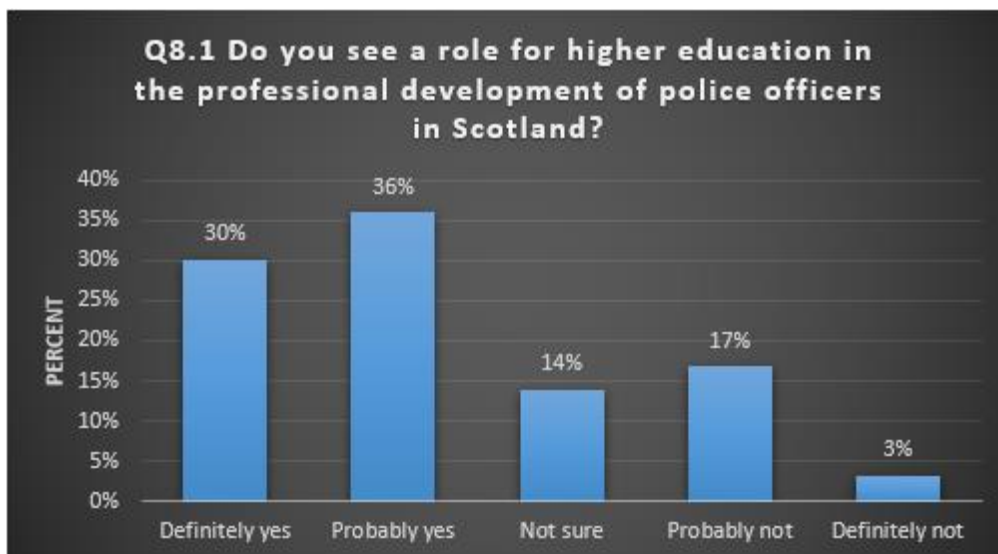


Figure 46 Survey responses to question 8.1 'Do you see a role for higher education in the professional development of police officers in Scotland?' (381).

Indeed, officers recognised that the evolving role of the police officer requires cultural changes and adaptation from the organisation:

“Our culture has always been you join the police and that’s it, whereas with all these experts and professionals that are coming in and dipping in for a year or two and then going well that’s not how we work, so there maybe is the flipside of that, that we have to change our view.” (Police Officer, senior management 1)

Simons and Ruijters' (2004) concept of the learning professional argues that learning from research and theoretical knowledge, rather than a contradiction to learning by doing (experience), should be considered an *expansion* of experiential learning. This expansion is supported through reflection and the recognition that theoretical learning is indeed necessary and also shared across the organisation through externalisation (Figure 5). Therefore, a continuous process of engaging with theoretical and experiential learning could change the 'ay been' culture, by combining what has worked previously with the current evidence on what works. However, as the previous chapter has identified, police officers did not always feel that they can promote or utilise knowledge beyond experience, and a certain level of commitment to the dominant 'ay been' culture is necessary to be supported for promotion or certain development opportunities (6.4).

Nevertheless, change agents within the force are starting to break down some of these barriers and utilise both experiential and theoretical knowledge to transform traditional practices and organisational narratives into more innovative ones (6.4.1.3). However, in what way these change agents are able to address the wider 'ay been' culture and organisational narratives has been questioned (Willis, 2016). As the next section will illustrate, change and reform can be slow and difficult to implement. This is despite the fact that the ability to change and adapt to the constantly changing policing landscape are central elements of police services.

7.2.1 Organisational learning: Change and Reform

The police service is acting in an environment that is characterised by a constant state of flux, where changing legislation, personnel, and demands require a certain level of adaptability. As suggested by Fyfe et al., (2018) these reforms and changes are often driven by 'external forces', rather than internal consultation with rank and file. This was also reflected in Police Scotland reforms in 2013. It is not the purpose of this thesis to explore the impact of these reforms in depth³¹, but it is important to highlight some of the experiences of officers and partners in relation to these significant structural changes and the impact this has had on the Scottish police learning environment. Indeed, police reform in Scotland and its impact on learning and development was discussed by almost all officers in one way or another, especially those who have experienced pre- and post- reform policing.

“I think **it's a much better placed organisation** than Lothian and Borders [legacy force] were, because it **has to have that governance and accountability** around it, and enshrined though it, to say, you know, there's the **integrity, fairness, respect that they bang on about**. I would suggest it's a **fairer organisation** than in [Lothian and] Borders.” (Police Officer, middle management 4)

Officer experiences, however, were not always positive, especially when reflecting on learning and development. For some, the centralisation of police forces in Scotland was a clear step backwards, with less availability of development opportunities, and

³¹ More comprehensive accounts of these reforms can be found in Terpstra and Fyfe (2015); Hail (2016) Fyfe (2019).

less support to access what was available. For these officers, the changes introduced through reform have introduced a perceived unjust distribution of learning and development opportunities across the force and unfair means by which decisions about training and learning needs are made (discussed further throughout this chapter). As discussed in chapter 6, the lived experience of officers within Police Scotland highlighted that the access to and use of CPD opportunities varies significantly between geographical areas, ranks and roles (Chapter 5 and 6). This was particularly the perception of officers from those legacy forces that considered themselves more progressive before centralisation. Indeed, for some officers this resulted in being held back in their development:

“We stepped back, [be]cause **some of the smaller forces used to be more progressive**. We threw all that out, so in essence the sort of progress we made during the sort of 90s and the 2000s in some places, we said well that’s not for us as an organisation, **we’re concentrating on one size fits all**, big machine of policing across Scotland, it all has to be the same. So, **we lost 10 years of progress**, and then **over the last 7/8 years we’ve stagnated** even more so. We’ve lost two decades, **we’re 20 years behind where we need to be.**” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

One reason for this may be that many officers “felt marginalised by the process” of reform, and had little opportunity to be part of consultations, planning, and implementations of reform (Hail, 2016, p. 338). This was in addition to the tumultuous initial years of Police Scotland that were characterised by increased pressure and public scrutiny, as well as several changes in leadership that made the direction Police Scotland was taking difficult to ascertain for officers. Furthermore, this was intensified by the lack of workforce planning in the first few years of Police Scotland (Murray and Malik, 2019), which is only now being addressed by the first Police Scotland Workforce Plan (Police Scotland, 2021). Police officers highlighted that they expected positive changes within the organisation in relation to organisational learning and development after the centralisation of Police Scotland. However, when this was not achieved, these officers felt frustrated:

“So, no, **I’m not convinced we are open**, and if we say we’re open, I think **where is the evidence of change**, of doing new ways of thinking? We haven’t really seen anything new.” (Police Officer, frontline management 5)

Therefore, although Police Scotland has been through significant change and reform over time, with both positive and negative impact on policing practice (Hail, 2016; Aston, Murray and O'Neill, 2019), they continue to struggle to address some of the more pervasive and negative cultural and structural aspects that influence learning and development within the organisation.

Nevertheless, participants argued that Police Scotland is still considered to be a service in its infancy and breaking down traditional local structures and cultures to develop a Scotland wide approach to learning and training may require more time. As the following quote highlights, developing a consistent and authentic learning environment across the eight previously separate organisations, which were at different stages of their own journeys to being a learning organisation and promoting effective and supportive learning environments, requires taking some steps back before moving forward together:

“I was gonna [sic] say, what do you mean by learning organisation?! I think **we're still in relative infancy** as an organisation you know, so yea, we didn't start on the first of April 2013 because we are what policing in Scotland has become as an organisation. Ultimately, I **think we've taken some backwards steps as a learning organisation.**” (Police Officer, senior management 4)

Nevertheless, some changes have been observed. For example, despite the fact that much of the initial learning period has stayed the same over time, officers recognised a change in the topics that are taught during this period. Survey responses revealed that officers who have shorter service brackets (10 years or less) suggested that they learned more about making ethically sound judgements and working with partners than officers with longer service brackets (11 years +). Additionally, respondents with longer service brackets were more likely to discuss the need for resilience, wellbeing, and diversity training, compared to respondents with shorter service brackets. This suggests that the initial training period has changed over time and Police Scotland is responding to the changing policing environment and police officer learning needs. Interviews support this claim as those officers with shorter service brackets, and those working in training and development roles, discuss the increase of inputs around mental health, wellbeing, and resilience:

“It’s **more focussed on the challenges you’re gonna [sic] actually face** once you’re operational, and the kind of, you know, **the dilemmas you’re likely to face**. I mean the idea for example of having inputs about **personal welfare and work-life balance** and things, absolutely none of that when I was there.” (Police Officer, Constable 8)

Whilst this officer suggested a more relevant provision of initial learning compared to the one they had experienced 19 years prior, chapter 5 demonstrated that this initial classroom-based learning period is still not considered relevant and contextualised enough to appropriately prepare officers for the realities of the job. This suggests that although the content at the Scottish police college is changing, without changing the way this is delivered and supporting the translation of this content into practice, there is little transformative value associated with these reforms. To develop a transformational rather than transmission model of learning (Kennedy, 2005), there needs to be a recognition that not only the content but the delivery and culture around this content needs to change. Otherwise, the changes implemented are only *cosmetic* and have little value in addressing the ‘ay been’ and other perceived barriers to individual, team and organisational learning (as explored in chapter 6). A closer alignment with the learning environment described in the LO literature (Figure 4), based on supportive structures and honest feedback loops, may support Police Scotland in addressing some of the barriers to learning and development introduced by officers (revisited in Chapter 8).

One common theme, discussed by participants, inhibiting transformative learning and innovation within the organisation is the impact of risk aversion and accountability.

7.2.1.1 Risk Aversion and Accountability

Officers are acutely aware that they are under constant scrutiny and pressure to perform because every mistake can lead to a public outcry and can significantly impact on public trust in the Police:

“If we locked up every paedophile in Scotland and there was none left it wouldn’t nae [sic] get one line [in the news] right?! [...] but **if we were to, I don’t know, get something wrong** it would get weeks and weeks of coverage [in the news], you know, **it’s completely unfair in that respect.**” (Police Officer, senior management 5)

Face-to-face encounters play an important role in either increasing or diminishing trust (Worden and Mclean, 2018). Indeed, Craen and Skogan (2017, p.3) argued that perceived fairness and respect (i.e. clearly explaining decision-making processes and being part of the decision-making process where appropriate) received inside the organisation can translate into fair and respectful treatment of members of the public externally, which can support police legitimacy and trust. Therefore, where there are structures that support accountability internally, this is more likely to be replicated on the streets. Interviewees in this study suggest however, that internal measures of accountability, such as ensuring officers are appropriately trained and educated for the roles they embark on, or officers feeling that they can share mistakes and questions with line managers, are not always in place. Indeed, where officers felt treated unfairly and wanted to hold other officers to account, they were often met with resistance, or they may be encouraged to avoid questioning such behaviour:

“I’ve been in positions where I’ve challenged officers **and been told you maybe don’t want to take that any further**, because you’re due for a promotion and it [will] be easier if this went away.” (Partner, criminal justice practitioner and recently retired police officer)

This supports the literature on this topic, which discusses various versions of the *blue code of silence* and its negative impact on achieving police accountability (Kutnjak Ivković, Haberfeld and Peacock, 2018). Furthermore, it reflects recent findings from an independent review of complaints handling, investigations, and misconduct issues, which highlighted police culture as a particular area of concern when it comes to the sharing of and learning from mistakes (Angiolini, 2020). The LO literature suggests that the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment, where employees feel able and encouraged to ask questions and view mistakes as learning opportunities, is central (Burgoyne, 1992). The ‘ay been’ culture and lack of internal accountability in this sense, according to participants, acts as a barrier to individual and organisational learning, highlighting the importance of cultural narratives, transparency, fairness and respect in developing supportive learning environments.

Additionally, some officers felt as though on the face of it, the organisation wants to hear the truth about possible areas for improvement, but when concerns are shared, they do not lead to any tangible action by the organisation. This indicates a lack of

willingness to engage in organisational learning or a lack of clear feedback loops (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008). For many officers, the lived experience of this leads to frustration with the organisation and a perceived lack of voice. Therefore, officers argued there is a need for increased internal accountability and transparency within the organisation to highlight how organisational learning takes place and what the impact of such learning is:

“They **need to create a culture where they want to hear the truth** and that’s genuine and it’s not just a case of them wanting to hear it but not do anything about it.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

As this officer highlights, it is not only about listening to complaints or suggestions but acting on them in a way that leads to positive or tangible outcomes, illustrating to officers the ability for the organisation to reflect and learn. Therefore, the perceived lack of meaningful engagement and concern to listen to officers, highlights a struggle for Police Scotland to engage in organisational learning that takes the voices of the workforce into account. The literature suggests that the main difference between an organisation and a learning organisation is that it involves and promotes individual, team, and organisational learning (Örtenblad, 2018). Within Police Scotland officers identified tensions between these different forms of learning and highlighted how disconnected they currently are. This can not only lead to feelings of unfair treatment and a lack of voice within the organisation, but due to the dismissal or lack of acknowledgement of new ideas or areas for improvement, may also lead to officers adopting negative views and practices because they have not been addressed and appear socially acceptable (Dimant, 2019). This may also explain the reproduction and sustained nature of attributes of traditional police culture.

Furthermore, this lack of internal accountability, according to officers, has led to a culture of fear, blame, and fault-finding. A culture which does not value honesty, often looking to blame the individual rather than the organisation. As this senior manager illustrated:

“There’s always been a culture in the police that **if something goes wrong, somebody has to be to blame** and there’s got to be an investigation and **somebody has to be accountable** and I think, that’s all very well if people are doing things wrong out of malice but if

people are just making honest mistakes, then that doesn't help because people will, **in that culture, will hide mistakes**, they'll do **anything to deflect blame**, they cheat, they lie, they you know you, **never improve because you keep making the same mistakes**. So it's only when you can have a little bit of openness and you know, 'look I've made a mistake, this is what I've learned from it, let's maybe not do it again', **put some processes in place, improve procedures that you can actually then become a learning organisation**, [not] until you get rid of that **blame game**." (Police Officer, senior management 2)

As Davis (2017) argued, a culture as the one described by the officer above can lead to a climate of risk aversion, where officers avoid risky situations or decisions, to avoid being in a position of being blamed for something that went wrong. This can significantly halter officer learning. Indeed, practitioners from allied professions also recognised this culture of risk aversion and suggest that this impacts negatively on partnership working and learning together. Whilst assessing risk is an important part of police work, where this dominates decision-making, it can prohibit transformative and innovative learning within the organisation, and with allied professions:

"I think they learn from the things they want to learn about. I think they're a learning organisation when it comes to **avoiding risk**, for risk averseness. I'm not sure they're a learning organisation for lots of other things that are actually important. And that might be being deeply unfair, but **I think they're a learning organisation to avoid criticism.**" (Partner, senior nurse practitioner and academic 1)

This is in contrast to the leadership role Police Scotland wants to take in "public service improvement and innovation", whilst being open to and learning from others, in their commitment to being an outward looking learning organisation (Police Scotland, 2018, p. 12). Practitioners from allied professions' perceptions suggest that officers often make decisions based on avoiding a possible backlash, not always with the service user's best interest at heart:

"The way the training is implemented, officers are so concerned about following the rules, about following **the training rather than using their professional judgement**, that they make **significant mistakes**, and there was a case of that, and so we brought it to police, and they were like '**well we rather he follow the rules**' [...], well that's because **one way is risky for you and one way was risky for [the service user]** [...] and now if we went to them with that, they'd be like 'uhh I wonder if this is an indication of a training need or just an individual officer that needs better supervision'." (Partner, Third Sector 2)

As this third sector practitioner indicated, where the organisation can blame an individual for a mistake, the problem is the individual and not the training and development provision within the organisation. Whilst there are mistakes that happen due to individual responsibility, a culture which tends to blame individuals, rather than reflecting on internal structures and cultural narratives that may have led to mistakes, can miss important learning opportunities. Indeed, based on the quote above, and confirmed by police officers, the transmission model of learning within Police Scotland discussed in chapter 5, often lacking contextualisation and time for reflection and discussion of what is learned, could explain the focus on following the rules and lack of professional judgement and discretion. In contrast, Simons and Ruijters' (2004) concept of the learning professional highlights the need to learn how to combine theory and practice and engage in active learning which continuously develops professional practice through externalisation. The current Police Scotland learning landscape does not put enough emphasis on developing officers who are able to commit to this concept, leading to a focus on avoiding risk and innovative practice and instead, many participants (both from allied professions and from Police Scotland) argued that officers stick with the 'ay been' and traditional policing narrative and rules within the organisation.

Officers further indicate that learning from mistakes is often dependent on who raises possible questions, with a general lack of clear structures in place to promote a fairer and more consistent approach to organisational learning:

“There is more of [learning from mistakes] I would say, yeah you know I think we do have far more scrutiny to see where we could improve, I think we do far more than I’ve ever seen you know previously, I think it is, I don’t think it’s particularly well structured and I think it depends on who the person is that wants to do it, I think it’s driven by that.” (Police Officer, senior management 1)

This unequal ability to raise concerns and be listened to can further intensify feelings of being treated unfairly by the organisation or line managers and lead to progress in one area within the organisation and stagnation or deterioration of practice in another. Furthermore, Pedler and Burgoyne (2017, p.120) found that in hierarchical organisations, such as the Police, “the upward flow of information is often limited and distorted. More junior staff often do not want to pass up bad news and protect their

own territories". This has been observed within Police Scotland and, according to participants, inhibits the development of a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment, which is needed to support both organisational and individual learning (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008).

Interestingly, the pressures of risk aversion and accountability may also be responsible for the previously mentioned lack of engagement with external training and development providers. As this constable working in a training and development role stated:

"I was gutted for [my colleague], because that would've been a fantastic opportunity for him to get that qualification. I understand why they've blocked it, it was [because of] **reputational risk**, if [this] training [company] then start advertising that they've been training police and stuff like that, which we could have sorted out if I'm honest." (Police Officer, Constable 3)

Due to the constant scrutiny policing is under, the lack of information available on Police Scotland's formal curriculum, and the strong focus on and prestige of learning provided or experienced internally, it can be difficult to set up or promote engagement with external training and learning opportunities. This is also reflected in the development of the ENU degree in policing, which was initially developed as a possible pathway into policing. Findings from this study highlighted a strong will to ensure that the majority of police training is delivered internally and ideally developed by Police Scotland. This reflects the hierarchy of experiential learning discussed in chapter 6, which suggests that experience and learning from within Police Scotland is generally that which is valued the most (Figure 34). Additionally, this may explain why multi-agency learning opportunities are limited and, when officers do engage with them, this often happens based on the officer's own relationships, rather than supported or indeed organised by Police Scotland. Whilst external engagement with learning may leave Police Scotland open to scrutiny if officers do not learn something they should, or indeed learn something they should not, the insular nature of police learning, can limit Police Scotland's ability to develop as an organisation and reflect on different viewpoints, particularly those that come from outside of policing.

Nevertheless, interviews revealed that there are instances where Police Scotland does try to develop structures to support organisational learning and innovation, to ensure

internal accountability. However, as the next quote highlights, although well-intentioned, the impact of these changes are often held back by the dominant culture of risk aversion and assigning blame to individuals within the organisation:

“The control room environment place a big emphasis on that and this is the **black box thinking theory** [...] we make a mistake, we don't deal with an incident properly, or we don't send someone to an incident, they fill a form out [...] and all we do is **we collate the form and we add them to the pile**, and we say we got a 170 of those this year, and you know we've spoke to staff and we've trained staff, or we've counselled staff about what to do and what not to do, **so I don't think we're truly a learning organisation in terms of it's about blame** unfortunately, it still is about blame and you know in terms of trying to adapt processes it's about **who can we blame for that**[...] as supposed to truly identifying the learning and people being comfortable [...]. And the plan was always for the organisation to adapt that kind of black box thinking that the control room have, it's never happened, and I think it would mean a huge **cultural shift.**”
(Police Officer, middle management 3)

Indeed, participants suggested that some of the processes put in place, similar to the mandatory CPD officers need to complete, are largely focussed on organisational accountability rather than individual, or in this case, organisational learning. Syed (2015, p.206 & 283), in his book on black box thinking, suggested that “process is often driven not by the accumulation of small steps but dramatic leaps”, therefore, “if we wish to fulfil our potential as individuals and organisations, we must redefine failure” and see it as a *means of learning*. Consequently, mistakes, rather than individual failures in need of individual solutions, should, where appropriate, be framed as meaningful *organisational* learning opportunities, instigating positive change. On the one hand this can develop organisational memory and avoid certain mistakes from happening again, whilst on the other hand this provides an important opportunity to promote a fair and participatory learning environment by involving and listening to employees to improve practice (Williams and Cockcroft, 2018). As the above officer suggests, to move away from the individual blame culture and achieve this organisational learning, a ‘huge cultural shift’ is necessary.

Heaton (2010) discussed at length the emergence of a risk and blame culture within policing and suggested that there needs to be greater recognition of objective and perceived risk, and strong leadership that can challenge risk aversion where it is not considered helpful. Hence, the role of leaders in the organisation is central to

promoting a culture which allows learning from mistakes across rank and file and is open to engage in innovative and transformative practice (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017). However, the organisational support for officers in leadership positions to promote and develop such a culture is limited. Indeed, participants' discussions about hierarchy, rank, and leadership development raised several questions about Police Scotland's ability to promote organisational and individual learning.

7.3 The influence of hierarchy and rank on learning

The last two chapters have explored the impact of discipline and the command-and-control structure on relationships between officers, as well as access to and engagement with development opportunities within Police Scotland. Perceptions of a lack of voice within the organisation and a lack of participatory engagement appear to stem from the strong adherence to hierarchy and rank and the credibility associated with it:

“Police [...] in my view have an **overblown perception of what that hierarchy delivers** in terms of practice change, and that's why training is so important, cause [sic] it is about **getting people to really be reflective and challenge their assumptions about something**, [...], trying to see through other people's eyes and then help them gain some skills to change their practice as a result of that, and then coach them for doing it, you know, **it isn't about well I'm just gonna [sic] tell you you're doing it wrong, do it this way from now on**, it doesn't work that way and [Police Scotland], you know, those in the upper level kind of know it but **they still have a fair amount of confidence in the command-and-control model.**” (Partner, Third Sector 2)

The quote above raised several interesting questions in relation to this cultural relic of policing, questioning the impact of hierarchy on learning, both for individual officers, but also the organisation as a whole. Furthermore, some practitioners from allied professions positioned their own organisation in opposition to that of the police by highlighting their commitment to flat hierarchical structures and its perceived link to employee empowerment and transformative learning. In the literature on the LO, there tends to be a focus on flat hierarchies which are considered to support effective and meaningful organisational learning environments (Brown and Brudney, 2003). However, more recently scholars have suggested that hierarchy does not by itself prohibit transformative practice or individual and organisational learning. Instead, as discussed previously, it is the unnecessary hierarchies or those which are not

supported with the necessary structures to enable effective communication, which are considered to hinder learning within the organisation (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017; Serrat, 2017). Therefore, it is not simply having a hierarchical organisation that can inhibit learning but the ways in which these hierarchies manifest themselves.

Interestingly, many constable level officers in longer service brackets discussed the frustration they felt when decision-making was cascaded up to Sergeants with less or similar service brackets, when they felt confident in making a decision themselves:

“I would crack up with that [constables having to ask higher ranking officers before making a decision] because even now to be honest, I **don't speak to bosses about very much you know unless there's gonna [sic] be something contentious**, just do your job you know, I've got the same service as my Sergeant at the moment, I've been in the job for three years, I've been in policing for 10, like why would you not just do your job like.” (Police Officer, Constable 6)

Indeed, many interviewees agreed with the literature on this topic highlighting the risk of developing *automatons* that simply practice “machine-like law enforcement”, leading to feelings of being deskilled and a lack of empowerment and ability to learn (Birzer, 2003; Sklansky, 2007; Brogden and Nijhar, 2013, p. 32). This can act as a significant barrier to develop the employee autonomy and empowering officers to make decisions on the ground (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011). As the above quote highlights, where an officer has enough experience to do so, they take on more autonomy in their decision-making. However, as explored in previous chapters, where officers do not receive the relevant and supportive learning opportunities that they need to develop the confidence to make their own decisions, they are reliant on higher ranking officers to make decisions, unable to engage in active learning.

ENU students reflected on the barriers that strict hierarchical and bureaucratic systems may present for organisational learning:

“I feel like change and development and learning and understanding from their [police officers'] point of view comes from a lot higher up than just your police officers, because at the end of the day, **they are just told what to do** and then they take the interpretation of it and try and apply it. So, **I think that they have learned but it is obviously based on a long line of command.**” (Student 10, focus group 3)

Whilst presenting an outsider perspective, students perceived the chain of command within Police Scotland as slowing down change and learning, and that meaningful

transformation and development is usually reserved for higher ranking officers, as lower ranking officers are “just told what to do”. This insight from students may influence their approach and motivation to learning and decision-making when and if they eventually join Police Scotland. Hence, further research on the impact of preconceived notions of hierarchy and rank on future recruits is important to understand how the lived experience of police learning may develop as police organisations increasingly open themselves up to recruiting policing students.

Furthermore, the less critical perception of higher ranking officers of how much participatory power there is, compared to the lived experiences of lower ranking officers can act as a barrier to change and transformation (Tatnell and Elliot, 2012). Indeed, findings suggest that the previously discussed lack of ability to discuss officer needs due to a lack of appraisal systems and the focus on representing traditional cultural scripts, limits the safe learning environment required for officers to engage in learning in lower ranks. Hence, as is suggested in the literature, a less (not non-) hierarchical and democratic model of leadership, especially one where individuals are open to learning from one another, may be more beneficial to support learning within Police Scotland. This is in line with a call for more transformative, shared, and distributive leadership styles across emergency services (Wankhade and Patnaik, 2020).

In some areas within Police Scotland this is achieved by higher ranking officers willing to listen and empowering their teams, sharing responsibilities, and acknowledging the value of officers across ranks and roles:

“I [recently promoted Chief Superintendent] took all of the detective sergeants into a room and just said ‘right, let’s be honest here, **you have more experience in each of your little fingers than I do** about murder, but **I’ve got the leadership and I’ve got public service** and the one thing I’m gonna [sic] say to you is I need you **to inform my decisions**, you are going to be as responsible as I am, the difference is I’m accountable, so we’re gonna [sic] solve this murder, we’re gonna [sic] give that family a result and we’re gonna [sic] take whoever has done this off the street, can I rely on you and **if I can’t rely on you I’ll replace you.**’ And they were like ‘naw [sic] it’s fine’ and they were beginning to talk to me, we got through it and it was a good result”
(Police Officer, senior management 7)

This quote highlights how *doing rank* (Davis, 2018) can be an important aspect of

empowering officers and supporting learning, suggesting that authentic learning and transformative and shared leadership can be performed within strongly hierarchical organisations. It can even be utilised as a catalyst for learning, as it may have done in the example above. Nevertheless, officers suggested that the key is the higher-ranking officer's willingness to learn from lower ranking officers:

"I think you know the rank structure is important but you also recognise actually there's people at PC level that would know a lot more about processing a drugs report than I would, because I've not done it for 10 years or something, so **it's going to the right [person], it's knowing where the knowledge is and tapping into some of that sometimes."** (Police Officer, middle management 5)

According to participants, there is a lot of luck involved in officers having a line manager that supports their learning journey, and there is a lack of focus in the formal and informal learning structures within the organisation on how rank influences the ability to engage with and apply learning. Indeed, some officers felt powerless in the organisation and at the mercy of officers in leadership positions:

"It can be an infuriating journey because I'm a low-level voice in a very tiered management structure so as much as I can say, 'this isn't good for students', a boss turns around and says, 'don't care that's what's happening'. I don't have a great deal of ability to change that." (Police Officer, Constable 3)

The limitations of hierarchy and rank power relations were further mentioned in relation to the new ART of Police Scotland. Interviewees suggest that the lack of 'rank' (at the time one constable level officer) in this team may inhibit their ability to instigate change and implement learning:

"We should have had an experienced police [officer], not necessarily really really senior, [...] but somebody at my level who would have been able to sit down and engage, somebody who's had a broad experience [...]. A constable with the best will in the world [...] won't have any organisational knowledge." (Police Officer, senior management 3)

Critically, if officers perceive the team to lack rank representation amongst their midst, this influences its credibility across the organisation (and possibly externally), which in turn negatively impact its reception when trying to support organisational learning.

Therefore, there is an association made between the value attached to a certain task or role and the rank that represents it.

Interestingly, some, although not many officers have indicated that this traditional hierarchical structure has changed, possibly through the leaner management structures introduced by the amalgamation of the previous eight forces. Many officers could see a positive impact of these leaner structures on police officer learning and development:

“I think a lot of it comes down to as well **the rank structure is so much flatter than it ever used to be**. It makes a massive difference I think it **empowers people to make decisions**.” (Police Officer, middle management 3)

Considering that the more positive experiences tend to be discussed by higher ranking officers, this might indicate a distorted perception of how flattened this hierarchy really is, influenced by their perspective looking from the middle- or top- down. Once again, this highlights a possible disconnect in the perceptions of innovative, fair, and changing practice between leadership and management officers and constable level officers, who still experience unequal distributions of opportunities and often hostile learning environments (discussed in chapters 5 and 6).

Furthermore, some roles previously only eligible for those in promoted (higher ranking) positions are now filled by lower ranking officers (Constables and Sergeants), due to the resource pressures faced by the organisation, giving more responsibility to officers with less of the prestige and financial reward associated with the role. For some officers, opening up these previously higher-ranking positions, has offered them a valuable learning opportunity not previously available to them:

“This used to be a promoted post, everybody that used to work in here was promoted, so they’re promoted to sergeant to be an instructor. **That luckily changed away** ‘cause [sic] **I never had an inclination for promotion in the job**. That’s never been a thing that’s interested me.” (Police Officer, Constable 3)

However, lowering the rank for positions within learning and development may illustrate to other officers that these roles and their work is less prestigious, and signifies a lack of investment in this business area. Furthermore, since constable level officers lack ‘rank’ within the organisation, it can be more difficult for them to instigate

meaningful change in their role, unless they have a supportive line management team. This highlights the complexities introduced through the hierarchical nature of policing and the value and prestige associated with different ranks, having a significant impact on both individual and organisational learning.

Therefore, it is clear that rank can be an important tool to enable learning in some circumstances, but it can also be seen as a barrier in others. To ensure that all officers are effectively supported and developed, whilst supporting the wider transformative and innovative learning Police Scotland wants to engage in (Police Scotland, 2018), it is important to discuss how leaders and managers in the organisation are identified, trained, and educated.

7.3.1 Learning to lead and managing to learn

Officers interviewed in this study often felt under prepared and unsupported when starting leadership and management positions:

“[laughing] Sorry [laughing] [leadership development is] not good, okay, **it’s not been good**. So, I did the old Inspectors' courses, which were very poor, very poor, you know, there’s not much to say about them in any way that would flower that up, they were poor [...], overall, **I would say the quality of the leadership training has been very poor.**” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

“I think there’s **a lot of people don’t understand what that leadership role looks like**, full circle brings us around to the fact that **the service [Police Scotland] has not invested in training and development that forms and equips people for those leadership roles**, so people apply for promotion not knowing what it’s gonna [sic] be like.” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

The quality of police leadership training and its impact on police officer and organisational learning has been explored in the international policing literature for many years (Schafer, 2010; Herrington and Colvin, 2015; Roberts *et al.*, 2016; Davis, 2018; Ramshaw, Silvestri and Simpson, 2019). Indeed, a recent thematic inspection of leadership training and development in Police Scotland by HMICS (2020) unearthed an ongoing struggle to provide the supportive and empowering leadership that some argue could improve or increase organisational commitment amongst officers, and improve learning across the organisation (Charman and Bennett, 2021). Police officers in this study agreed that leadership development is an ongoing problem for Police Scotland frustrating not only leaders themselves but also their teams.

As with most of the development beyond the initial training period, police officers argued that when it comes to learning and development for leaders, the onus is largely on the individual. The LO literature highlighted that there is a drive in organisations to place more responsibility for learning on the individual, which has led to individual learning journeys that are often separate from that of the organisation (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017). However, the ability, or indeed motivation, to engage in self-directed learning is not always a requirement that is clearly communicated with officers going for leadership positions. This leads to steep learning curves for some and highlights a lack of clarity about what is required of leaders in the organisation, and what safeguards are in place to ensure that leaders are appropriately prepared and that they engage in ongoing development and learning. This lack of organisational oversight and support for leadership development can intensify inequality of access and engagement with learning amongst both managers, leaders, and those who are line managed.

Beyond the promotion diploma, discussed in chapter 5, officers argued that there is little clear structure or knowledge about the leadership development opportunities available:

“There isn’t anything that I think properly prepares you to be a leader in the organisation and there’s nothing at Chief Inspector rank, there’s no course that I’m aware of that you can go on as a Chief Inspector.” (Police Officer, middle management 7)

“So, there’s still this urban myth that if you are a Superintendent or Chief Superintendent then you can do anything, so you get promoted to divisional commander and [are] **expected to understand HR discipline, legislation, legalities, finance, fleet, estate, media work, politics, partnership... they don’t train you in any of that.** So there has to be an opportunity at senior rank in particular **for some form of MSC, postgraduate higher education** that covers, if not just policing, than what it’s like to be a senior strategic manager in the public sector.” (Police Officer, senior management 7)

Considering the importance of leaders as role models in a hierarchical organisation, setting the standard as to how knowledge should be considered, shared, and appreciated (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008), the lack of support and development for these roles within Police Scotland can create a gap when trying to develop a supportive learning environment across ranks and roles. Officers highlighted

that for senior positions within the organisation the mandatory provision of courses currently available is not considered enough to effectively prepare leaders to do their job. Indeed, many senior ranking officers discussed the need for HE courses, like the DPSLM, as important learning opportunities to build the wider understanding of policing, criminal justice, and leadership scholarship. This suggests that some officers see value in integrating HE for specific aspects of policing, such as leadership development, involving tasks, skills, and knowledge that, according to officers, go far beyond what the police can currently provide. However, as discussed throughout this thesis, currently such engagement is reserved for officers who engage with it in their own time and without organisational support.

The feelings of frustration with the current provision of leadership development was intensified by a lack of knowledge about what training and development is available or required for their rank. This makes it more difficult to engage in self-directed learning as it is unclear what is needed and how to access possible learning opportunities. Indeed, interviews suggested that there is a lack of clarity at what point a police officer is in a position to take charge of their own learning and what that might look like. Some officers suggested that senior management officers (Superintendent and above) should be responsible for their own learning because of the level of responsibility that they have:

“I think a lot of people have an **expectation to be spoon fed** development opportunities in terms of [leadership development] so I’ve gone out, **purposefully gone out and sought my own opportunities**. [...] **I don’t rely on the organisation** to continue [to] develop me, there’s a personal responsibility for your own development.” (Police Officer, senior management 3)

Interestingly, interviews highlighted that senior level officers engaging in self-directed learning were often those who have either received good mentorship from tutors and line managers, and/or have engaged with HE either before or after joining Police Scotland. Many of these senior officers indicated that they have realised early on that the organisation struggles to provide meaningful continuous leadership development and therefore, in accordance with their own intrinsic motivation to be a good leader and manager, engaged with learning and development on their own terms, and often externally:

“My view is that **[leadership development] is a personal responsibility** and the other thing is that, as a leader there’s a responsibility, if you’ve been given a leadership position in the case of policing a pay rise, my view [is that it] is a competency that **you do things to prepare yourself for those types of roles**, so there are some skills based things that I think the organisation should provide and there’s **some reading and wider learning that in my view is a personal responsibility**, because you’ve got a responsibility for the people that you’re leading.” (Police Officer, senior management 3)

In comparison, officers interviewed who have not yet engaged with HE and who did not have supportive mentorship throughout their career, struggled to identify how to develop as a leader, and often felt stagnant and frustrated with the organisation. In particular when comparing themselves to other leaders who were perceived to have more access or support to develop themselves. As Leek (2020, p.746) illustrated “learning [should be] self-directed **and** supported through open dialogue and experiential interaction in the workplace”. The fact that only some officers engaged in self-directed learning and others struggled to identify ways in which to do so, indicates that self-directed learning rather than something encouraged by the organisation, is simply happening by chance for those individuals who already have an intrinsic motivation to do so. This can, and according to the lived experiences of officers has, led to a ripple effect where those officers who are line managed by officers with a strong drive to engage in self-directed learning receive more extensive support than those who are line managed by officers who either do not have the drive to engage in self-directed learning, or do not know how to do so. Furthermore, the learning culture described previously, which limits the ability of officers to speak up and ask for help, leads to a lack of accountability and ability to identify what support leaders in the organisation require.

Some officers argued that the organisation needs to revisit recruitment into leadership positions to avoid overburdening individuals who might apply for promotion for the wrong reasons and do not have the ability to do the role well:

“**We promoted people that weren’t ready for it**, and it always happens, you put them in a rank and **they’re floundering a bit and it’s really stunted their development** for some of them because they’ve had a bad experience.” (Police Officer, senior management 5)

Considering that there are currently no direct entry routes available in Scotland, those officers considered for leadership positions are those who have been developed in and by Police Scotland over previous years. Therefore, theoretically Police Scotland has an opportunity to prepare individuals for promotion, if and when they discuss their intention to apply for leadership positions. However, as chapter 6 highlighted, leaders tend to be promoted based on their ability to illustrate credibility through experience, rather than skills and knowledge that might be relevant to being an effective leader. Hence, officers indicated that there is a lack of transparency when it comes to leadership recruitment, a lack of preparation to become a leader, and a lack of access to internal development opportunities while in a leadership role. However, leaders are responsible for not only supporting their own development but also supporting the development of those they line manage, whilst informing organisational development (Serrat, 2017). With a lack of clear pathways and support for them to engage in their own learning journeys, it is unclear how they can support others effectively, which has led to a perception amongst leaders, managers and those who are line managed, of being treated unfairly by the organisation. A central theme discussed in relation to leadership development was the role of people management and other soft skills, the current provision of which may explain the patchy and often unequal distribution of support and engagement with learning and development across the organisation.

7.3.1.1 People Management

“I’m talking about senior officers and that **they just don’t have the communication skills to be an effective leader**, and it’s all very well going on courses to say this is how you should act but if you don’t have that, it’s personality isn’t the right word, if you don’t have communication skills, it’s very hard to learn communication skills [...] it’s all very well having different courses for it **but I suppose you can lead the horse to water you can’t necessarily make it drink...**”
(Police Officer, frontline management 5)

Officers discussed a lack of line management support for personal and professional development to develop communication skills. This has been supported by a recent thematic inspection by HMICS (2020, p.4), which found that leaders in Police Scotland often “lack emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and strategic perspective”. As the above quote indicates (and as has been discussed in the previous section) self-directed learning is important. However, this needs to be learned and supported by the

organisation rather than *assumed*, otherwise managers struggle to access learning opportunities and are unable to appropriately and effectively support their teams.

“In [a central division in Scotland] **we’ve got a huge issue with actually getting anybody interested in promotion**, we’ve got something in the order of 54 temporary Sergeant’s because nobody is going for promotion.

Interviewer

Why?

Constable 5

Well perhaps [...] **Inspectors and Sergeants aren’t developing cops. It’s left to you to make you know, your own decisions, and put yourself forward**, and I think maybe there should be more relevant onus put on Sergeants and Inspectors to develop people.” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

Officers in this study discussed the lack of support from line managers to develop them and help them identify opportunities to engage in lifelong learning, both for their personal and professional development (6.3.4). Indeed, as discussed in chapter 5, there is a significant lack of, and uncertainty about, appraisal processes within the organisation (5.3.2), which has led to patchy and often tick-box type provisions of development conversations.

Although leaders were often considered to be competent and confident in crisis situations, when it came to ‘softer’ people management skills, managers mentioned a lack of support to develop these skills, which left them feeling overwhelmed and sometimes unable to effectively support individuals.

“People management stuff [...] especially in that looking after absence you know even conduct, no involvement in that before, but **all of a sudden I’m the head of that for the division with no training**, none and never had any by the day I left.” (Police officer, senior management 1)

“I think it was the detective Chief Superintendent who basically said people have moved up four or five ranks, including himself, and **they haven’t actually been given any kind of training in relation to managing budgets, managing people** or anything like that, and they kind of had to pick it up off the cuff.” (Police Officer, frontline management 6)

These quotes highlight police officers’ perceptions that developing soft skills such as people management skills and practical skills around supporting people and their

development, should be developed by the organisation. Nevertheless, officers did agree that there are some leadership courses offered by the organisation. However, these are largely focussed on operational leadership and technical skills, rather than soft skills to support the wellbeing and development of police officers. This can leave officers unprepared to effectively support their peers and can have a negative knock-on effect on people's development, and perceptions of the learning environment within Police Scotland. This is compounded by the organisational and learning culture and climate discussed in chapter 6.

As mentioned above, some officers have questioned the recruitment of leaders in the organisation. The perceived lack of development of effective people management skills, in addition to cultural and structural barriers to learning and appreciating different kinds of learning, may explain the limited capacity of Police Scotland to engage in effective talent management. Findings show that to address emerging skills gaps and respond to the complex challenges of the 21st century, whilst avoiding unequal experiences and distributions of learning and development across the organisation, there is a requirement for more extensive and consistent approaches to 'talent management'³² across the organisation.

7.3.1.2 Talent Management

"It all comes down to your relationship with your line manager I suppose, cause [sic] if you're really good friends with them, then they kind of go that extra mile for you, but if you're not they don't, so I suppose it all comes down to that relationship you have." (Police Officer, frontline management 5)

As this quote highlights, the learning culture within Police Scotland is driven by relationships, especially the relationships with higher ranking officers. Indeed, experiences of police officers reflect what Campeau (2017) suggested, namely that officers in higher ranking positions tend to support those officers "who most clearly espouse the reigning institutional myths" (Campeau, 2017). Therefore, the ability to be

³² As Tansley (2011, p.272) highlighted, talent management, and indeed talent, are not well defined terms and their meaning tends to differ significantly for different organisations as it "will naturally depend on the needs of the organisation and the nature of the work". For the purposes of this thesis, and based on Tansley's work, talent management describes the nurturing and stimulation of innate and learned skills and knowledge relevant to Police Scotland's aims and objectives.

developed in Police Scotland is often based on personal relationships, which does not place enough emphasis on talent and merit. Many officers argued that this introduces an unequal and unfair playing field, which reflects previous notions of equity theory, unearthing tensions between the effort put in and the rewards associated with it (Buckley, McGinnis and Petrunik, 1992).

Furthermore, officers discussed the general lack of clear structures supporting talent management within the organisation. They suggested that talent may only be recognised, where an officer has a particular niche, and they are known by certain higher-ranking officers.

“What I’m saying is **your talent doesn’t get recognised** but on the flip side [of] that is the last project [I worked on], I didn’t apply for that job, **they came and looked for me because they knew that I could do the assessment strategies** [...] so it’s **only if somebody has a niche and somebody else knows about it** you know, [I] don’t know how you would overcome that.” (Police Officer, frontline management 7)

This is further intensified by the hierarchy of learning discussed in chapter 6 (Figure 34), where experience from operational policing is considered more credible and important than that from other sources. Therefore, talent which could improve policing practice associated with other kinds of learning and knowledge, is not always recognised as talent.

“No not at all. **Zero. Zero support.** So, I’ve now got [X] publications, I’ve got people contacting me about writing books on [this area of policing practice], I write on [policing topic] extensively and **I got a lot of external interest.** I’ve now been employed as an **expert fellow with one body.** I’m a science writer for a body that’s funded by the security services, **[Police Scotland] shows no interest in that whatsoever, none.**” (Police Officer, middle management 6)

As this quote highlights, although externally this officer’s talent and knowledge was recognised, within Police Scotland they found little support and interest in their work. This is despite the fact that it could support organisational learning and the implementation of innovative practices. Indeed, the recognition of officers’ talent beyond experience may support bridging the gap between academia and police, as officers (pracademics) with such skillsets could act as knowledge brokers (Huey and

Mitchell, 2016), and help to address the dialogue of the deaf³³ (Bradley and Nixon, 2009). However, current approaches to leadership and talent management reflect traditional notions of police culture and continue to reward policing experience and commitment to traditional cultural policing scripts over and above innovative and expansive learning. This links to the discussion around the value and experiences of change agents within the organisation and the limited impact they have without a wider organisational and cultural shifts within Police Scotland (6.4.1.3) (Engeström, 2001).

Police officers are generally sceptical of Police Scotland's ability to recognise officers' talents and often discussed the feeling that once they joined Police Scotland, unless they had previous experience from the military (Figure 34), their slate has been wiped clean, as if they had nothing relevant to offer:

"Once you join in a sense **you just become a number but I'm sure on an individual line manager level, I'm sure they appreciate people's skill and they have that knowledge, but on a maybe further up **maybe we're missing a trick you know.**"** (Police Officer, Constable 1)

"It's a missed opportunity [...] you know what's your background before you joined the job, you did what? Alright! Would you be interested in using it at some point? [...] How do we not know our people better? [...] Well, it's as if you know men in black be referring to the [neurolyzer], if you come into the service 'pshhh', so **you just forget about everything what you were doing before, and we'll forget about it too and we conspire together to rub this bit out.**"
(Police Scotland, senior management 6)

Officers highlighted that this is a missed opportunity. Indeed, research has illustrated how talent, knowledge, and skill from outside of policing can be relevant to develop policing practice further (Christopher, 2015b). Therefore, developing a culture and structures which recognise and reward relevant skills and knowledge to address the policing challenges of the 21st century (Ramshaw and Soppitt, 2018), is important. Importantly, where Police Scotland continues to fail to recognise or reward officers' skill and knowledge beyond police experience, findings suggest that officers may increasingly lose faith in the organisation and feel undervalued. Indeed, a central

³³ Bradley and Nixon (2009) discussed the dialogue of the deaf between academia and the Police to highlight the ways in which each side tends to be unresponsive or lacks understanding for the other.

principle of adult learning theories is that learning processes should take into account the prior experience of the individual to promote “the extension and clarification of meaning of one’s own experience”, supporting individual and organisational learning (Smith (1982) *in* Knowles, Holton III and Swanson, 2021, p.34).

A central way in which talent management has been approached in policing is accelerated promotion. Police Scotland’s legacy forces had several iterations of this national accelerated promotion scheme, which identified and developed officers who exhibited a certain leadership talent, by fast-tracking their promotion process. Police officers in this study suggested that the success of accelerated promotion was limited. Some participants felt as if the scheme did not identify the right people and those officers who were on the scheme felt as if their career stagnated when they came off this pathway. They struggled to adjust to staying in one rank for a longer period of time. This was often intensified by a lack of support from the organisation throughout the process:

“You have a time and motion study, and you spend your whole time doing the time and motion study, not actually doing what you’re supposed to be doing. It was a bit like that, you spend your entire time evidencing competence or exceeding competence **and that distracted you hugely from actually doing it and it was actually quite a stressful experience** it was, yea while there was definitely opportunities and definite positives, **it wasn’t brilliant.**” (Police Officer, middle management 2)

Nevertheless, as the above officer highlighted there were also certain benefits associated with the scheme, in particular in relation to accessing learning and development opportunities within the organisation:

“**I did loads of development in those days** [...] lots of networking, it was really, really good and **I benefitted hugely from the [accelerated promotion] scheme**, [...] so I think where I am today is largely down to that. I think **where I am now in my career though it’s not helping** because where I am now there’s a whole range of other factors come into play.” (Police Officer, senior management 2)

“Yea a really good experience, lots of specific challenges around about that scheme, how it was applied etcetera, etcetera, but overall, I really enjoyed it and as I say **it’s certainly been of benefit to me you know.**” (Police Officer, senior management 4)

However, as the latter quote alluded to, the lack of transparency around the processes involved and the lack of support with what comes after accelerated promotion, can lead to additional pressures for officers. Indeed, some officers highlighted that it intensified feelings of unfair treatment, where some officers were able to access opportunities that others could not, even though they have the same rank and role. Accelerated promotion therefore, in the way it has been implemented and communicated across the force, whilst empowering some officers, created perceptions for others of an unequal and unfair learning environment. As discussed previously, this can lead to a loss of confidence in the organisation and reflects the importance of lateral communication within Police Scotland. As Serrat (2017) argued, this is of particular importance for large and geographically disperse organisations, such as Police Scotland. Furthermore, the movement of officers through the ranks at an even quicker rate leads to further instability in teams and departments, which as discussed previously (chapter 6), can significantly impact on officer learning journeys.

The negative perception of some officers on how accelerated promotion was implemented may also explain survey respondents' feelings about direct entry routes, which could import talent from outside of Police Scotland. Similar to interviewees, the majority of survey respondents (85%) think that direct entry routes are not necessary in Scotland because everyone should go through the same (initial) training regime (Figure 47).

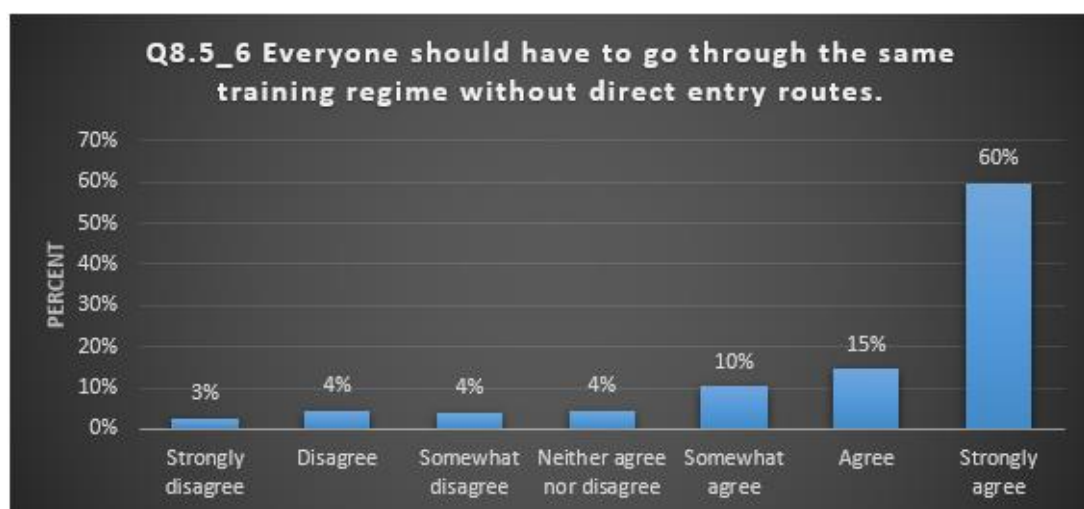


Figure 47 Survey responses to question 8.5_6 To what degree do you agree with the following statement 'Everyone should have to go through the same training regime without direct entry routes' (n=381).

Therefore, findings suggest that there is currently little support for direct entry for police officers within Police Scotland. This is in contrast to the Winsor (2011) report and Neyroud's (2011) review of police leadership, which have discussed the possibility of direct entry and the possible usefulness of these approaches in supporting the professionalisation of policing in England. This has led to the introduction of several direct entry schemes in England and Wales (Tong and Hallenberg, 2018). Williams and Sondhi (2022) highlighted however that the evidence on the success of these schemes is still in its infancy. Indeed, findings from this study would suggest what Herrington and Schafer (2019, p.243) pointed out, i.e., that the single-point of entry is still considered "the only way police leaders can have any credible ability to lead the organisation". Therefore, "effective police leadership has become intertwined with the notion of operational credibility" (Herrington and Schafer, 2019, p. 243), reflecting the hierarchy of experiential learning introduced in chapter 6 (Figure 34). This could also explain the negative experiences of some officers on the accelerated promotion scheme, where the perceived talent to be a leader, as identified by Police Scotland, does not translate into the dominant cultural narrative, which suggests that years of (operational) experience providing someone with the credibility to move up in the organisation. These tensions can have a negative impact on both individual and team learning, by reducing the trust and support within teams for officers on accelerated promotion. This is not to argue that operational experience is not a very important factor in the ability to support and lead police officers but based on the findings it should not be the only factor.

Nevertheless, there were instances where officers' talent developed through engagement with relevant external learning opportunities, before or after joining Police Scotland, was acknowledged, and recognised by the organisation. This led to officers feeling empowered and increased their job satisfaction:

"I think it was alright purely because they were flexible with me on this occasion, **I could actually sell myself and who I am and why I am good for the role**, they gave me space to talk about also **who I am away from the police**, which I really appreciated, I think that really **helps the department as well get better candidates.**" (Police Officer, Constable 7)

"My dissertation for my Masters, I came back to the police, and I did it on a policing subject that ultimately, **I agreed to share my learning**

and ultimately my learning was adopted [...] that was really beneficial to the police, that's me saying that but **there was a real read across.**" (Police Officer, frontline management 4)

These quotes highlight the link between acknowledgement and recognition of learning and talent and feelings of empowerment. Additionally, recent research by Staller et al., (2021) found that the application of learning can have a significantly positive effect on the motivation to engage in learning in the future, as highlighted in chapter 6. This suggests that where Police Scotland acknowledges learning beyond operational experience, they might have a better chance of developing lifelong learners and indeed the learning professionals (Simons and Ruijters, 2004; Serrat, 2017). As Serrat (2017, p. 60) highlighted, "a learning organisation needs people who are intellectually curious about their work, who actively reflect [...] and who use their understanding and initiative to contribute to knowledge development". The organisation therefore, has an integral part to play in acknowledging learning and initiative and utilising it to not only promote individual but also team and organisational learning where appropriate.

Some of the tensions identified around leadership, people and talent management appear to be due to a lack of, or indeed miscommunication between different levels of the organisation. Interviews revealed that there are significant communication problems within Police Scotland when it comes to learning and development, which often intensify feelings of being treated unfairly. Therefore, the next section will take a closer look at the formalised communication structures within Police Scotland and their impact on the learning landscape.

7.4 The role of communication in supporting individual and organisational learning

Many of the perceived barriers encountered when engaging with learning and applying learning in practice discussed so far, are underpinned by an officer's ability to understand, and use the dominant cultural scripts to communicate their needs and wants effectively. Officers indicated that the way that decisions around access to learning and development opportunities are communicated often leaves them confused as to what they did wrong and how to improve:

"The police promotion process, **for whatever reason** the panel didn't think I answered the questions well enough so [I] **failed the process.**"
(Police Officer, frontline management 5)

This lack of clear communication and feedback provided is often further intensified where officers feel that decisions have been made unfairly and did not reflect their efforts and learning, linking to notions of equity theory (discussed previously 6.3.3):

“So, I get my feedback and under leadership it tells me I get a zero for that part of the application, now zero is very poor and I’ve since shown that to a couple of Chief Inspectors who both said it’s a solid 2, if not a three or four [in the grading system]. **I can only assume that they were trying to keep me in the control room** because they were haemorrhaging staff, I don’t know. Anyway, turns out that **the Superintendent who helped me put the application together was on the panel, so that was like double jeopardy.**” (Police Officer, Constable 5)

As highlighted by this quote, many officers argued that the lack of communication and transparency within the promotion process to justify and explain decisions can intensify feelings of being treated unfairly by the organisation (Kang, 2007). This, as in the example above, leads officers to think that there is an alternate reason to not promote someone or to keep someone in a (temporary) rank. The LO literature suggests that promoting “a series of decisions, actions and feedback loops” guiding learning processes is important to develop a supportive learning culture across the organisation (Kools and Stoll, 2016, p. 46). This ensures that individuals can improve and understand the reasoning behind decisions. In the best-case scenario, while the outcome might be the same, providing meaningful feedback can ensure that officers do not feel treated unfairly and negatively influencing future engagement with learning and development.

In addition to a lack of transparency and clear communication from line and senior managers, officers also discussed problems communicating, sharing, and disseminating knowledge and learning across the organisation:

“The organisation is **rarely sharing and communicating learning within the organisation.**” (Police Officer, senior management 8)

Indeed, officers highlighted that there is a lot of learning within Police Scotland, but this is not always shared and disseminated well, which can lead to a loss of organisational memory. This can significantly limit Police Scotland’s ability to base decisions on previous knowledge, and the available evidence-base. Whilst the ART and

the Research and Insight function of Police Scotland present an opportunity to more strategically build a hub for knowledge, and knowledge sharing, from both within and outside of the organisation, its impact on participants and indeed for my own study has been marginal. This questions the resources dedicated to this team and their ability to break down existing (cultural) barriers to knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and impact generation.

Communication, therefore, plays a central role for the organisation to support learning and development, share it across the organisation to develop organisational memory, and develop effective relationships with partners and the public. However, as the next section will illustrate, even where official and formal structures and intentions for learning are communicated by the organisation, they do not always translate well into practice.

7.4.1 Implementation and Interpretation gaps

The implementation gap describes the gap between an organisation's policies and intended practices (official rhetoric) and how these are implemented and experienced by employees (Piening, Baluch and Ridder, 2014), reflecting on research question one (*how learning is understood*) and two (*what the lived experience of learning is*). It could also be said that it is the difference between *talking the talk* and *walking the walk*. Officers in this study discussed in many different ways how Police Scotland's policies, workforce development strategies, and plans promise positive improvements to learning and development which are not always translated into practice as intended, or indeed at all:

"We're sticking with this for what it is, and we use lots of fancy language about transformation and futures and so on and so forth, but we are pretty much doing the same thing that we've always done, you know." (Police Officer, senior management 6)

As this quote highlights, the impact of the 'ay been' culture within Police Scotland limits the impact of transformative policies and structures put in place. Indeed, in addition to the implementation gap, without the necessary safeguards and support to implement transformative and innovative policies and structures, an *interpretation gap* can emerge. This is where intended policies, strategies, and reforms are misinterpreted and perceived differently to what the organisation intended (Piening,

Baluch and Ridder, 2014). As the following quote highlights, without taking the *hearts and minds* of officers with them, reforms will not lead to change and will only be perceived as window dressing:

“The service keeps talking of, you know, 2026 and talking about change and so [on] and so forth, and let’s drive through change, but [...] [they] didn’t think about taking people with them, **[there] hasn’t [been] any kind of engagement in terms of the hearts and minds of the officers and staff**, so change has been a thing which people had **done to them** and they have displayed a **high degree of resistance** and [...] glue over it and just **keep on doing what we knew how to do.**” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

“I think that the executive are trying to [...] **make it seem like they’re doing that** [transforming learning culture] but as you and I know **there’s a difference between saying you’ve got stuff available and changing the culture**, because it can miss out quite a few ranks on the way down, and then when it gets to the bottom end, it’s actually it’s not about culture at all, **it’s just something you have to do.**” (Police Officer, middle management 1)

Therefore, officers suggest that changes are often implemented too quickly and without participatory engagement from the individuals these changes will impact. In the case of learning and development, this has led officers to engage with the newly introduced prescribed or mandatory courses but often stick to traditional or well-established ways of doing things (the ‘ay been’). Therefore, findings show that new processes are being engaged with in a transmission or tick-box manner that does not lead to the intended meaningful change or transformation (see appraisal systems and for example, 5.3.2). Interestingly, this is a well-known problem of change and reform in policing and has been discussed in the literature for many years (Lurigio and Skogan, 1994; Myhill and Bradford, 2013; Campeau, 2018). Yet, Police Scotland continues to struggle to include officers in decision-making processes. This makes many officers feel underappreciated and as if change is being done to them, rather than with them, from the top down, creating a lack of voice within the organisation. The lived experience of learning therefore often feels disempowering to officers (rather than empowering as stated in the Police Scotland Strategy 2026), for some resulting in a more limited desire to engage with learning. Therefore, it is important to look and think beyond Police Scotland to better understand what partners are doing to empower and engage staff

in learning and understand what recruits of the future may look for from Police Scotland.

The lack of meaningful change as a result of these implementation gaps, where Police Scotland either implements something without consulting officers, or say they will do something but do not put enough resources or support in place to do so, increases frustrations amongst officers. This has been highlighted by several examples throughout the findings chapters so far. Indeed, for some officers the inability to generate meaningful organisational change, leads to negative perceptions and interpretation of future reforms to the learning environment that Police Scotland is trying to implement. In that sense, future implementation gaps may become self-fulfilling prophecies, influenced by officer's preconceived notions of what the organisation has failed to do before. Indeed, Piening et al., (2014, p.557) argued that employees tend to develop expectations "about their employer's intentions and attitudes toward them based on their experiences [...] in the past", as highlighted by these officers:

"Yea so **we'll just wait and see till it's rolled out**, it's kind of like when they tell you someone new is coming to your team like, ahh I'll just wait till they're here, **in case it never happens**, because **the amount of things that they say are gonna [sic] happen and never come to fruition**, so you're best not to get your heart set on it so just wait, you know, just see what happens." (Police Officer, Constable 6)

"Police Scotland have said the right things in strategy documents and said they're gonna [sic] invest in these areas and **they haven't actually followed through in providing training to those areas or developing training.**" (Police Officer, frontline management 2)

Addressing these aforementioned implementation and interpretation gaps, and officers' negative perceptions of possible change is particularly important in light of the changes proposed in the new Police Scotland workforce plan (Police Scotland, 2021). These reforms are ambitious and reflect the drive to integrate innovative and expansive learning, such as new leadership pathways, a reintroduction of accelerated promotion, and the new mandatory 'My Career' conversations. However, without the necessary supportive structures in place to effectively communicate *with* and *to* officers the intended purpose of these reforms, while ensuring these are implemented effectively, proposed changes may succumb to implementation and interpretation

gaps. Indeed, officers already demonstrated a level of confusion as well as wariness of these upcoming reforms. This highlights not only the need for more engagement and participation in policy making across rank and file, but also as Serrat (2017) stated, the need for ongoing monitoring, reviewing, and self- and independent evaluation.

However, the ability to implement and meaningfully change policing practices is not only dependent on communication alone. Indeed, Police Scotland as a public service is acting and reacting within a complex myriad of accountability mechanisms in an ever-changing environment. This, according to many participants, further curtails the ability to drive through change due to the influence of politics and policing priorities that influence budgets and time to engage in individual and organisational learning.

7.5 The influence of politics and priorities on the police learning landscape

Contrary to Reiner (2010), who suggested that police often do not see the link between police and politics and like to consider themselves to be impartial, officers in this study were very aware of the role politics plays in influencing decision-making, learning and development within policing:

“The service needs to have a better look at futures thinking, what does it look like and prepare ourselves for that, partly the problem I think is that **we’ve got a funding envelope at the moment, we’re a bit hamstrung with politics.**” (Police Officer, senior management 6)

Officers argued that the influence of political agendas and structures on the Scottish policing budget restricts police officer learning and development, by limiting the funds available to provide the learning that might be needed or wanted. While officers recognised that Police Scotland has some say over the budget that is available within the organisation, i.e. the money that is available can be assigned to certain business areas for example learning and development, interviews focussed largely on the decreasing nature of budgets overall. These budget cuts are perceived to make it more difficult for Police Scotland to work effectively and provide a supportive learning environment, by limiting the time and resources available to engage in organisational learning and promote individual and team learning:

“I think as much as politicians can run about and say ‘yea we’re for policing, we’re for policing’ well, commit to that. **Put your hand in**

your pocket and properly commit and let us properly train.” (Police Officer, Constable 3)

“The Scottish Government, they get the block grant from Westminster and how they spend it so **they spend less on policing than others**, so we get costs to us and I spend a lot of time with accountants and trying to work out how I will pay for things and that’s frustration you know [...]. **I think we’re too close to politics**, I don’t think the oversight thing works, and that effects how we’re perceived.” (Police Officer, senior management 5)

These quotes highlight a perceived lack of understanding between governance, politics, and policing needs and practice. The politicisation of policing has been a topic of much debate in the UK and beyond over recent years (Longbottom and van Kernbeek, 1998; McAra, 2008; Fyfe, 2013b; Davies, 2015). Indeed, research from this study suggests that the lack of autonomy of the police service, is perceived to limit the ability to engage in organisational transformative learning. Therefore, beyond the internal barriers and drivers of learning and development, it is important to recognise the socio-political context that influences decision-making within Police Scotland. This reflects the socio-spatial dimension discussed in the development of expansive learning environments by Engstroem (2016), which recognises the myriad factors within but also outside of the organisation which influence its learning environment. However, this could also be considered one way in which responsibility for a lack of development opportunities and learning is shifted to external entities, rather than looking for alternative ways to address or overcome barriers internally.

Beyond external budgets and politics, participants also revealed that many learning opportunities only become available once they are deemed a priority by Police Scotland, based on public interest. This can act as a barrier when Police Scotland wants to move to proactive rather than reactive policing, which would signify a commitment to more innovative and active learning approaches (Kools and Stoll, 2016; Cierna *et al.*, 2017):

“Professional development of front-line response officers is **non-existent unless it suits PS [Police Scotland]** - i.e. D1 license when they have no one trained to drive the minibuses.” (Survey response 1)

Interviews highlighted that for certain business areas this dependence on priorities can be an advantage, because if an area is deemed a priority there will be greater investment. Additionally, there is more willingness to engage in more innovative approaches to support individual and organisational learning. This even includes the otherwise rarely supported external learning opportunities, such as academic degrees:

“Since that point a number of other people within Police Scotland have been put on similar courses and on master’s courses [in a certain business area], but it’s kind of come out this year that there wasn’t a centralised coordination of that, and there wasn’t any thought around the processes and procedures and the ongoing management of that, so the decision’s been taken to stop them for the forthcoming year, whilst they get all that kind of policy and procedures and processes agreed and agree what they’re gonna [sic] offer, and who’s gonna [sic] be able to go on them, and how they’re gonna [sic] be supported, whereas I’m kind of going through it and sticking with it and I’m kind of making the best out of the situation.”
(Police Officer, frontline management 6)

However, as discussed in chapter 6, some of these courses, because they are guided by current priorities and often short-term planning, only reach a limited number of individuals and only for a certain period of time. This limits the development of organisational memory and organisational learning, since those officers who were lucky enough to engage with this opportunity are unlikely to stay in the same business area, and officers rarely mentioned ways in which the learning they engaged with was embedded within the organisation. Additionally, although the officer in the quote above continued to complete their course, they felt unsupported by the organisation to do so and lost faith in the organisation to support their development in the future. This reflected other officers’ experiences and highlights the way in which providing short-term development programmes based on priorities can intensify officers’ feelings of being treated unfairly or unjustly by the organisation and limit lifelong and continuous learning. Indeed, Filstad and Gottschalk (2013) found that this is a common trait within the Norwegian police force, which is focussed on acting rather than planning and therefore leading to short-term solutions that make it more difficult to commit to the concept of the learning organisation, which is heavily based on notions of learning that are ongoing and embedded in the organisation (Gould, 2016).

However, as this next officer suggested, there has to be a recognition that, due to the expanding and continuously evolving role of the police officer, and increasingly limited resources, it is difficult to provide all the training and development necessary to ensure that officers are prepared to address everything they may encounter, or indeed if this would be desirable:

“I think [...] **the police is such a big organisation** that every department is a priority in their own mind so domestic is a priority, child protection is a priority, adult protection is a priority, you know, road traffic is a priority, serious and organised, **everything is a priority**, so everybody has a priority but it's about **how do you decide as an organisation what information people will get told** because it's information overload within the police.” (Police Officer, frontline management 4)

Indeed, even outside of the organisation there is an understanding that the current remit of policing makes it difficult to appropriately prepare police officers for the realities of the job. ENU students, reflecting on their own learning so far, noted that this may present a particular problem when it comes to overhauling the system and thinking about completely new learning programs, such as moving to degree entry:

“I mean, [in addition to] your police training, **there is only so much other training that a police officer might be able to take on and actually retain** because **their role's already so vast**, and they do so much already. If you were trying to drill into them a completely other training program. **I feel like it might get a bit too much**. I mean, they're only human there's only so much that can do.” (Focus Group 3, Student 10)

It may be unrealistic then to develop police officers as true ‘jack of all trades’ within the current policing structures and contexts. Interviews suggested that there is a hope that focussing on one area that is currently a priority, will not limit police officers’ ability to address other areas of practice. In fact, as mentioned previously, for those areas that are not considered a priority, there may be an assumption and need for officers to engage in self-directed learning. Nevertheless, the LO literature suggests that decisions should be made collaboratively where possible and by clearly communicating why something is a priority and what exactly this means for the learning and development needs and wants of officers, to increase job satisfaction and employee commitment to the proposed changes (Wathne, 2011; Filstad and Gottschalk, 2013; Örtenblad, 2015; Charman and Bennett, 2021).

The identification of priorities and strategic direction within policing is heavily influenced by available resources and budgets, which all participant groups discussed as a current significant barrier to learning and development.

7.5.1 Budgets and resources

As indicated above, although politics influence how much money Police Scotland receive overall, the organisation has some influence over how this budget is used in practice. Interviews highlighted that training and development is often the first area of business that experiences budget cuts. Worryingly, senior officers suggested that this lack of investment can lead to more significant problems further down the line:

“I think a large part of the pressure on that [training and development] has been **the pressure to slash budgets** when we became Police Scotland.” (Police Officer, frontline manager 6)

“They’re [Police Scotland] under pressure financially you know and, and with having more demand and less resource you can’t have all the abstraction, which I absolutely understand, [as a] senior manager, I get that, but **sometimes I think we’re too quick, it’s [training] the first thing we cut** you know, let’s trim the training, and I think **you are just pushing the problem down the road, and you’re also exacerbating the problem.** Train people properly, get them understanding what they’re doing, making them confident and competent in what they’re doing, you won’t get the mistakes.”
(Police Officer, senior management 5)

Indeed, findings presented in the last three chapters would suggest that the lack of training is adding undue pressure on officers to perform in the light of reduced development opportunities. Therefore, there is a recognition amongst officers that more investment in training and development is needed and could lead to savings in the future:

“**I think we need a capital investment in the estate, more classrooms, better facilities,** we need a revenue investment in our staffing and a strategic workforce plan that doesn’t just move frontline officers from A to B but recognises the demand in our training environment.” (Police Officer, senior management 7)

Indeed, such an investment could signal organisational intent to provide better learning opportunities for employees, as an organisation that “values, supports, engages and empowers a diverse workforce [...] with a continued focus on workforce development” (Police Scotland, 2021, p. 20).

Interestingly, some of the officers who are currently or have previously worked in training and development roles, mentioned the focus on *payment returns*, when assigning resources and budgets to training and development. As this next quote illustrates, rather than focussing on developing police officers as lifelong learners, the training just needs to develop officers that are *good enough* for a certain period of time.

“If we get 6-7 years out of them well that’s kind of the justification of cost of the initial training and that for me turned my stomach. I was like that, no I would rather see somebody come in here and stay for life because we ultimately get a better cop out of them [...] and it’s probably ‘cause [sic] **we effectively are throwing people out after training and saying right just get on with it, with no thought of how to for lateral development**, that lateral spin, how to kinda [sic] try and keep them happy.” (Police Officer, Constable 3)

This officer strongly highlights the link between the current learning environment and officers’ perceptions of being treated fairly and justly by the organisation. Indeed, as Charman and Bennett (2021) argued, and is suggested in this quote, the lack of organisational support for officers can significantly impact on officer commitment to the organisation and in some cases even lead to voluntary early resignations.

Additionally, the lack of long-term planning and increased staff turnover can have a negative impact on developing organisational memory and supporting organisational learning:

“So, if we don’t train people, we don’t offer them opportunities for **lateral as well as vertical development** then we are going to have a transient workforce and that means **we’re gonna [sic] have to train people at a far greater layout and we lose all the [skills and knowledge].”** (Police Officer, senior management 7)

Interviews with practitioners from allied professions suggested that the lack of resources and budgetary constraints are not isolated to policing. Practitioners from allied professions highlighted that development opportunities previously funded internally are either becoming more competitive, or scarce, or need to be self-funded:

“Yea, people are encouraged to try but there is a recruitment freeze at the moment so I’m not sure if this will change but yea funding issues.” (Partner, Justice Social Work 1)

“I mean it’s interesting ‘cause [sic] we’ve only just been hit with a suggestion that our fourth advisor, who hasn’t done the supervision

module, **may have to self-fund** that and **that's the first time we've had that**, so we're trying to explore that a bit more and see what's behind that, but **up until this very moment that's never been an issue we've always been funded.**" (Partner, senior nurse practitioner 1)

However, in comparison to police officer experiences, practitioners from allied professions with graduate entry and extensive continuous engagement with HE, argued that these funding cuts do not lead to significant gaps, or indeed a lack of opportunities. In comparison to officers' experiences, practitioners from allied professions argued that there is a will, both organisationally and individually, to look at other external and shared learning and funding opportunities to ensure that practitioners engage in continuous learning and that their needs are met:

"I don't think. **I can't see any obvious gaps** as I say I think funding is gonna [sic] start to be a bigger issue, I can see that starting now, but we just have to work hard to see, you know, **we have got other options**, we can apply to for that at the moment. But I think you know that will be the case for many organisations, not just in health but at the moment, there's no obvious gaps for me **I think, we've got a good set of options for that.**" (Partner, senior nurse practitioner 1)

These different approaches and appreciations of budgets and resources and how to adapt to changes within that could significantly impact effective partnership working in the future. Indeed, although interagency working is an increasingly more important aspect of the policing landscape, senior officers identified significant challenges in working and learning together due to independent budgets and associated cultures around it:

"Well now it all becomes sort of **siloed back to that**, there's been lots of community planning and the Christie Commission were supposed to stop all this, so the revolving doors service user experience is not trying to work across all of these, but it's to be a one stop approach to anything. Panacea that sort of thing. But then the things, **the behaviours that drive and maintain the silos are budgets**, so policing budget is separate from fire budget, is separate from ambulance, is separate from health, and never the twins shall meet, and then the government occasionally do things, they put a pot of money together, which is community planning money, and you have to bit it for it and all the rest of it, but it's so miniscule that doesn't actually do anything." (Police Officer, senior management 6)

As this officer highlighted, the influence of politics and budgets on partnership working is significant and even where shared pots of money are available, these are not considered significant enough to instigate meaningful long-term change. Therefore, external forces influence police's ability to effectively work and learn with other agencies, which can be further intensified by different approaches and appreciations of learning discussed in the last three chapters. Findings suggest that this can significantly limit Police Scotland's (and partners') ability to commit to the recommendations of the Christie Commission (2011) and hinder the ability to embed multi-agency learning opportunities across the public sector long-term. The literature suggests however that it is important to develop communities of practice and engage in boundary crossing to ensure that the organisation can work at the periphery of innovation and best-practice (Burgoyne, 1992; Wenger, 2011). Hence, Police Scotland as an organisation, rather than the individuals within it, has to play an active role in identifying ways to utilise budgets and resources effectively, not only internally but also in conjunction with partners to address the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century. Officers therefore suggest that meaningful, long-term, and effective changes in the police learning landscape, to address the opportunities and barriers discussed so far, will require an organisational drive and commitment to encourage and support learning and development across the organisation and beyond (with partners).

7.6 Organisational drive and commitment to promote learning

Officer experiences so far highlight that learning is largely driven by individuals and their intrinsic motivations, rather than an organisational drive or support to develop individuals:

"Honestly, I don't think we are [a learning organisation]. A lot of the courses that I've managed to get on over the past few years have been through **external offers**, through the national crime agency, and through external partners, and I think there's been a complete **lack of commitment** to understanding what we need to do to train our officers and train people up." (Police Officer, frontline management 6)

"Nobody encourages you; nobody says you know I think you could [do this], nobody, it's a bit like the additional learning opportunities, if you don't put yourself forward generally unless you have a backer and [...] unless you find it and apply for it **yourself nobody is gonna [sic] tell me about it.**" (Police Officer, Constable 5)

This lack of organisational drive to encourage learning indicated to officers that engagement with learning beyond mandatory courses is optional and not valued by the organisation. Therefore, the reactive nature of policing, or as van Dijk et al., (2016, p.12) argued, the “short-term, reactive, incident-oriented behaviour” of policing, appears to be reproduced in its approach to learning and development. Rather than fostering a learning culture across the organisation, it drives learning in pockets based on priorities, which results in an unfair distribution of learning opportunities across the organisation.

Interviews with practitioners from allied professions enabled a valuable understanding of perceived organisational drive to support and enable learning within their organisation. Indeed, in contrast to police officers, practitioners from allied professions with degree only entry discussed feeling empowered by their organisation to engage in lifelong learning. This was supported through regular supervision, but also by valuing different kinds of knowledge, skill, and learning, and feeding it back into the organisation, according to participants, developing organisational memory based on the evidence-base:

“I definitely think **learning is encouraged and it’s supported** and [...] people who are doing the practice educating, like the council funds that, and **they get study days** and there’s like **special leave policy**, which allows for study days and stuff, you know, so from that point of view the council’s supportive. **I don’t pay for any of my own training, the council funds my training whatever it is.**” (Partner, Justice Social Work 3)

Garvin et al., (2008) suggested that the role of supportive leadership is central here because leaders act as role models on how knowledge should be considered, shared, and appreciated. Therefore, what senior managers support and promote sets a precedent and communicates to officers what kind of learning is valued by the organisation. As highlighted previously however (7.3.1), leaders in Police Scotland do not always feel prepared to empower individuals when they themselves struggle to access and apply learning in practice. Therefore, many police leaders currently appear ill prepared to drive learning in the organisation forward.

In addition, in comparison to police officers, practitioners from allied professions on the whole had more agency in influencing their career path and therefore their

learning journey. This was provided through the regular appraisal processes available, monthly supervision meetings, continuous engagement with HE, and the need to (re-) register with a national oversight body in regular intervals:

“They’ve done a lot of workforce development to get extra staff and out of the four child protection nurse advisors, three of them have done their supervision module, so we’re all linking in regularly with the University of Stirling to support our team in keeping our skills up academically.” (Partner, senior nurse practitioner 1)

These factors all play an important part in ensuring practitioners’ expectations are met, while offering flexibility in the way they are addressed through an iterative process of supportive structures within their organisation, which together form a supportive learning environment that drives learning forward.

Figure 48 was created based on findings from this thesis, to illustrate the processes and structures, which according to some practitioners from allied professions, underpin the effective and inclusive learning environments of their organisation.

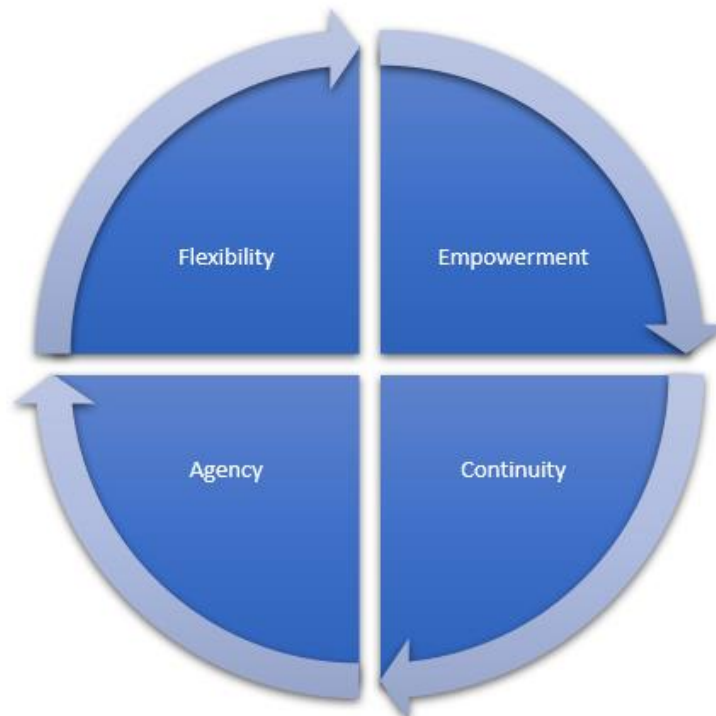


Figure 48 Underlying processes and structures of effective organisational learning environments according to practitioners from allied professions

Örtenblad (2018, p.151) suggested that “the organisation being a facilitator, supporter and/or arranger of the learning going on in the organisation” is important to support

individual, team and organisational learning and develop organisational memory. However, as has been discussed throughout the last three chapters, the current learning environment within Police Scotland leads to a lack of *empowerment* amongst officers, who often feel isolated in their learning journeys and unsupported by the organisation (6.4.1.2). The different segments in the diagram above (Figure 48) highlight some of the central elements that could aid Police Scotland to improve the current perceptions of a lack of organisational commitment to learning and development.

The lack of *continuity* in the provision of learning opportunities and supportive structures has led to a loss of faith in the organisation and the perception that opportunities are not fairly distributed. According to participants, this inhibits the ability to develop communities of practice supporting individual, team, and organisational learning effectively (5.3.2, 6.3.4). Furthermore, the lack of *agency* officers described when trying to or wanting to influence their professional development can negatively impact on officers' perceptions of voice within the organisation and the organisations' ability to embed learning and develop organisational memory (6.4.1.1). Lastly, the lack of *flexibility* within the learning environment within Police Scotland limits the ability to engage in the innovative and active learning practices to develop learning professionals as well as promoting organisational learning (Chapter 5).

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that both partners and police officers also provided several positive examples of learning within Police Scotland in recent years:

“Okay, learning organisation I would describe as an organisation who is always open to change, is flexible and dynamic, and takes all learning opportunities on board, implement them, embed them, learn from them. [...] Would I describe Police Scotland as that? ... **I actually think we're on the cusp of saying yes to that** [...] we're on a huge change agenda at the moment towards 2026, so **that whole change in organisational improvement is well on route** so I would say the organisation has now got the drive and the organisation for that to happen and we're just at the kind of delivery stage so yea.”
(Police Officer, middle management 3)

“**I think it [Police Scotland] is more open than it used to be** so there's been improvement.” (Partner, Justice Social Work 5)

Although some of the barriers explored so far have been deeply rooted in police culture and historical practices and understandings of policing, there might be some momentum in the organisation that could enable them to address some of these barriers in the near future. In particular with the help of external partners such as SIPR and SCLEPH and change agents within the organisation. Furthermore, considering the scope of this research project, and the lack of chief constable level officer engagement with it, the organisational structures and intentions in relation to learning and development would benefit from further research and exploration.

7.7 Discussion and conclusion

The 2021 Police Scotland workforce plan states that Police Scotland wants to be an employer of choice that *attracts, retains, and develops* its people (Police Scotland, 2021). By exploring the occupational, socio-spatial, and structural factors that enable and limit individual and organisational learning, this chapter started to question the ways in which learning is currently delivered within the organisation, helping to answer research question one. It started by providing an insight into the strong influence of the 'ay been' culture, which supports the replication of the status quo and in many ways limits the organisations' ability to engage in innovative and transformative thinking and learning (Halmaghi, 2018). This supports findings from the literature, which suggest that projects promoting police reform have often failed due to the conservative forces at work within police forces across the western world (Karp and Stenmark, 2011).

In particular, the ineffective communication around learning and development, due in part to a lack of structures and opportunities to voice learning wants and needs, limits the opportunity to embed, promote, and share organisational and individual learning. This influences Police Scotland's ability to address and learn from mistakes, which has been identified as an area of concern in Scotland by the Angiolini report (2020).

However, the ability to learn from mistakes individually and as an organisation is a central element of the (workplace) learning literature, to encourage innovation and change (Syed, 2015; Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017). Officer experiences would suggest that there is a lack of psychologically safe learning environments available within the organisation and indeed, the hierarchical command-and-control culture and the 'ay

been' negatively influence police officer willingness to come forward, even where supposedly safe spaces are provided. This highlights another way in which an implementation gap can manifest. Therefore, effective communication before, during, and after implementation of new reforms and policies with all stakeholders involved, not only the leadership team, is important to ensure that reforms to learning environments are implemented and interpreted as intended. This will be particularly important in the roll out of the new 'My Career' process across Police Scotland to have the intended positive impact on police officers and the organisation (Police Scotland, 2021).

Whilst effective communication at all levels was considered essential, this study also highlights the quintessential role leaders and managers have in the organisation. Indeed, findings suggest that leaders often lack the value alignment with Police Scotland's vision to value, support, engage and empower "a diverse workforce to lead and deliver high quality services, with a continued focus on workforce development and overall wellbeing" (Police Scotland, 2021, p. 20). The current structures and culture within Police Scotland are not perceived to be able to effectively support this authentic leadership style (Yavuz, 2020). In particular, the lack of leadership and people management training limits the ability of leaders to commit to Police Scotland's aims. This suggests a disconnect between the ongoing commitment to developing innovative and participative leadership practices within the organisation (Police Scotland, 2021) and officer experiences on the ground.

For many officers, the recruitment process to leadership positions was perceived to be unfair. Myhill and Bradford (2013) argued, this perceived lack of procedural fairness experienced by officers may increasingly lead to less identification with and commitment to the organisation, which can have a knock-on effect on officers' ability and motivation to engage in learning and development in lower ranks. As highlighted in the literature review, it removes officer learning journeys from the organisational learning journey and puts significant pressure on individuals to develop themselves with little or no organisational guidance and support. This results in some officers well-placed to support individual, team, and organisational learning and others struggling to do so, with little effort from the organisation to address this gap.

Although the ability to address this may be hampered by the pressure to perform in the light of limited resources and decreasing budgets, practitioners from allied professions suggested that the expansive learning environments in their professions, often had more flexible and consistent approaches to learning, due to more comprehensive people management systems and flattened hierarchies. This significantly increased employees' feelings of organisational support and the ability to support individual and organisational learning, whilst creating organisational memory. Therefore, as highlighted in

Figure 48, Police Scotland may benefit from developing learning environments which meaningfully empower officers, providing *continuous* support, promoting officer *agency*, and are flexible rather than rigid in their provision and appreciation of different kinds of learning.

However, beyond barriers to individual learning, Police Scotland currently lacks the structures and feedback loops to effectively engage in organisational learning and develop organisational memory to develop such a supportive learning environment. Furthermore, the onus on individual rather than organisational drive and commitment when it comes to learning and development can, and has according to some officers, led to an unequal distribution of opportunities and learning across the organisation. This highlights an individualised learning environment, rather than a learning organisation and can lead to partnership working dependent on individuals' motivations and commitment, with a lack of capacity to develop organisational long-term engagement and learning within and across agencies.

Nevertheless, Police Scotland has talented and knowledgeable people within the organisation, and indeed in some areas is developing effective and supportive learning structures. However, the underlying culture of the 'ay been', unnecessary hierarchical structures, risk aversion and accountability, as well as external forces such as budget constraints and resource pressures, continue to limit Police Scotland's ability to homogenize this learning environment across the organisation. As research on social work and nurse education has illustrated (Davies, 2008; Orme et al., 2009; Yam, 2004), the complete overhaul of education systems, although it may be needed, is not easy and is difficult to implement. If this is done without *the hearts and minds* of officers at

all levels, changes can, and according to findings from this study, will be perceived as window dressing, and result in another tick-box exercise that in practice, does not lead to any meaningful change. Nevertheless, since Police Scotland came into being, there have been positive developments in relation to learning and development. Building on this momentum, Police Scotland may be at a crossroads and slowly transform notions of the 'ay been' to one that recognises that change does not take away from what has worked before but can advance traditional practices to align with the contemporary role of the police officer, the police organisation, and wider societal transformations. This could help develop the mindset that support and drives meaningful individual and organisational learning forward.

The upcoming conclusion chapter will therefore highlight recommendations and key conclusions, which will point towards the ways in which Police Scotland, and police organisations more generally, may further improve and transform their learning environment to one that is closer aligned with the literature on what works to promote effective workplace learning, and develop a learning organisation. In addition, it will highlight how the last three chapters have helped to answer the research questions of this study and present a revised framework for learning within Police Scotland, based on the recommendations from this thesis, to further develop the learning environment within Police Scotland and the literature on this topic.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this PhD research project is to *critically assess and explore the role, culture, and value of police learning in Scotland*. This was achieved by collecting and analysing 381 survey responses, forty-eight interviews, and three focus groups. The research questions, presented in chapter 2, provided the basis for this assessment, and will be revisited throughout this chapter, drawing on the discussion of findings in chapters 5, 6, and 7. This thesis argues that current theories of professionalisation, workplace learning, and the learning organisation are not yet nuanced enough to encapsulate the current context of police learning. The intricacies of learning within the organisation and in shared learning environments, highlighted the enduring tensions between experiential and theoretical knowledge, illustrating the strong influence of police culture on the police learning landscape. Indeed, findings would suggest that the current workplace learning and LO literature would benefit from incorporating theories of organisational justice more extensively (explored later in this chapter), by recognising the ways in which power structures and occupational culture can influence individual and organisational learning. This could help to avoid the identified implementation gaps within Police Scotland when introducing innovative and transformative reforms, and focus on their commitment to being an outward looking learning organisation (Police Scotland, 2018).

This chapter will answer each research question in turn, highlighting the different lenses through which police learning was explored (sections 8.2 – 8.4). This will illustrate how police learning is understood and manifests in Scotland, how this compares to experiences of learning from practitioners from allied professions, and ENU students' expectations of police learning and experiences learning on policing. In the following, the independent and significant contributions of this thesis to the police learning and wider workplace learning literature will be presented (8.5). This thesis has made a significant contribution to the knowledge base around police learning, particularly in Scotland, while highlighting implications for the wider workplace learning landscape. Indeed, a framework for learning within Police Scotland was revised based on the findings and the available literature on this topic to advance our current knowledge on police learning and create a framework which reflects the

realities and lived experiences of police officers (8.5.1). To illustrate in what ways findings may improve current policy, practice, and research in this area, the next section will suggest key recommendations to advance future practice and research (8.6). Furthermore, although every effort has been made to limit this, no study is perfect and within the theme reflecting on learning throughout this thesis, section 8.7 will consider the ways in which this project could have been improved further. Finally, the key points from the research project will be summarised, alongside final comments on police learning and development (8.8).

8.2 Research question 1 – How is police learning understood and supported in Scotland?

In response to research question one, interviews and survey respondents highlighted that both individual and organisational learning are considered important to develop relevant, reflective, and innovative policing practice. Findings suggest that Police Scotland has some areas and subcultures within the organisation which are engaged in meaningful and reflective learning practices, for example those officers engaged in Master's and PhD research, and those departments working on particular priority areas within Police Scotland. However, this thesis identified significant challenges to an organisation-wide approach to learning, which promotes officer empowerment and innovative practice.

Police officers provided a more in depth and relevant discussion of the lived experiences of learning and were able to indicate how learning within Police Scotland manifests and is supported by the organisation. Many officers argued that Police Scotland is better placed in relation to learning and development than in previous years. Indeed, some officers recognised a gradual shift from traditionally more closed and restrictive learning environments to more openness to learning from mistakes. However, this is often considered a symbolic adaptation that does not lead to significant changes on the ground, where *cultural inertia* (Campeau, 2017) is ripe. Additionally, police officer interviews revealed that this shift is still largely dependent on the department officers work in, and the understanding and promotion of learning by their line manager. The unequal distribution of learning opportunities emerging from this and officers' feelings of unfair treatment by the organisation could be understood through the lens of organisational justice theory. Organisational Justice is

“concerned with the implications of justice judgments on staff attitudes, staff retention, workplace relations, productivity and performance” (Roberts and Herrington, 2013, p. 115). As mentioned above, where officers are unable to utilise and apply the knowledge and skills they have invested time and motivation in to improve their practice, particularly where this is a necessity of joining the force, feelings of organisational ‘injustice’ can occur (Williams and Cockcroft, 2018). Research suggests that these feelings of ‘organisational ‘injustice’ can lead to voluntary early resignations by police officers and negatively influence officer commitment to the organisation (Charman and Bennett, 2021). Hence, this thesis indicates that a better understanding of organisational justice theory and its implications for the learning environment could improve current engagement with and the use of development opportunities for officers, teams and the organisation. There is a need for more research in this area to better understand how different aspects of organisational justice theory may advance police learning environments.

Furthermore, participants highlight several unique aspects of the police organisation that require a level of command-and-control, creating a more complex relationship with learning and development. Indeed, officers often struggled to articulate where to draw the line between developing expansive and innovative learning to continuously adapt and improve practice, whilst learning disciplined behavioural traits to follow orders and adhere to internal hierarchical structures. This suggests that learning is understood in different ways within Police Scotland, namely in a restrictive one-way transfer of knowledge, skill and behavioural traits for many frontline policing tasks, such as handing out tickets, reciting the law and following standard operating procedures. Interestingly, it appears to be more innovative and transformative when it comes to areas of high priority and within pockets of learning cultures within the service. A grey area emerges when officers are confronted with the “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber, 1973) presented in the literature review, where strict adherence to the law and procedures may not lead to the best outcomes. The ability to reflect on this grey area is further limited by the lack of safe and supportive learning spaces within the organisation. This thesis argues that spaces such as these are central to enable police officer development and ensure that officers better understand the way in which to apply their powers in often ambiguous and difficult situations.

Officers argued that Police Scotland struggles to develop an organisation-wide, psychologically safe learning environment, where individuals feel a sense of support and empowerment. Garvin et al., (2008) and Moreale and Herrington (2021) argued that psychological safety is an important aspect of learning organisations, and leaders in the organisation play a significant part in implementing this. Furthermore, although many leaders in this study wanted to act as change agents, Haake et al., (2017, p. 764) argued that “this discrepancy [between what Police Scotland promotes through their leadership programmes and what is experienced in practice] is argued to represent an effective barrier for change initiatives, and hence the idea that police leaders will be able to function as agents of change promoting organisational reform is highly uncertain”. If there are no effective structures that provide officers with the tools and opportunities to learn, the passion of some leaders in the organisation can only go so far in supporting individual and organisational learning (Örtenblad, 2018). Additionally, the strong focus and reliance on individual and self-directed learning, separate from organisational and team learning, introduces feelings of a lack of voice within the organisation. Procedural justice theory, as part of organisational justice theory may explain this. Procedural justice theory suggests that employees need to have decisions explained to them clearly and ideally make decisions together, whilst being treated “in respectful, nonthreatening, and unbiased manners” (Wolfe and Nix, 2017, p. 719). This can make employees more likely to respond positively to decisions made and support organisational goals (Nix and Wolfe, 2017). The lack of voice within the organisation as a whole, but in particular when it comes to supporting team and organisational learning, introduces a lack of procedural justice that Police organisations should seek to address in the interest of developing organisations which value their employees’ contribution. It is also considered a barrier to developing organisational memory and a supportive learning culture across the organisation (Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017).

Furthermore, participants argued that the ‘hidden curriculum’ on the street often opposes that which is taught in the classroom. Therefore, the content taught within the formal curriculum is not always considered to match the realities of the job. This confirms findings from White (2006), who illustrated that the focus on technical skills and practice can lead to unhelpful binaries between theory and practice. This can inhibit meaningful learning and development. Police Scotland’s perceived lack of effort

to address this gap between the official and 'hidden' curriculum can lead to unintentional consequences where strategic priorities and aims are adhered to on paper but not in practice. Indeed, selection processes for leaders in the organisation are often perceived to reflect a focus on experience rather than knowledge and skill, highlighting the strong influence of traditional notions of police culture within Police Scotland. This confirms Roberts et al.'s, (2016) findings that those officers well versed in the tradecraft, tradition, and experience of policing are rewarded by being given leadership roles. This in turn shows other officers that it is possible to do the role without, or at least not because of, any additional learning beyond experience. As Williams, Norman and Rowe (2019, p. 270) argued, there is a "need for a wider definition of what contributes to 'police knowledge'".

Police officers pointed out that the engagement with learning opportunities beyond initial learning is often delayed and because of this, rendered irrelevant and unnecessary. This highlights another way in which Police Scotland provides learning opportunities which, in practice, provide little cognitive value to officers. Indeed, this delayed provision of learning opportunities further signifies to police officers the lack of value placed on learning and development by the organisation. It questions the focus on 'provisionism' (Boud and Lee, 2005) within Police Scotland learning offerings, and highlights the need to be more aware of officers' lived experiences to ensure that the provision of learning opportunity addresses current needs of officers and the organisation. More extensive focus on the impact of learning provisions may also address resourcing issues mentioned by officers, ensuring what is provided matches the need of the officer and the organisation.

Reflecting on these findings, it would benefit Police Scotland to more formally recognise that individual learning and self-legitimacy is as important as team learning and organisational learning, all of which do not happen in a vacuum or without one another (Cierna *et al.*, 2017; Martin *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, this study suggests that Police Scotland needs to be more proactive with its engagement and promotion of learning, while clearly stating what learning in the organisation should and does entail. This will help officers to know where organisational responsibility to provide and support learning ends, and that of the individual officers to engage in self-directed learning begins. There should be a symbiotic relationship between the two (Örtenblad,

2018), to avoid gaps in knowledge and skill that has negatively impacted the success of individuals, teams, and the organisation.

ENU students present a small cohort of university students currently studying on a policing degree in Scotland and discusses the views of individuals who are not yet police officers, nevertheless, their views have raised valuable insights worthy of further exploration in light of the expansion of policing degrees in Scotland. Additionally, these emerging perspectives suggest that there is a role for HE to advance police learning in Scotland. If, as expected, a number of this cohort join Police Scotland, they harbour expectations that the organisation will provide a flexible and responsive learning environment going forward. Thus, it is not just important for current employee satisfaction but also to ensure legitimacy and responsiveness to changing demands and future police officers.

ENU students recognised the role and value of experiential learning, particularly in the initial stages of becoming a police officer, confirming much of the literature on this topic which recognises the value and importance of craft knowledge and experience (Heslop, 2011a; Willis and Mastrofski, 2018). However, and as Willis and Mastrofski (2017) suggest, ENU students also recognised the value of academic knowledge for policing practice. They argued that, whilst craft knowledge and experience are important for the intricate processes of policing, wider scientific knowledge is needed to understand the role, powers, and value of the police and policing to address the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century. Therefore, ENU students expressed similar views to those of allied professions, reflecting the idea of the learning professional who is able to effectively combine experiential and theoretical knowledge to engage in active learning (Simons and Ruijters, 2004).

Interestingly, students understood their own engagement with HE as an important part in helping them to challenge what they perceive to be the more controversial aspects of police culture. However, the expectations of students to challenge traditional practices, or indeed act differently based on their knowledge from outside of Police Scotland, is likely to be hampered by the current learning culture within Police Scotland, which, this thesis argues, rewards those who commit to dominant cultural scripts, and may hold back those who oppose them. This questions the current

value of HE degrees in policing beyond the personal development it can provide (Dominey and Hill, 2010).

Nevertheless, ENU students did not only discuss the benefits of degrees in policing for individual officers but discussed degree entry to policing in Scotland as a way in which to raise Police Scotland's profile and increase their legitimacy. Interestingly, this was in opposition to what police officers suggested provides credibility, authority, and trustworthiness within the organisation, which is years of experience and experiential learning. Therefore, there appears to be a disconnect between what is considered organisational legitimacy, the "normative and cognitive forces that constrain, construct, and empower organizational actors" (Suchman, 1995, p. 571), self-legitimacy, "a solid moral foundation in their work to be confident in their own authority" (Paoline and Gau, 2020, p. 62), and external legitimacy, "which relies on organisational fields, regulatory agencies, professional associations and reputational norms" (Drori and Honig, 2013, p. 347). Organisational legitimacy, as described by police officers, is that which dominates officers' lived experiences of learning and often stands in opposition to that of self-legitimacy, which may explain why officers often feel unprepared and unsupported by the organisation to do their job. ENU students suggested that a stronger alignment of organisational legitimacy with the current theoretical and academic knowledge of policing would help to close the gap between organisational and self-legitimacy, which in turn promotes external legitimacy. Therefore, the current dominant narratives of different forms of legitimacy within and outside of the organisation can significantly influence the learning landscape, and where misaligned lead to officers feeling let down by the organisation and unsupported to effectively do their job.

Students also presented some expectations on Police Scotland as a provider of learning and development, within the current police learning landscape, may not be realistic and lead to disappointment. Indeed, rather than proving a benefit to their journey within Police Scotland in the future, their degree education may present a barrier to assimilation within the organisation and influence their ability to make decisions, within an organisation that struggles to combine different forms of learning, knowing, and doing.

There was no consensus amongst officers if degree entry, or direct entry for individuals with particular academic backgrounds, would be beneficial to support learning and development within Police Scotland, as much of the literature within the police professionalisation sphere tends to suggest (Christopher, 2015b; Goode and Lumsden, 2018; Leek, 2020). Nevertheless, there was agreement that more engagement with HE and academic knowledge would benefit the organisation, individual officers, the public and allied professions to address the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century (Weber and Khademian, 2008). Although there is some engagement with HE institutions through collaborations such as SIPR, officers were sceptical of the current 'tokenistic' engagement for police officer development and organisational learning. Therefore, as much as officers' perceptions of Police Scotland becoming a degree entry profession were largely negative and considered unnecessary, officers did argue that a gradual shift in the organisation is needed to appreciate and utilise different forms of knowledge and skills, both from research and other avenues, more effectively. This echoes the emerging voices of ENU students and the value they can see in the knowledge they receive through their degree for policing practice and the police organisation. Consequently, participants call for more structured and long-term approaches to knowledge and skill development that is less dependent on external priorities, internal cultural factors, and line management support. Indeed, Hough et al., (2018) suggested that more structured engagement with HE, and the resulting body of knowledge within the service, is important to legitimise the authority of the police in society.

Nevertheless, the discontinuation of the DPSLM and the introduction of the new vocational 'Sergeants Professional Development Programme' are perceived generally positively. This is even though changes such as this one, move further away from a structured approach based on long-term engagement with HE, to a more informal approach based on experiential learning and line management support. Therefore, although officers argued that more structured engagement with other forms of learning and knowledge is needed, they struggled to identify how the police could implement this and prefer learning 'in the flow' of working and through experience. Findings would suggest that this is due to the strong influence of the current hierarchy of knowledge and experience, making other forms of learning irrelevant and

undervalued for professional development. Perhaps, as Lancaster (2021) argued, both officers and the organisation need a less blinkered view of what learning might look like and recognise that learning can be both experiential and academic/theoretical. This would significantly advance the ability to commit to innovative and empowering notions of learning in the workplace and was one of the stark differences emerging between police officer perceptions of learning and development and that of practitioners from allied professions.

8.3 Research question 2 - What is the lived experience of learning within Police Scotland and how may this vary by rank, years of service, and educational background?

Chapters 5 and 6 investigated police officers' lived experiences of learning based on their demographics. These findings suggest that perceptions of, engagement with, and experiences of learning within Police Scotland varied based on rank, years of service, and educational background. In addition, differences in access and engagement with CPD have been observed between divisions. These differences are influenced on the one hand by structural factors, such as the centralisation of the police service in Scotland. On the other hand, this is due to the individual motivations to engage in learning, whilst being socialised into the traditional police culture within the organisation, a culture which promotes certain hierarchies of learning and knowledge. This significantly impacts on officers who want to engage in learning and thinking 'outside the box' trying to reform and improve policing practice.

In relation to rank, police officers were more likely to engage with internal learning opportunities in lower ranks, primarily due to a greater number of opportunities available to them. Police officers in higher ranking positions confirmed that there is a lack of leadership development opportunities available. This resulted in officers in these positions being, on the whole, more likely to engage in external learning opportunities, compared to officers in constable or sergeant ranks. The wider impact of this, as observed by officers, is the lack of lower ranking officers going for leadership positions because they fear a lack of organisational support and learning opportunities available to them to commit to the role.

Conversely, officers in higher ranking positions found that they were more able to utilise and apply external learning, or learning beyond experiential and tactical

knowledge, in their role. In comparison, lower ranking officers often struggled to see the benefit of learning beyond that which was mandatory or prescribed by the organisation, due to a perceived lack of applicability in practice. Therefore, findings show that officer rank appears to be related to whether officers engage in learning beyond that which is mandatory and offered internally, how this learning is perceived, and whether such learning will be applied in practice. This reflects the command-and-control culture within policing and the perceived lack of autonomy and agency in lower ranking positions, leading to a lack of perceived ability and need to engage in reflective and transformative learning (Leek, 2020), which can inhibit change from the bottom up.

In relation to years of service, police officers in shorter service brackets were less likely to engage in learning beyond that which is prescribed by the organisation. Indeed, the most valuable learning, particularly in these early years, was considered experiential learning. However, this learning often lacked time for reflection and discussion with peers and line managers, leaving officers to learn what they think may be important, rather than being guided by an official curriculum or internal, structured supervision. In comparison, officers with longer service brackets, were more likely to engage in additional optional learning within and outside of Police Scotland. Conversely, some officers in longer service brackets, highlighted that they are less motivated to engage in additional non-mandatory internal or external learning. This is explained by the impact of the lack of capital associated with learning beyond experience, signalling to officers that such learning is irrelevant to advancing within the organisation. These diverse experiences by officers in longer service brackets, often in leadership positions, leads to an unequal support system for lower ranking officers and teams. This is because those officers engaged in learning beyond the limited established opportunities offered by the organisation provided better support for individual and team learning in their departments, due to their own motivation and commitment to learning (Serrat, 2017; Hoel and Christensen, 2020). This creates an unequal distribution of support across the organisation and, as discussed above, has created feelings of 'injustice', where the organisation lacks the ability to create a supportive, equal and participatory learning environment.

Indeed, the initial classroom-based learning and ongoing CPD e-learning packages, across ranks and years of service, were perceived as tick-box exercises and a way for the organisation to achieve accountability without the necessary checks and balances to see if the learning provided resulted in the learning outcomes proposed. This is supported by the literature which suggests that police services often fail to “specify what knowledge [is] required (Heslop, 2011b) or whether the success in exams translated into behaviour in practice” (in Belur et al., 2019, p. 9). In comparison to officers with shorter service brackets, police officers who have a certain amount of experience (years of service) tend to acknowledge the limits of experiential learning and mandatory courses and, through reflection in and reflection on action (Schoen, 1987), recognise the need for more comprehensive learning opportunities to develop their practice. Therefore, even constable level officers with several years of experience recognise the need for more meaningful learning opportunities, suggesting that years of experience has a more significant impact on the assessment of the value of learning in Police Scotland than rank does, whilst rank is a significant factor in the ability to apply learning beyond experience in practice.

Several differences between officers with HE degrees and those without were observed. Officers who engaged with HE for a prolonged period of time (Bachelor, Master, or PhD) had increased motivation and ability to engage in lifelong learning, beyond the mandatory provision of courses by Police Scotland. Indeed, they often felt more able to identify and drive their own learning forward through self-directed learning. Therefore, officers with this background exhibited key characteristics of lifelong learners interested in learning for their personal and professional development (Blaschke, 2016). However, considering the size of the police officer population part of this study, it may be the case that officers without a degree background exhibit similar characteristics but were not identified through the sampling methods in this study.

This study found that educational background did not influence officer preference for experiential learning but highlighted the recognition that meaningful learning needs to include a range of learning opportunities, both vocational and academic, formal and informal, and supported by the organisation. This supports Lancaster's (2021) argument that learning ‘in the flow’ of working is paramount to meaningful workplace learning within the police. However, the internal hierarchy of learning and knowledge

(Figure 34), recognised by officers across educational backgrounds, puts very little value on academic knowledge and therefore, there is little support within the organisation to engage in and apply such learning. Nevertheless, the personal benefit of engagement with HE to develop officers more able to engage in self-directed learning and support team and individual learning of others, develops social capital in the learning communities that have, and are starting to, develop within Police Scotland.

However, due to these perceived hierarchies of learning, officers who have or are engaging with HE often felt that they had to keep their police practitioner role separate from their police scholar role. This limits their ability to work effectively as *pracademics* and *knowledge brokers*, to bridge the perceived gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences. Hence, this study contends the suggestion in the literature that there is an increased integration and acceptance of academia within policing and police services, also called academic drift (Hallenberg, 2012; Tight, 2014; Edwards, Lee and Esposito, 2019). This study suggests that in Scotland the two worlds of academia and policing are still largely kept separate for individual learning pathways, with a lack of organisational and cultural support to effectively integrate the two, limiting not only individual but also organisational learning.

Consequently, this thesis highlights the importance of understanding both the macroenvironment (organisational and cultural factors) and the microenvironment (how officers assign meaning to their experiences based on their interaction with others) of learning. Heifetz (1994) called this moving between the 'balcony' (the bigger picture) and the 'dance floor' (the micro picture) (*cited in* Brookes, 2017, p. 114). By analysing the interplay between the two, this thesis identified a disconnect between the learning practices and culture promoted by Police Scotland (the balcony) and the experiences of officers on the ground (the dance floor), which is often influenced by their rank, years of service, educational background, and location. As illustrated, this has led to inequity amongst officers and for some, has negatively influenced their motivation to engage in lifelong learning and CPD. Research suggests, and officers in this study have warned, that in time this could lead to a workforce crisis, through increasing feelings of injustice and unfair treatment within the organisation (Bradford and Quinton, 2014; Williams and Cockcroft, 2018; Aston, Murray and O'Neill, 2019;

Charman and Bennett, 2021). Therefore, findings from this thesis draw attention to the importance of aligning the skills and behaviours of officers and their learning needs (Staller *et al.*, 2021), with the collective vision and social outcomes of the organisation as a learning organisation (Brookes, 2017; Police Scotland, 2018).

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the differences between rank, years of service, and educational background are sample specific and further research in this area would be useful to identify how generalisable these findings are across the police officer cohort in Scotland, and what impact these differences may have on the large number of police staff managed by police officers.

Introduced in the literature review (2.4.1), the LO literature could provide a useful initial framework to increase awareness within Police Scotland of the different building blocks (Figure 4) which could improve police officers' lived experiences of learning, whilst developing organisational memory. As Filstad and Gottschalk (2013) highlighted, the LO literature and the emerging framework for learning it creates, illustrates the different layers involved in workplace learning at the individual, team and organisational level and how they relate to one another. Nevertheless, findings from this thesis suggest that this framework not only has limitations in relation to its prescriptive nature, with little in the way of how to achieve the identified building blocks (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2013), but it also strives for an ideal that does not fully reflect some of the idiosyncrasies at play within police organisations. Furthermore, it does not reflect the complexity of public sector organisations, particularly policing, balancing the wants and needs of employees, the organisation, the government, different publics and partners. How findings from this thesis may be used to address some of these shortcomings and develop a learning organisation framework relevant for policing, will be discussed later in this chapter (8.5.1).

8.4 Research question 3 – What can we learn about professional learning from allied professions?

This study presented valuable insights from allied professions demonstrating the ways in which learning and development is perceived to manifest in some other public services. Working closely with Police Scotland, this participant group also presented exploratory insights into multi-agency learning environments and learning from their profession which they perceive as important to integrate into Police Scotland's

learning environment more extensively to enable more effective responses to the shared 'wicked problems' of the 21st century.

Practitioners from allied professions with degree entry discussed several benefits of the prolonged initial learning periods that integrate academic and workplace learning in their profession, such as a broader understanding of their occupation and practice, the ability to critically appraise knowledge, an understanding of the current research in their area of practice and knowing how and why to engage in learning in the future. This reflects some of the benefits of degree entry for policing presented by Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017) in Figure 8. This is in comparison to the often black and white classroom-based initial learning period police officers described. Additionally, practitioners from allied professions with degree entry, or those who are registered to a regulatory body, on the whole had a much broader understanding and appreciation of CPD, supported by extensive people management structures in place to proactively encourage reflective practice. Therefore, these practitioners rarely felt as if the requirement for a certain number of CPD hours was a chore or a tick-box exercise. Rather, due to the perceived alignment with organisational structures, in addition to their own interest in self-directed learning, it was considered an essential aspect of their work and felt well-integrated. This perceived alignment is not discussed or actively recognised in the LO literature and presents a way in which to support employee development in a way that in turn also increases commitment and identification with the organisation and therefore may be a way to address the identified implementation gaps within Police Scotland.

Nevertheless, practitioners also pointed out similar limitations to that of police officers, such as budget restraints, the reliance on e-learning for mandatory courses, and the pressures of the job limiting the ability to abstract staff for courses. Findings suggest that to navigate this complex environment, in the increasingly more interconnected world of policing and public health, learning from and with others is as important as the individual occupational cultures and structures that influence this learning and its impact. This requires effective communication at all levels (strategic, management, practitioner) to develop communities of practice that can learn and grow together (Charman, 2014). For practitioners from allied professions, an important barrier to effective partnership working with police was the lack of continuity of staff,

and a perceived lack of support when officers are transitioning into new roles with little knowledge or understanding of their new area of practice. This, in addition to the perceived risk-averse and insular nature of policing, has impacted negatively on effective partnership working and engaging in shared and interagency learning opportunities to develop organisational memory.

Even though, this participant group has not experienced the Police Scotland learning environment, their perception of officers' skills and knowledge provides exploratory insights into how police officers present themselves in the workplace environment and how they put learning into practice. Practitioners from allied professions acknowledged that when working with specialist departments, they worked with very knowledgeable officers willing to reflect and engage in lifelong learning within Police Scotland and with partners. This may reflect the specialist training and development opportunities they were able to access. In particular, the shared learning opportunities in these specialist departments were considered essential to align police work more effectively with that of allied professions, by developing a shared language and understanding.

Practitioners from allied professions often felt that police officers should have similar opportunities to themselves, allowing them to engage with HE more extensively. They argued that the perceived restrictive nature of the learning environment within Police Scotland is outdated and that if they seek to further improve and expand partnership working, a more flexible and less restrictive understanding of learning is needed. They argued that effective partnership working within the public health sector (van Dijk *et al.*, 2019b) is important to co-produce knowledge, requiring partners to work and learn together. For some participants this justified calls to increase educational standards or reform to police learning and training to keep up with other professions in the public sector (Brown, 2020).

Interviews with practitioners from allied professions further highlighted that the perceived current standard of knowledge and skill of police officers increases pressures on officers and partners to perform, without the necessary support and scaffolding from Police Scotland to do so. Their experiences however do highlight areas of practice that could support Police Scotland's learning environment such as those presented in Figure 48, revisited again later in this chapter (8.5.1). It is important to take into

account that practitioners from allied professions reflect particular viewpoints from a comparatively small number of practitioners in each profession. Whilst they highlighted important and valuable perceived similarities and differences between Police Scotland and their own profession, considering the growing interest in joined up, partnership and public health approaches to community safety and criminal justice (Bartkowiak-Theron *et al.*, 2022), there is a need for more extensive engagement with these professions and their learning environments, going forward.

After discussing how the findings of this PhD research project answer the research questions, the next section will present the key contributions made to the research literature. These are multi-faceted and significant in nature, highlighting the value of the different stakeholders engaged in this study and the mixed-methods research design used.

8.5 Key contributions to the literature

The literature on police learning and professional workplace learning is prescriptive in nature – it highlights the need for concrete learning processes and structured engagement with HE as a way to support learning (Green and Gates, 2014; Pedler and Burgoyne, 2017; Örtenblad, 2018). This thesis suggests that without a clear understanding of the *needs* of police officers, and those of other key stakeholders, the provision of these learning structures will only symbolically develop a learning organisation with effective workplace learning structures. Furthermore, the provision of HE without the associated support to implement learning into practice will have little impact on the success of the organisation. Indeed, introducing transformative learning processes without taking the current learning environment and context into account, can increase the gap between organisational learning aims and police officer learning needs, alienating officers from engaging in learning in the future, and increasing feelings of a lack of voice and unfair treatment by the organisation (Fekjær and Petersson, 2018; Charman and Bennett, 2021). This highlights the need for police organisations to actively listen and support officer learning beyond mandatory courses, in an effort to meaningfully ‘empower and enable officers’, as stated in the 2021 Police Scotland workforce plan (Police Scotland, 2021). Therefore, the following, so far neglected, aspects of the workplace learning landscape need to be considered in more depth:

1. Police officer learning journeys are inextricably linked to perceived organisational learning (Martin *et al.*, 2019). Where the organisation is perceived to be resistant to change and learning, the individual officer's motivation to engage in learning is hampered. Therefore, Örtenblad's (2018) suggestion that a learning organisation should be 'facilitating' learning, is not enough to ensure the organisational learning. The organisation as a 'facilitator' may provide and support individual learning but without the organisational drive and commitment to develop and learn, it fails to act as a role model to its employees and is unable to learn from the individuals within it, to develop organisational memory and effectively share learning across the organisation and externally. Consequently, both organisational and individual learning is important to develop a proactive learning culture, where organisational practices and aims align with that of individual learners and vice versa.
2. Feelings of fairness, voice and respect within the organisation are central enablers or inhibitors of engagement with, and motivation to, learn. Organisational Justice Theory, and in particular procedural and distributive justice³⁴ theories, are a hitherto undervalued concepts within the workplace and professional learning literature. Therefore, future research in this area would significantly benefit from utilising organisational justice theories to identify how-a supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and supportive leadership (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008), can be implemented in an organisationally just manner, improving experiences of learning and development across the organisation.
3. The lived experience of police officers in Scotland highlighted that even where officers engage in different kinds of learning within the organisation, this was limited by the cultural prestige associated with experience and learning on-the-job. The current literature on workplace learning and learning organisations and the 'professionalisation agenda', while illustrating the benefits of integrating different forms of knowledge and learning, provide little in the way

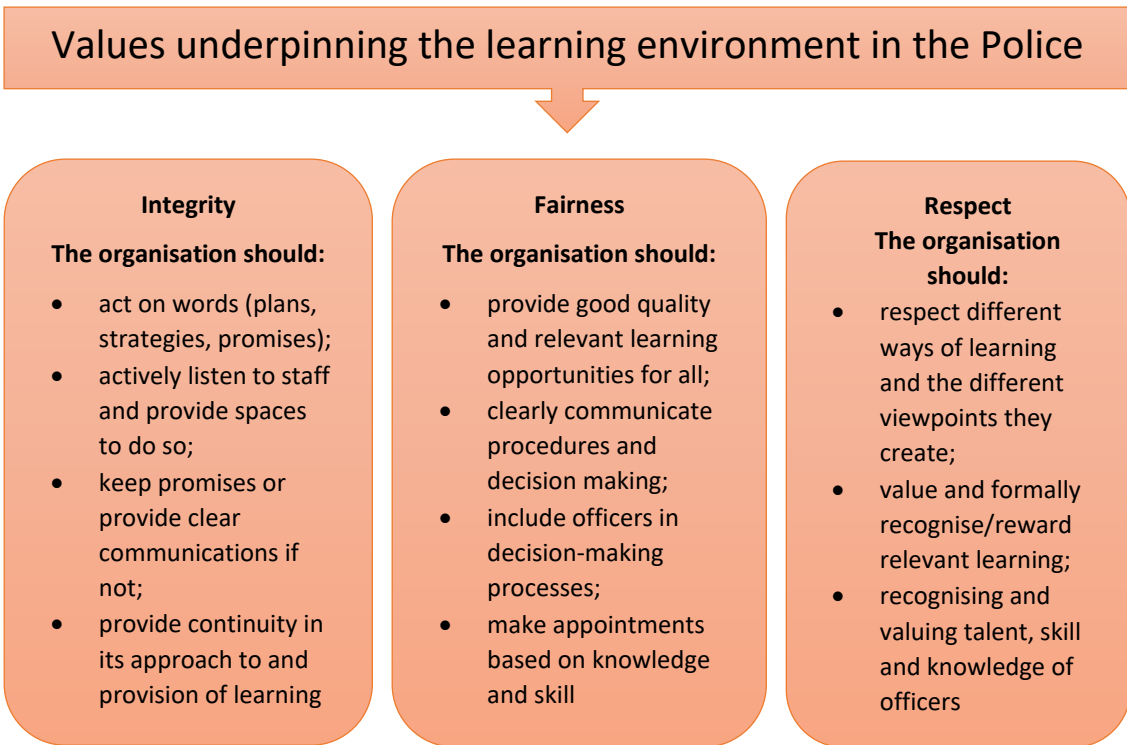
³⁴ Distributive justice, for the purpose of this thesis, describes the extent to which resources, rewards and goods are shared and distributed equitably or fair across the organisation (Bradford and Quinton, 2014; Ramshaw, Silvestri and Simpson, 2019)

of addressing the strong cultural influence on what learning is rewarded within an organisation such as the police. This thesis identifies the need for extended focus on informal, mentoring, and peer learning networks, supported by the organisation, to enable the translation of theoretical learning into practice. Without protected and supported time to reflect on experiential learning with others, the expansion of policing degrees and other learning provisions through HE will continue to have little impact on policing practice and organisational learning.

4. Participants highlighted that conceptualisations of workplace learning and professional learning organisations relevant to the police service are important. This would ensure that traditional aspects of police learning that continue to hold value within the organisation, such as command-and-control, are integrated into a framework that still promotes innovative and critical learning and development throughout the organisation. Such a framework needs to clearly state where innovative and expansive learning (Beighton and Poma, 2015) is possible, and where transactional forms of learning are needed to ensure external accountability and legitimacy. One does not have to exclude the other, but the organisation must clearly communicate to officers the role and value of each, to avoid officer frustration with the perceived lack of meaningful learning opportunities available.
5. This research illustrates the need for police services to deepen their understanding of learning culture. Participants suggested that significant cultural barriers remain to engaging and integrating different kinds of learning within the organisation. Contrastingly, some practitioners from allied professions highlighted a much wider understanding of workplace learning and a more positive learning culture. This thesis therefore argues that while the workplace learning and LO literature provides a valuable framework for the police to create a supportive learning environment, work is necessary to address the current implementation gap between the aspirations of Police Scotland to be a learning organisation, individual officer's ambitions to learn, and the organisational culture and experiences on the ground.

8.5.1 Considerations for an emerging reworked framework for police services as learning organisations

Moving beyond the above-mentioned neglected areas in the current literature, the exploratory insights from police officers, allied professions and ENU policing students have helped to develop revised workplace learning framework, which reflects the findings from this study on the lived experiences of officers and perceptions from key and emerging stakeholders. As discussed previously, the LO literature provides some prescriptive themes and 'building blocks' (Garvin, Edmondson and Gino, 2008) which can act as a useful foundation from which to explore this topic, however, to ensure that implementation and interpretation gaps are addressed, there is a need for more focus on values and process when it comes to developing effective and supportive police workplace learning environments. Whilst some emerging models in the past two years have started to address the need for more policing specific workplace learning models, such as Harding *et al.*'s (2019) Policing and Development 2025: Destination Map, the intricacies of inherent cultural, structural, local and historical complexities continue to not be addressed in much detail in models such as this one. Rather than focussing on one model, the framework developed here, combines established theories and frameworks on workplace learning, organisational justice and research on police learning to develop a more comprehensive picture of how effective and supportive learning environments within policing may be achieved reflecting officers' lived experiences. Based on this literature, and the findings from this study, three key elements have been identified as important for the development of a supportive and effective police learning framework: (1) values which underpin learning within the organisation; (2) structures which support such learning; and (3) an environment which embeds this learning. The key here is that learning does not describe a passive process which simply happens, but requires active engagement on an individual, team and organisational level. The proposed framework for learning in Police Scotland highlights some of the themes considered important based on the findings of this study:



The underlying values of a possible Police Scotland learning environment illustrated above are based on Police Scotland's values of Integrity, Fairness and Respect. This offers Police Scotland an opportunity to integrate their values into their learning environment and through this act as a role model on the values they want their officers to adhere to. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, Police Scotland would have to consider where the implementation of the above values may sit and how to ensure new and established officers understand and support these. Based on these values the following structures present important ways in which to implement learning throughout the organisation:

Structures to support learning in the Police

Self-directed learning should be a central part of the police officer role description and well-integrated into organisational structures. This should help emphasise the importance of learning within the organisation.

Work to clarify boundaries to better understand where organisational responsibility to provide learning ends and that of individuals to engage in self-directed learning begins.

Implement annual appraisals and development conversations with clear objectives in relation to learning and development, including offering a regular (monthly) space for informal development discussions.

Providing integrated, regular, and protected formal and informal spaces to reflect individually and in teams.

Linking formal reflection spaces to listening opportunities for the organisation to implement and act on learning – developing organisational memory.

Creating meaningful feedback loops between ranks, roles, managers and those who are managed, the organisation and officers by actively seeking out, acting on, and communicating feedback, whilst recording any learning in accessible formats easily accessible to officers.

These structures would demonstrate to officers that learning is an essential and required aspect of their job and that the organisation provides the necessary spaces to identify learning opportunities, reflect on learning and implement it into practice. In addition to these structures a supportive and inclusive learning environment, as illustrated particularly through practitioners from allied professions in this study, is key to make officers feel part of the organisation and build collective capacity for learning, innovation, and change:

Police learning environment

Creating safe spaces to learn, reflect, and share concerns – provide officers with the skills to facilitate spaces like this.

Building and supporting communities of practice – within policing and with partners.

Appreciating diversity of thought and encouraging different ways to engage in and promote learning beyond experience (including HE, peer learning, courses with partners, engaging in research).

Building an organisationally just environment, promoting different aspects of organisational justice theory such as procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice.

Closing the gap between the formal and hidden curriculum – utilising managers, peers and tutors to do so, i.e. aligning the work of formal and informal mentors with the formal curriculum – providing them with the relevant training to do this.

Linking officer expectations to collective vision and values (above) as well as social outcomes of the organisation.

Managers, leaders and peers pro-actively encouraging officers to engage in learning and development.

An environment which creates safe spaces to learn from mistakes, appreciates and rewards different ways of thinking, and offers support based on fair, where possible participatory, and respectful communication and decision-making can create the supportive learning environment the LO literature suggests is key to develop a responsive organisation ready to face the challenges of the 21st century (Örtenblad, 2018). The values, structures and themes presented in the above framework have been discussed throughout this thesis but will be presented more practically through the recommendations discussed next. Due to the nature of this study, a time and resource limited PhD project, future research would benefit from utilising a framework such as the learning organisation (Figure 4), with these adapted themes and building blocks included, to critically assess police learning environments.

As demonstrated by the discussion above, this thesis has significantly contributed to the research literature on police learning and vocational learning more broadly, by exploring the micro and meso level structures influencing police learning in Scotland. It provides police forces and other public sector organisations with ways in which to explore their learning environment and expands theories of the learning organisation, workplace learning structures, and professionalisation, whilst identifying how changes to the learning environment may be perceived by practitioners. Consequently, the next section will discuss the recommendations developed based on these contributions.

8.6 Recommendations for policy, practice, and research

The preliminary findings report shared with Police Scotland in March 2021 (Engelmann, 2021), suggested emerging recommendations at an earlier stage of this PhD research project. Importantly, these recommendations started a conversation with key stakeholders in the hope that they will be utilised to instigate step-change within the organisation. The recommendations presented here reflect on these emerging recommendations and augment them through utilising the concluded analysis, discussion of findings, and the emerging framework discussed above.

8.6.1 Policy recommendations

1. Policies need to consider how officers best absorb information and enable them to apply their learning in practice, to avoid the aforementioned implementation gap. Ambitious policies with a lack of understanding of how police officers effectively learn will continue to fail to generate meaningful change in the organisation. Therefore, learning packages, online or otherwise, should encourage discussion and reflection in order to cement learning and support self-directed learning. This should build on the successes of current work in the organisation such as the implementation of mental health pathways training (Coleman, 2021), which has introduced flexible and responsive learning opportunities for officers.
2. Reforms, such as changes to the leadership development programme and the introduction of the new 'My Career' process, need to be communicated clearly and, where possible, reflect long-term planning. Additionally, implementation should be supported by feedback loops (Cox *et al.*, 2020), which allow for reasonable adjustments and changes to be made, based on police officer

experiences on the ground. This can reduce possible implementation and interpretation gaps, support organisational learning and increase officer voice within the organisation.

3. Police Scotland's initial learning period should build the foundation for self-directed learning (Lancaster, 2019), supporting officers to learn how to learn, by encouraging engagement in reflection and recognising the benefit of learning beyond experiencing something. HE is considered an institution with a particular interest in developing critical self-directed learners (Dominey and Hill, 2010). Therefore, further engagement with such experts in the field of adult learning may provide helpful tools to encourage self-directed learning, while still covering the essential learning outcomes set by the organisation.
4. There is a need for a more flexible approach to learning and development, reflecting the importance placed on diverse career opportunities available to officers throughout their time in the force. Therefore, learning opportunities, rather than following a strict rank or role dependent script, should be tailored to the individual officer as much as possible (Keogh, 1997), reflecting their own skills and knowledge, and changing based on the rhythm of their career. This avoids redundant or unnecessary abstraction for learning that is not considered relevant by officers and may provide the opportunity to prepare officers more effectively for changes in roles and ranks. Whilst this presents a greater challenge to the organisation and its resources, the payoff could lead to officers better prepared to support their own, their teams, and organisational learning. Dependent on its use and implementation, the new 'My Career' process may present an opportunity to address this.

8.6.2 Practice recommendations

1. Police Scotland should reconsider a more staggered approach to initial learning, such as was previously the case in Scotland (classroom-based learning – field training – classroom-based learning) (Figure 1). This would provide officers with more structured opportunities to implement learning, encourage peer learning, and ensure that values, norms, and behaviours developed on the street, are aligned with the current formal curriculum.

2. The largely informal learning during initial field training, supported by tutor constables, was a topic of much debate. Tutor constable recruitment processes should be rigorous and involve extensive training. In line with the 2002 HMIC *Training Matters* report, the tutor constable training should be *reviewed, monitored and accredited*, to ensure that probationers receive the best support possible. Continuous evaluation of tutor constables is important to ensure that standards are kept high and tutor constables do not reproduce outdated practices and cultural scripts. Furthermore, raising the standard of training and monitoring for this role can increase its prestige amongst officers, particularly those with longer service brackets, and encourage recruitment of more established officers into these roles.
3. “Skills and knowledge do not endure indefinitely” (Skills Foresight, 2002, p. 26), especially where non-operational duties take an officer away from operational ones for extended periods of time. Therefore, to ensure that training decay is minimised, not only the provision of CPD but the active engagement with CPD is important. Therefore, Police Scotland should provide regular (at least once a year) development conversations with all officers, which rather than only looking forward, also provide a space to reflect on what has been learned. In line with experiences from practitioners from some allied professions, these conversations should be a learning opportunity in and of itself and framed and supported as such by the organisation.
4. There has to be an acknowledgement that delivering e-learning with a test for compliance is no longer proficient to initiate learning (Lancaster, 2019), and that a police force that aims to stay relevant has to improve their e-learning provision. Police Scotland’s (2021) workforce plan suggests that the organisation will expand their online learning provisions, more so on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic. This presents an opportunity to revisit how these packages are delivered and framed by the organisation, identifying what the purpose of their use is, and where learning is the aim, supporting packages with opportunities to discuss information and reflect on its implementation into practice.
5. There is a need for Police Scotland to recognise that knowledge acquired outside of the policing environment can be relevant to policing practice. Actively acknowledging the value of officer talent can help fill skill gaps in the organisation, while also empowering officers to use all their skills and knowledge, not only that which has been taught by or was experienced in Police Scotland. The new ‘My Career’ process

should therefore encourage officers to reflect on learning beyond operational experience. This would encourage and support both organisational and individual learning, whilst empowering officers and increasing their voice in the organisation.

6. Leadership recruitment strategies should be revisited to reflect the current leadership needs of the organisation, rather than the traditional culture and historical needs of Police Scotland. This will ensure that leaders are role models of desirable behaviours in line with the workplace learning literature and Police Scotland's commitment to being a learning organisation (Police Scotland, 2018), rather than reflecting the 'ay been'. In addition, ongoing development and appraisal systems need to be in place at all levels to ensure that leaders evolve as the organisation does. Experience and years of service alone do not by themselves translate into effective leadership. To lead complex adaptive systems (Moreale and Herrington, 2021) it is equally as important to lead in times of crisis as it is to listen to fellow officers and adopt shared and adaptive leadership styles, which create psychologically safe (learning) environments. Indeed, meaningful investment in leadership development at all levels, recognising the potential to transform police culture and practice, could further improve organisational learning and leaders acting as role models in the police learning environment.
7. Police Scotland should further increase the provision of shared learning opportunities, and multi-agency learning environments which promote an understanding of allied professions and their work at all levels. This can offer a way to develop and use a multi-disciplinary perspective, which is becoming ever more important to address the 'wicked problems' of the 21st century. The engagement with partners to provide this can be beneficial both for Police Scotland and allied professions to learn and appreciate each other's viewpoints and work more effectively within the public health agenda.

8.6.3 Research recommendations

1. Policing practice is significantly dependent on partnership working and collaborative approaches to learning (Charman, 2014; Fleming, 2010; Mulholland et al., 2019; Watson et al., 2021). The gap identified between the provision of, and engagement with, learning opportunities between Police Scotland and degree entry allied professions requires further investigation. The

police learning landscape would benefit from more comprehensive research on the existence of this gap, how this gap may impact on policing practice, and what changes may be required to address this.

2. In addition, this thesis suggests that there is an increasing gap between officers with and without experience of HE, as well as officers who know how to engage in self-directed learning and those who do not. Future research would benefit from looking into:
 - what, and if, this impacts on police officer motivation to learn;
 - how officers with different educational backgrounds and capacity to learn work together;
 - how the police organisation responds to differences in educational backgrounds; and
 - the impact of different educational backgrounds on policing practice.

This would provide valuable insights into officers' abilities and what might be required from Police Scotland to effectively support officer learning pathways. Indeed, these are also interesting and worthwhile topics to explore in England and Wales with the introduction of the PEQF and current discussions of the reintroduction of non-degree pathways into policing (Jacques, 2022).

3. The growth of cross-border policing (Hufnagel, 2017; BBC, 2021a), suggests that research investigating how officers with different training and education regimes effectively work together would be beneficial. Indeed, many officers discussed the national and international training and education opportunities they have had and the significant benefit they saw in these. Considering the recent introduction of the PEQF in England and Wales, it will be important to monitor and evaluate how Police Scotland responds to the changes in the police education landscape elsewhere. Therefore, comparative studies, such as (Tatnell, 2022) will become increasingly important to ensure that police officers can work effectively together.
4. Leaders in the organisation not only manage police officers, but also police staff. In comparison to police officers, police staff are hired based on their skillset, which they have often spent a significant amount of time developing. Police officers on the other hand tend to be recruited based on their life

experience and commitment to Police Scotland's values of *integrity, fairness, respect and human rights* (Police Scotland, 2018), with comparably little focus on skills and qualifications from previous jobs or degrees. Although not a focus of this study, the interaction between police leaders, whose credibility is based on experience and rank, and police staff, whose credibility is often based on their educational background, would be an interesting and relevant topic of research. This would help to identify how police officers' experiential learning translates into effective working relationships with police staff. Indeed, Atkinson (2017), in his study on police analysts experiences in Scotland, found that police staff often felt infantilised due to the dominant police culture. This highlights the relevance of this research topic, especially in light of the planned increase of police staff in various roles within Police Scotland, as announced in their 2021 workforce plan (Police Scotland, 2021).

5. Additionally, there is a need for further research on the role and value added by police tutor constables, particularly considering the changing tutor constable profile, and the value placed on experiential and on-the-job learning. This thesis suggests that the current training, profile, and use of tutor constables is leading to gaps in knowledge and skill and added pressures on probationary officers. Therefore, this area of research would benefit from comparative ethnographic tutor constable studies, aiming to identify and analyse potential problems within tutor-probationer relationships. Based on these studies, pilot tutor constable training programmes could be developed, looking to optimise the best tutoring approach, improving the experiential learning experience of police officers. In addition, police would benefit from looking at the supervision and tutoring/mentoring structures in place for similar professions, such as social work and nursing, to identify best practice and avoid re-inventing the wheel.
6. Lastly, ENU students (and students on similar courses at other universities across Scotland) present a unique opportunity to study the impact of HE experiences on becoming a police officer. Future research should consider following student cohorts into their practice as a police officer and compare their experiences with that of new recruits from other backgrounds. Ethnographic research would be ideally placed to explore this. However, other

longitudinal qualitative or quantitative research, such as conducting focus groups, interviews, or questionnaires at regular intervals throughout the participants' career, would also be beneficial. This would offer unique evidence to evaluate the value added by policing specific degrees in Scotland to police officer experiences and policing practice, while supporting the development of university programmes focussed on policing.

Therefore, although research on police learning and education is burgeoning, there is still work required to improve the knowledgebase of effective structures and practices that support police officer learning. To do this effectively, it is important to reflect on how this study could have been improved, so that future research can learn from experiences encountered throughout the current project.

8.7 Areas for improvement

It is important to note that the limitations identified here do not make participants' contributions, and the findings of this thesis less valuable, instead they provide ways in which to further advance research in this area.

Firstly, the number of police officers engaged with throughout this research presents a meaningful number and is in keeping within the scope of a PhD project. However, when viewed in comparison to the over 17,000 police officers in Scotland, there are bound to be viewpoints and understandings of learning that have not been considered. Indeed, the number of survey responses (381) were likely impacted by the timing (COVID-19) and advertisement (the staff intranet news page) of it. Although the second publication of the survey sought to rectify this problem, due to its targeted nature, it led to the overrepresentation of some divisions compared with others. This may have exaggerated some of the national differences discussed in the findings chapters. In an ideal world, a more structured and systematic approach to collecting survey responses across geographical areas, ranks, and roles would have benefited the reliability of this study. However, this approach would require a shift in transparency and access between police and academia that, although not utopian, is an unestablished reality as yet. Hence, whilst the survey is not representative of all officers within Scotland, its analysis provides an exploratory and largely descriptive analysis of learning and perceptions of the value of different kinds of learning within

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Police Scotland, suggesting important areas worth further investigation and supplementing qualitative interview findings.

Secondly, although the survey was piloted with current and retired officers, there were certain questions that could be interpreted in different ways by different officers. This was established through feedback from participants, utilising the contact details on the survey debrief page and follow-up interviews. Therefore, responses to some questions could be interpreted differently depending on how the respondent understood the question. This was augmented by the lack of insider knowledge at the start of this project. Nevertheless, follow-up interviews with some of the survey respondents ensured that some of these confusions were addressed, and questions with possible different interpretations were analysed with caution throughout. If the survey was to be readministered, it would be advanced by redrafting questions to reflect the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the topic of police learning and education that has occurred throughout this research project, further increasing the validity and reliability of findings. Furthermore, it could be improved by developing factor structures that for example represents the characteristics of a learning organisation (or the proposed revised framework in section 8.5.1) and through a stratified random sample highlight to what degree Police Scotland commits to these characteristics. This could develop a more systematic picture of Police Scotland's learning environment and how it relates to dominant theories in the field.

Thirdly, the allied professions included in this study were based on a convenience sample and only reflect the views of a small number of practitioners in the chosen organisations. This means that findings presented could be skewed towards individuals interested in this topic who have had particularly positive experiences of learning within their own organisation. Additionally, many of the practitioners interviewed were in senior positions in their respective organisations, which could paint a more positive picture of the provision of learning and development than that experienced by less senior practitioners. Therefore, interviews with practitioners from allied professions, although providing a valid indication of the views and experiences of these professions, have limited generalisability. Furthermore, whilst a certain picture was painted by participants about the difference between Police Scotland and degree

entry professions, this should be interpreted with caution with the above in mind and explored in more depth in future research.

Fourthly, due to the timing of this study, ENU students were in 1st and 2nd year at the time the focus groups were conducted and have not yet started volunteering with Police Scotland³⁵. The relative novelty of students' HE experiences and their understanding of policing, could limit their ability to comment in-depth on their perceptions of the police learning landscape. Therefore, students' views may, in all likelihood, change over the four-year degree period, as their understanding of policing develops, and the topics covered throughout their degree become more critical and applied. Hence, further longitudinal research (as suggested in the recommendations) would be useful to follow this and future cohorts through their degree and into the police. Nevertheless, ENU students provided a valuable, so far neglected view, of HE students interested in becoming police officers in Scotland. On reflection, in comparison to police officer interviews and partner agency interviews, ENU students presented valuable and relevant insights into the outsider views of police education and what Police Scotland may consider in the future. Students have, however, not joined Police Scotland yet and not everyone will because the course is currently not a direct pathway into policing. Thus, their views should be interpreted in this way. Nevertheless, several of them have joined Police Scotland as special constables as part of their course and plan to join full time upon completion of their degree.

Finally, half of this thesis was completed during a global pandemic. Whilst presenting some benefits to this study as described in chapters 3 and 4, this has negatively impacted access to some participants, as well as impacted on officers' and partners' experiences of learning and development. This may have made it more difficult for officers to reflect on the provision of opportunities in 'normal' times and may have skewed their responses throughout. As discussed in the methodology chapter, this also impacted on the diversity of the participant sample overall. Nevertheless, all possible safeguards have been put in place to interpret findings with these influences in mind.

³⁵ Many policing students on the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology at Edinburgh Napier University undertake the university offered Special Constable course that enables them to become a voluntary police officer and gather experience before joining full time after completing their degree.

Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of the current thesis to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the police learning environment, particularly considering that only half of the data collection was conducted during the onset of the pandemic, and it was also not an expressed aim of this research. Nevertheless, future publications from the findings of this study will unpick some of the views expressed by officers, partners, and ENU students in relation to the changes initiated due to COVID-19. This is important because changes to the learning environment initiated through this pandemic will undoubtedly have a long-term impact on the engagement and provision of learning for police forces (Lancaster, 2021; Moreale and Herrington, 2021; Police Scotland, 2021).

Therefore, although there were some limitations with the methodology used and the sample recruited for this research, the impact these limitations have had on the presented findings have been limited by the use of ongoing reflection and applying caution throughout the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of participant responses. The fact that there are areas for improvement, also reflects the researcher's current level of experience within the field, as well as the general lack of research and knowledge in this area to build on, whilst being a natural part of the research process. Therefore, this thesis provides a valuable framework for future work in this field of study, to further develop the knowledge and methodological approaches used when exploring police education and learning.

8.8 Final comments on police learning, police as a learning organisation and where to go from here

"Whether we produce legalists or Dirty Harrys as future police officers are clearly determined by more factors than the design and content of police education." (Fekjær and Petersson, 2018, p. 13)

The above quote encapsulates the message of this thesis, illustrating that the symbolic commitment to being a learning organisation and promoting workplace learning through empowerment and support (Police Scotland, 2021) is not enough to, effectively and meaningfully, support police officer learning and development. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that Police Scotland's symbolic commitment to *empower, enable and develop* their workforce (Police Scotland, 2021) ends at the point where officers want to engage in and promote learning which is not controlled or provided by

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Police Scotland. This seriously questions Police Scotland's ability to engage in honest and reflective learning in an increasingly more complex policing landscape.

This study provided an ambitious framework to explore and critically assess the role and value of learning and development within Police Scotland. Although data access, collection, and discussion took longer than expected, not the least because of the outbreak of a global pandemic, this study has offered a timely exploration of what learning within the workplace from a policing perspective in Scotland entails, and where barriers to the effective provision of learning may lie. This thesis created an initial framework for learning in Police Scotland, and other police forces, to develop fair, innovative and supportive learning environments, which are in line with their ambitions to support, enable and empower their officers and staff. It is not the purpose of this framework to dictate how learning should happen but to present key emerging attributes from partners, officers, and ENU students which reflect a learning environment of an organisation able to confront the challenges of the 21st century.

Consequently, there are a myriad of factors that influence the complex landscape of police learning, and in many ways, this reflects the current literature on this topic. However, the most important factor currently limiting Police Scotland's ability to provide meaningful workplace learning opportunities and a supportive and safe learning environment appears to be the strong pull of the 'ay been' culture, a level of cultural inertia which continuously inhibits both individual and organisational learning. To develop effective communities of practice (Leek, 2020), where different learning styles, different forms of knowledge and teaching, and different spaces for learning are actively promoted, as a way to *empower, enable, and develop* the organisation and its workforce, Police Scotland will have to surrender some of their control to their employees, while taking meaningful steps towards holding officers who do not commit to their ambition to account. This will require effective communication at all levels, active individual and organisational learning, and an openness to new and emerging knowledge and skill which could advance policing practice and transform police culture.

If Police Scotland can build on the vast amount of talent, skill, knowledge, and enthusiasm they already have within their organisation, by appreciating and utilising it to promote organisational learning, those officers who have lost or are losing faith in

the organisation may start to identify with the organisation again. Instead of doing a good job *despite* the organisation, seeing it as a barrier to learning and development, a change in organisational approach to learning may help officers to recognise and appreciate the organisations' active role within a psychologically safe and supportive learning environment, where officers feel safe and heard to voice their opinions. However, if Police Scotland continues to only symbolically, and within their official rhetoric, provide safe and supportive learning environments, creating implementation and interpretation gaps, the risk of a workforce crisis in the future increases.

Finally, studying the role, value and culture of learning within Police Scotland, whilst simultaneously experiencing it as a special constable and teaching on a policing degree, has been an insightful and interesting journey. Overall, as much as there are growing frustrations with the availability, provision, and variety of learning opportunities within Police Scotland, both for full-time officers and special constables, there are several positive developments in this area. The continued work of the SIPR, the growing interest of retired and current police officers in HE and research, the expansion of the Research and Insight team within Police Scotland, and the development of the first Police Scotland workforce plan, illustrate that there may be some momentum to develop and transform the police learning landscape. As this study has illustrated, building on this momentum is not only important for police officers and the police organisation, but also for allied professions, service users, and a possible future generation of police officers with increasing expectations and demands on the organisations' learning support and provisions.

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Appendix A: Police officer interview schedule

- Thank participants for attending
- Explain the purpose of the interview
- Talk through participant information sheet and participant rights
- Explain the purpose and information of the consent form and ask participants to sign if they want to take part

Topic	Question	Follow up
Building Rapport/ Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job description • How long have you been in your current position? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you decide to become a police officer?
Personal meaning of education & Educational background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is the value of higher education? • Do you see a place for education for the development of police officers in Scotland? • Have you engaged with any educational opportunities (further or higher education) before or after you joined Police Scotland? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivations • Benefits • How did it impact on your personal and/or professional development? • Challenges • Lifelong learning
Police Probationer Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe a good police officer? • What do you think is the purpose of initial probationer training and what was your experience? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths and Weaknesses • Role of education
Education and Police Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is the role of education in police officer development? • Do you think there is a place for HE/FE in initial police training? • In your opinion, how does Police Scotland value Police Officers with degrees? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivations • Continuous Professional Development
Police Organization and Continuous Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think changes to police education can influence police legitimacy? How? • In what way do you think changes to police education could affect police culture? • In your opinion what is a professional learning organization? • Where do you think education fits in when thinking about Police Scotland as a professional learning organization? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of education in professional policing?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw together conclusions from the different areas of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any further comments? • Debrief

Appendix B: Partner professions interview schedule

- Thank participants for attending
- Explain the purpose of the interview
- Talk through participant information sheet and participant rights
- Explain the purpose and information of the consent form and get participants to sign if they want to take part

Topic	Question	Follow up
Building Rapport/ Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job description • How long have you been in your current position? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you decide to become a nurse/criminal justice social worker/-?
Personal meaning of education & Educational background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is the value of education? • What do you understand a lifelong learner to be and do you think it is important for the job that you do? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation • Benefits • Barriers
Police Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe a good police officer? • Where your work and that of police Scotland overlaps, what kind of skills and knowledge do you think are most helpful in effectively answering a call? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future of Police Training & Education
Education and Partnership work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think your experience of higher education has influenced your approach to partnership work? • Do you think there is a place for HE/FE in initial police training to enhance partnership work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion what should this engagement look like?
Police Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe the culture within Police Scotland? • In what way do you think changes to police education could affect this police culture? • Do you think being a graduate profession helps to secure public support? • Do you consider your profession to be a professional learning organization? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link between education and professional practice? • Link to partnership work
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarise the conclusions from previous sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any further comments? • Debrief

Appendix C: Focus group interview schedule

- Thank participants for attending
- Explain the purpose of the focus group
- Talk through participant information sheet and participant rights
- Explain to participants that the researcher will step in from time to time to guide the conversation and keep it focussed on the schedule.
- Explain the purpose and information on the consent form and get participants to sign

Topic	Question	Follow up
Building Rapport/ Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Talking through Participant Information Sheet and what this focus group will entail • Talk through what will happen after the focus group. • Signing Consent Forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about what you have been doing before joining this course.
Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are currently on a programme of study preparing you to become a police officer, why did you decide to join this programme? • How did your family and friends react to you wanting to become a police officer? • How did your friends and family react to you wanting to do a degree to become a police officer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which was the strongest motivator for you to apply for this course? • Have you always wanted to be a police officer?
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, what is the value of higher education? • What do you hope to get out of this degree in relation to being a police officer in the future? • Do you think Policing should be a graduate profession (explanation)? • Do you hope to keep learning and have opportunities for doing further degrees after joining police Scotland? Why? • Do you think this degree prepares you for the realities of the job? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you could design a training course for future police officers, how would you balance academic and practical knowledge? • If you think Police Scotland should be a graduate profession, which model do you think is most effective, pre-join degrees (explanation), post-join degrees (explanation), Police University (explanation)?
Police Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe a good police officer? • From what you have learned so far and considering your motivations to become a police officer, what are your expectations of Police Scotland in supporting your learning? • Do you think there is a place for higher education within Police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your expectations of Police Scotland as an organization in terms of professional and personal development? • Do you think becoming a special

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	<p>Scotland? Why? What would this look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a profession? • Would you describe police Scotland as a profession? Why? Why not? • Have you started a voluntary Special Constable position with Police Scotland yet? If not, would you want to do this before going through the application and probation period? Why? Why not? 	<p>constable before joining the police force is important? Why?</p>
Partnership Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there parts of your degree focussing on partnership work between the police and other public service agency's? What do these look like and what they involve? • Do you think that learning about the opportunities and barriers of partnership work will influence how you will approach partnership work in a police officer role in the future? • Did you realize the amount of partnership work that is involved in policing before you started this course? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, how might higher education influence partnership work with other agencies in a policing context? • Learning about other disciplines, including social science and psychology, do you think that is important for police officers? Why? Why not?
Conclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawing on information from the previous sections, draw out conclusions and discuss them together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any further comments? • Thank participants again • Debrief

Appendix D: Example of Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet – Police Officer Interview

Title: *The role of education in police officer training and education in Scotland*

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to explore **the role of education** in the education and training of police officers and Police Scotland as a whole. To do this, this research will answer the following questions:

1. How do police officers view their engagement with internal and external education opportunities in relation to rank, years of experience and educational background?
2. In what way does Police Scotland see themselves as a professional learning organisation and how are possible changes to training and education and their impact in this context understood by police officers?
3. What are police partner professions' perspectives on the role of education within Police Scotland, police officer development and partnership work?
4. How do policing students understand the role of education in police officer development?

Methodology

This project is using a **mixed methodology approach**, this means both online surveys and face-to-face interviews are used to engage with participants including Police Scotland Officers, professionals from allied professions and Scottish Policing degree students to answer the questions mentioned above.

You are invited to take part in the **Police Officer Police Education Interview**. This will involve:

- Signing a consent form
- An audio- recorded face-to-face interview with a maximum of 90 minutes long
- At a mutually agreed venue (University/ Police Scotland/ other office buildings) and time between the **1st September 2019 – 1st February 2020**
- The opportunity to ask questions before the interview via email/phone or in-person on the day of the interview
- Open-ended questions exploring your personal perspective on the role of education in police officer development and for Police Scotland as an organization.
- Further questions exploring your perspective on possible changes to police education and what role education plays in Police Scotland being a professional learning organization.
- Give as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable with
- Being presented with a debrief form summarising your rights as a participant and the next steps and contact details for you to take home.

Inclusion Criteria

- Be a **current serving police officer with Police Scotland**
- Completed 2-year Probation period

Anonymity and Confidentiality

- All information treated confidentially
- Audio-recordings will be safely destroyed after interviews are transcribed not including any names or other identifying information

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- Personal information will be pseudonymised, meaning identifying information like your name will be replaced by an artificial identifier
- Every measure will be taken to ensure that you are non-identifiable in any produced write-ups or reports.
- No individual interview will be shared with Police Scotland or anyone else but the research team.
- Additionally, all data will be stored on Edinburgh Napier University secure systems only accessible by the researcher and password protected.

Withdrawal

- Withdraw **at any point** during the interview and up to **two weeks after** using contact information on debrief form
- Any information up to this point will be securely destroyed
- Thereafter, interviews will be transcribed, analysed and pseudonymised and withdrawal will be impossible.

Support

This project is ethically approved by Edinburgh Napier University, supported by the Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR) and approved by Police Scotland. Nevertheless, it is completely independent from Police Scotland and your participation in this study is **entirely voluntary**.

Next Steps

Thank you for considering contributing to this study. If you understand the above information and would like to proceed, please reply to the invitation email or use the email of the researcher below to arrange a time and place for the interview.

Any questions, please get in touch with the researcher, supervisor or the independent advisor if you would like to talk to someone who knows about the study but is not involved in it.

All the best,

Larissa Engelmann

Ph.D. Research Student

School of Applied Sciences

Edinburgh Napier University

9 Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11
4BN

████████████████████

Research specific phone number

Dr Andrew Wooff

Supervisor & Criminology Lect.

School of Applied Sciences

Edinburgh Napier University

9 Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4 BN

████████████████████

Dr Rory MacLean

Independent Advisor & Psychology

Lecturer

School of Applied Sciences

Appendix E: Example of consent form

The role of education in police officer training and education in Scotland

Larissa Engelmann (Principle Investigator)

In line with the Edinburgh Napier University's Code of Practice on Research Integrity, Edinburgh Napier University requires all persons taking part in research studies to give their written consent to do so.

Please read the following and sign below if you agree with these statements:

- I freely and voluntarily consent to participate in this study exploring the role of education in police officer development in Scotland, conducted by Larissa Engelmann a postgraduate research student at Edinburgh Napier University.
- I have been asked to participate in an **interview** giving my personal opinion and talk about my own experiences of educational opportunities and their impact on my police practice and my views on the role of education in police officer training and development and for Police Scotland as an organization. This should take a maximum of **90 minutes** to complete.
- I have been given the information sheet about the 'police education study' and understand the aims of this project and had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I consent to the interview **being audio-recorded** and have been informed that any acquired recordings will be destroyed as soon as transcription has concluded.
- I have been informed that my responses will be anonymised and my name or any other personally identifying information will not be shared or used within the subsequent write up of this study.
- I am fully aware that I have the right to leave the interview at any point and withdraw consent for the information I have provided to be used any further for this research study without giving any reason. My participation in this study is completely voluntary and thus I may withdraw at any point up until 2 weeks after the interview.
- If there is any question I wish to leave unanswered I can do so with no negative consequences.
- The participant information sheet informed me that I can get a transcript of my interview if I would like to and gave me the contact details for the request.
- I had the opportunity to ask any questions I might have about the research and data collection process and they have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I have carefully read and understood the information above and the participation information sheet and freely consent to participate in this study. This signature is not a waiver of any of my legal rights and I am able to keep a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Printed Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

As dictated by Edinburgh Napier University guidelines, I have thoroughly explained the research and withdrawal process to the participation who has, with his/her signature, consented to take part in this study. One copy of this consent form will be kept by myself for my records.

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Example of debrief form

Debrief

Thank you for taking part in this research study exploring the role of education in police officer development in Scotland. Your contribution to this project is very much appreciated and will go a long way in advancing our understanding of police officers educational backgrounds, motivations, barriers and educational needs of officers.

More specifically, the information you have provided will enhance our understandings of:

- Police officer engagement with different kinds of education before joining Police Scotland and while being part of the force.
- How educational motivation and engagement differs across rank and time in service.
- In what way educational motivations align with Police Scotland education and training aims.
- How Police Scotland can improve the education opportunities for police officers to better meet the professional and personal development needs of police officers.
- How police officers see Police Scotland as an organisation with relation to being a professional learning organisation.

As mentioned at the beginning of the study, all data is **anonymised as much as possible**, and at no point will your participation in this study be disclosed to anyone else but the main researcher. You can also find a link to our privacy statement here: **link to privacy statement**.

You now have **two weeks to withdraw** from this study in which case please contact myself directly, through the contact details given below. Any acquired information/data from you through the interview will then be destroyed completely.

If you have any concerns regarding the use of data, or the project, please contact myself or my supervisor through the contact details given below.

Next Steps

Thank you again for participating in this research study and contributing valuable information that I hope will improve our understanding of the role of education in Police Scotland in the future. Emerging findings should be available by the end of November 2020. If you would like to be kept up to date, please get in touch with myself, Larissa Engelmann, through the contact details below.

Thank you,

Larissa Engelmann
Ph.D. Research Student
School of Applied Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
9 Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN



Research specific phone number

Dr Andrew Wooff
Lecturer in Policing and Criminology
School of Applied Sciences
Edinburgh Napier University
9 Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN



Appendix G: Survey invitation email

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Larissa Engelmann and I am a Ph.D. student at Edinburgh Napier University. I am emailing you today to invite you to take part in my Ph.D. research study with the title:

The role of education in police officer training and education in Scotland

As part of this police education research study, I am looking for police officers who have finished their **probationary period** from different ranks, years of experience and educational backgrounds, to take part in an **online survey**, to gather perspectives on motivations and experiences of education before and/or after joining Police Scotland. This survey will offer a valuable insight into police officer backgrounds and their views on the role of education on police officer development within Police Scotland.

The survey should take **no more than 20 minutes** to complete. Everything you need to know about the study, your rights as participants, anonymity and confidentiality and the next steps after the survey can be found in the attached participant information sheet.

This study is completely **independent** from Police Scotland and your participation is entirely **voluntary**.

If you follow the link below you will also be presented with the participant information sheet proceeding to the survey. This survey will be live until **-two months after survey sent out-**.

[Link to the online survey will be displayed here](#)

Thank you for considering taking part in this study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch using the contact details below.

Thank you and kind regards,

Larissa Engelmann

Ph.D. Research Student

School of Applied Sciences

Edinburgh Napier University

9 Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN

[REDACTED]

Research specific phone number

Appendix H: Survey

Q3.1 What age are you?

- 18-25 (1)
- 26-35 (2)
- 36-45 (3)
- 46 and above (4)

Q3.2 How would you describe your gender?

Q3.3 How long have you been employed by Police Scotland as a police officer (including 2 year probation period)?

- 1-4 years (1)
 - 4-6 years (2)
 - 7-10 years (3)
 - 11-20 years (4)
 - 21 - 30 years (5)
 - 30 years and over (6)
-

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Q3.4 Did you transfer from another Police force to Police Scotland (for example England, Wales, Northern Ireland)?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q3.5 What is your current rank within Police Scotland?

Constable (1)

Sergeant (2)

Inspector (3)

Chief Inspector (4)

Superintendent (5)

Chief Superintendent (6)

Chief Constable (Including Assistant and Deputy Chief Constable) (7)

Appendices

Q3.6 Which is your current division?

- Division A or N (North East or Highlands and Islands) (1)
- Division L, U or K (Argyll & West Dunbartonshire, Ayrshire, Renfrewshire & Inverclyde) (2)
- Division P, D or C (Fife, Tayside, Forth Valley) (3)
- Division Q, J or V (Lanarkshire, Lothian & Scottish Borders, Dumfries & Galloway) (4)
- Division G or E (Greater Glasgow or Edinburgh) (5)
- National Specialist Division (6)
- Currently on secondment to other force/agency (7)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Probationer Training

Q4.1 To what extent did what you have learned during initial probationer training prepare you for the realities of the job as a police constable?

- Not at all (1)
- To a small extent (2)
- To a moderate extent (3)
- To some extent (4)
- To a high extent (5)

Appendices

Q4.2 To what extent did you learn the skills described below in your initial probationer training? (use the slider to indicate how much you have learned these skills during your training 0=not at all - 100 to a high degree)



Q4.3 Were there any skills or knowledge (in addition to the ones previously) you would have liked to learn in your initial residential training period?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q57 Please specify

Appendices

Q4.6 What have been the main modes of education used for courses you have completed or attended through Police Scotland (including Probationer training)? (*rank 1= most common - 8= least common/not used at all*)

_____ E-learning (online) (1)

_____ Large (30+) group lectures with little to no time to ask questions (2)

_____ Large (30+) group lectures with time for asking questions and group discussion (3)

_____ Small scale tutorials (2-30) based on discussion and debate (4)

_____ On the job training (5)

_____ Live simulation (role-play) (7)

_____ Practical exercises (8)

Q4.7 Which of these modes of education do you consider **most effective** to support your own learning? (pick one)

E- learning (online) (1)

Large (30+) group lectures with no time to ask questions (2)

Large (30+) group lectures with time to ask questions and group discussion (3)

Small scale tutorials (2-30) based on discussion and debate (4)

On the job training (5)

Live simulation (role play) (7)

Practical exercises (8)

Combination (9)

Appendices

Q4.8 Which of these modes of education do you consider **least effective** to support your own learning?
(pick one)

- E-learning (online) (1)
- Large (30+) group lectures with no time to ask questions (2)
- Large (30+) group lectures with time to ask questions and group discussion (3)
- Small scale tutorials (2-30) based on discussion and debate (4)
- On the job training (5)
- Live simulation (7)
- Classroom based practicals (8)
- Combination (9)

End of Block: Probationer Training

Start of Block: Educational Background

Q5.1 What is your **highest** academic qualification completed to date? *(please select one)*

- No formal academic qualifications (1)
- Standards/National 5s/GCSE/O levels or equivalent (2)
- Highers/Advanced Highers/AS levels/A levels or equivalent (3)
- Certificate/ Diploma of Higher Education or equivalent (4)
- Bachelor's Degree (5)
- Postgraduate Degree (MSc or MRes) (6)
- PhD (7)

Q5.2 Would you consider the **most recent** certificate/diploma/degree you have completed Policing related?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q5.3 What was the title of the **most recent** certificate/diploma/degree you have completed?
(Please type in the name of your most recent higher or further education qualification)

Q5.4 Did you gain your academic qualification(s) *(Certificate/Diploma or above)* **before or after** becoming a police officer with Police Scotland? *(if you received more than one academic qualification before and after joining Police Scotland select both options)*

Before joining Police Scotland (1)

After joining Policing Scotland (3)

Q5.5 Did you receive any support from Police Scotland to do so *(i.e. fees paid, time off, ...)*?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Appendices

Q5.6 Please specify what support you received (*select all that apply*).

Fees paid (1)

Time (2)

Other (3)

Don't want to say (4)

Q5.7 Please specify

Q5.8 Have you taken part in any **optional** (non-mandatory) training/education/continuous professional development opportunities **within or outside of Police Scotland** since you finished your probationer training?

Yes (1)

No (2)

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Q5.9 Why have you not taken part in any **optional** training/education/continuous professional development opportunity? *(select all that apply)*

Not relevant to my position (1)

Time commitment (2)

No interest (3)

Not the right course offered (4)

I think I already have all the knowledge and skills that I need to do my job well (5)

Costs (6)

Other (7)

Q5.10 Please explain further

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Q5.11 Who was the main provider for the **optional** training/education/continuous development courses you have taken part in? (*choose all that apply*)

Police Scotland (1)

Universities (including Open University) (2)

Third sector organization (3)

Skills Development Scotland (external skills development provider) (5)

Council (7)

Other (4)

Not sure (6)

Q5.12 Please specify

Q5.13 Did you receive any officially (by Police Scotland or other institution) certified or accredited qualifications for any of the training/education/continuous professional development courses you have taken part in since you completed your probationer training (*optional or mandatory*) ?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Not sure (3)

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Q5.14 How important are accredited qualifications to you when taking part in additional training or education opportunities?

- Very important (4)
- Somewhat important (5)
- Unsure (6)
- Somewhat unimportant (7)
- Not important at all (8)

End of Block: Educational Background

Start of Block: Motivations & Experience Academic Education after joining

Q6.1 What have been your main reasons for engaging with further or higher education opportunities after joining Police Scotland? *(select all that apply)*

- Personal interest (1)
 - Professional interest sparked through my work as a police officer (2)
 - Professional development to move up the ranks (3)
 - Specialist knowledge (4)
 - Professional development to eventually do another job leaving Police Scotland (5)
 - Safety net in case I will not be able to be a police officer in the future (6)
 - Other (7)
-

Q6.2 Please explain

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Q6.3 In your opinion, in what way(s) has being a police officer while completing your academic qualification(s) impacted on your learning? (*select all that apply*)

- It has not impacted on my learning (1)
- It made the learning more relevant since I was able to apply it in practice (2)
- It made my learning more relevant since I could relate it to my experience as a police officer (4)
- It had a positive impact on my learning because the skills and knowledge learned in policing environment were transferable to academic learning environment (6)
- It made my learning more difficult because of the time commitments (3)
- It made my learning more difficult because the knowledge did not reflect what I have experienced in practice (5)
- Other (7)

Q6.4 Please explain

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Q6.5 What were the main reasons for you not to engage with education opportunities (certificate/diploma or degree level study) before joining the police? *(select all that apply)*

- Not a requirement to become a police officer (1)
- No personal interest in further or higher education (2)
- Economic reasons (fees, loans, debt) (3)
- Not meeting entry criteria (4)
- Time commitment (5)
- Do not see the value in further or higher education (6)
- Never considered it (7)
- Other personal reasons (8)
- Planning to engage with education opportunities in the future (9)
- Other (10)

Q6.6 Please explain

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Q6.7 What were the main reasons for you **not** to engage with further education opportunities (certificate/diploma/degree level) after joining the police? (*select all that apply*)

- Not a requirement (1)
- No personal interest in further or higher education (2)
- Economic reasons (fee, loan, dept) (3)
- Not meeting entry criteria (4)
- Time commitment (5)
- Don't see the value in further or higher education (6)
- Never considered it (7)
- Other personal reasons (8)
- Planning to engage with education opportunities in the future (9)
- Other (10)

Q6.8 Please explain

End of Block: Motivations & Experience Academic Education after joining

Start of Block: Further Training and Education

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Q7.1 What motivated you to engage with additional **optional** education/ training/continuous professional development opportunities after joining Police Scotland? *(select all that apply)*

Personal development (1)

Professional development (2)

Operational need (3)

Getting a certificate (4)

Promotion (5)

Other Officers were doing it (6)

Career Progression (7)

Something to fall back on (8)

Other (9)

Q7.2 Please explain further

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Q7.3 To what extent have additional **optional** education/training/continuous professional development opportunities supported your **personal** development ?

- A great deal (1)
 - A lot (2)
 - A moderate amount (3)
 - A little (4)
 - Not at all (5)
-

Q7.4 To what extent have additional **optional** education/training/continuous professional development opportunities supported your **professional** development?

- A great deal (1)
 - A lot (2)
 - A moderate amount (3)
 - A little (4)
 - Not at all (5)
-

Q7.5 I feel motivated by Police Scotland to engage with ongoing training and education opportunities. *(Please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement)*

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)

Q7.6 I am satisfied with the continuous professional development opportunities available for my role within Police Scotland. *(Please indicate to what extent you agree with this statement)*

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat disagree (5)
- Disagree (6)
- Strongly disagree (7)

End of Block: Further Training and Education

Q8.1 Do you see a role for **higher education** in the **professional** development of police officers in Scotland?

- Definitely yes (1)
- Probably yes (2)
- Not sure (3)
- Probably not (4)
- Definitely not (5)

Q8.2 Do you see a role for **higher education** in supporting the personal development of police officers in terms of realising dreams and aspirations outside of Police Scotland?

- Definitely yes (1)
 - Probably yes (2)
 - Might or might not (3)
 - Probably not (4)
 - Definitely not (5)
-

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Q8.5 Please indicate to what extent you agree/disagree with the following statements

I believe education to degree level has a positive influence on police practice. (1)

Understanding the causes of crime and the bigger picture around crime prevention, victimisation and the benefits and barriers of partnership work can improve how police officers answer calls and make decisions (2)

Higher education for police officers can offer a better understanding of the bigger picture around crime, crime prevention, victimisation and partnership work. (3)

Higher education can develop other skills important for police work including IT, business, writing and critical thinking skills that are important for police work. (4)

You learn everything you need to be a good police officer through experience and working closely with senior officers. (5)

Everyone should have to go through the same training regime without direct entry routes. (6)

Training together in the Scottish Police College is important to build bonds with other officers and be socialised into the organization. (7)

Academic knowledge is important to improve practice and use evidenced- based approaches to policing. (8)

Police Scotland values academic knowledge and uses it in practice. (9)

Academic knowledge is too theoretical and irrelevant for everyday policing. (10)

I would engage with higher education opportunities if I would be offered the time off to do so by Police Scotland. (14)

End of Block: Higher Education

Start of Block: End of Survey

Q9.1 Submission of responses

Thank you for taking part in this research study and completing the survey exploring the role of education in police officer development in Scotland. Your contribution to this project is very much appreciated and will go a long way in advancing our understanding of police officers educational backgrounds, motivations and educational needs.

More specifically, the information you have provided will enhance our understandings of:

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Police officer engagement with different kinds of education before joining Police Scotland and while being part of the force. How educational motivation and engagement differs across rank and time in service. In what way motivation aligns with Police Scotland education and training aims. How Police Scotland can improve the education opportunities for police officers to better meet the professional and personal development needs of police officers.

As mentioned at the beginning of the study, all data is **fully anonymised**, and at no point will your participation in this study be disclosed to anyone else but the main researcher. Every step will be taken to make you non-identifiable in the subsequent analysis and write up of this study. Additionally, all data is stored on secure University systems only accessible by the researcher.

If you have any concerns regarding the use of data, or the project, please contact myself or my supervisor through the contact details given below. You can also find a link to our privacy statement here: **link to privacy statement**.

Next Steps

Thank you again for participating in this research study and for contributing valuable information that I hope will improve our understanding of the role of education for Police Scotland in the future. Emerging findings should be available by the end of November 2020. If you would like to be kept up to date, please get in touch with myself, Larissa Engelmann, through the contact details below.

Thank you,

- I would like to submit my answers (1)
- I do not want my survey responses to be used in this study (3)

End of Block: End of Survey

Appendix I: Details submitted to ethics committee

DETAILS OF PROJECT

1. Background information (300 words maximum; references should be cited and listed)

The professionalization of police services in western countries can be traced back more than 100 years and is therefore not a new development (Mays, 2010). However, in recent years it has regained considerable attention in enabling police forces to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century. There is increasing agreement about the ever-changing nature of police work, indicative by over 80% of calls made to Police Scotland in 2017/18 not resulting in a crime being recorded and 57,000 recorded cases in 2015 involving some form of mental health aspect (Police Scotland, 2016). In addition, continuous advancements in technology influencing criminal behaviour as well as the way police officers do their jobs and the increasing need for effective partnership work, illustrate the complexity of policing contemporary society (Rogers and Frevel, 2018). To ensure that police officers have the knowledge and skills to adapt to this ever-changing landscape of policing, England and Wales has introduced the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF), using higher education to develop policing into a graduate profession as part of the professionalization agenda (Paterson, 2011).

With growing partnership work between academics and Police Scotland and the first policing degrees launching in Scottish Universities, it is time to look at the role of education for police officers in Scotland and identify opportunities and barriers for the future (Martin & Wooff, 2018). Research exploring the effects of higher education on police officer development and practice has been complex (Brown, 2018) and almost nonexistent within a Scottish context. Therefore, this study will contribute to our understanding of the value of different forms of education for police officer development from different perspectives, while identifying in what way changes to police education may impact on Police Scotland achieving their aim of being a professional learning organization.

Brown, J. (2018). *Do Graduate Police Officers Make a Difference to Policing? Results of an Integrative Literature Review*. Policing: Journal of Policy and Practice. 0(0). 1-22.

Martin, D. & Wooff, A. (2018). *Treading the Front-line: Tartanization and Police – Academic Partnerships*. Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice. 0 (0). 1-12.

Mays, D. (2018). *Why Police Departments Should Not Impose A College Degree Requirement On Applicants for Law Enforcement Officer Positions*. A Leadership White Paper. Denton Police Department, Texas.

Paterson, C. (2011). *Adding value? A review of the international literature on the role of higher education in police training and education*. Police Practice and Research: An International Journal. 12(4). 286-297.

Police Scotland (2016). *Policing 2026: Our 10 year strategy for policing in Scotland*. Police Scotland, Glasgow.

Rogers, C. & Frevel, B. (2018). *Higher Education and Police: An International Review*. Palgrave Macmillan.

2. Aims & research questions

Aim: To critically assess the role of education in the training and education of police officers in Scotland and Police Scotland as an organization.

The following four research questions were developed to achieve this aim:

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1. How do police officers view their engagement with internal and external education opportunities in relation to rank, years of experience and educational background?
2. In what way does Police Scotland see themselves as a professional learning organisation and how are possible changes to training and education and their impact in this context understood by police officers?
3. What are police partner professions' perspectives on the role of education within Police Scotland, police officer development and partnership work?
4. How do policing students understand the role of education in police officer development?

The stated aim and research questions will contribute to our knowledge about the role of education in police officer development in Scotland, possible value added by higher education involvement and the impact of changes to police education for police practice and partnership working.

3. Participants

- **Number & nature of sample:**

For the Piloting phase of the study, three current Police Scotland police officers known to the researcher/supervisory team will be invited to take part in the survey, two current Police Scotland police officers known to the researcher/supervisory team will be invited to take part in the police interview, two professionals from allied professions known to the researcher/supervisory team will be invited to take part in the partner professions interview and 4-8 students on the director of studies policing degree at Edinburgh Napier University will be asked to take part in the initial focus group.

For phase 1 of this study, approximately 300-600 police officers from Police Scotland, across rank and length of service, will be interviewed via an online survey. Considering the number of Surveys needed for a representative sample using Yamane's (1967)³⁶ sample size formula, based on current officer numbers in Scotland (17,251) a sample of 391 responses is needed. However, due to the mixed-methodology and exploratory nature of this study, the researcher is not aiming for a representative sample. Nevertheless, the net will be cast as wide as possible to allow for non-response rates and item-nonresponse rates and increase the diversity of responses. Therefore, the aim is to get between 300-600 responses.

For phase 2, 20 semi- structured interviews with police officers from Police Scotland across rank, length of service and educational background will be conducted. These will be complemented by an additional 10 semi- structured interviews with professionals from allied professions, working in close partnership with Police Scotland.

Phase 3 will involve 3 focus groups with students currently studying an undergraduate policing degree in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year at Edinburgh Napier University and the University of West of Scotland and planning to become police officers after they graduate.

- **Inclusion/exclusion criteria:** People under the age of 18 will be excluded from all phases of the study.

For phase 1, the inclusion criteria are respondents need to be police officers employed by Police Scotland, who have successfully completed their two-year probation period. For phase 2 interviews, to be included police officers need to meet the same requirements as in phase 1 of this study and be interested in exploring the role of

³⁶ Yamane, T (1967). *Statistics: An Introduction to Analysis*. New York: Harper and Row.

education within the organisation (Police Scotland). Professionals from allied professions need to be actively working with Police Scotland on a regular basis in an operational context. Additionally, they must have been in such a role for at least 1 year. Inclusion criteria for phase 3 focus groups are being a current matriculated full-time 2nd, 3rd or 4th year student on either the BSc(Hons) Policing and Criminology Degree at Edinburgh Napier University or the BA(Hons) Criminal Justice (Policing) programme at the University of West of Scotland, with a genuine interest in joining Police Scotland after finishing the degree.

- **Recruitment of participants, including details of formal permissions from another organisation (where appropriate):** Formal permission from Police Scotland to carry out this research has been given and there is no separate ethical approval process for Police Scotland.

Participants for the piloting phase of the study will be recruited through previously established relationships from the researcher/supervisory team with police officers, professionals from allied professions and policing students.

Both the assigned contact person for this project from Police Scotland, Claire Thompson, and the new academic research team within Police Scotland (Dr Maria MacLennan & Constable Judith Northin) have agreed to support the dissemination of the survey through mailing lists and the staff intranet of Police Scotland for phase 1 of this study. Participants will be recruited through the invitation email/page (Appendix 1), clearly stating that this research is independent of Police Scotland and even though results may be shared with Police Scotland, every measure will be taken to ensure that individuals will not be identifiable. Additionally, only analysed data will be shared and not individual responses from officers. The sampling scheme for the first phase of this study is threefold. It is purposive sampling in the sense that only police officers will receive the email to participate in this study to their work email accounts. It is random in the sense that within the emailing lists used, no specific officers are chosen or targeted to get a wide range of responses. Similarly, snowball sampling will be used, encouraging police officers with the invitation email to send the invitation email to fellow officers and spread the word through word of mouth, to reach maximum response numbers.

Phase 2 interview participants will be recruited in a number of different ways. Firstly, through the survey officers will be asked to get in touch with the researcher, if they are interested in further discussion about the topic and agree to take part in an interview (Appendix 13, 17). Since phase 2 is trying to identify police officers with different educational backgrounds, rank and time in service purposeful and snowball sampling will be utilised to identify those officers that will be best able to answer the research questions and offer an important variety in responses. Police Scotland representatives have agreed to support this process. Additionally, with the help of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) (who also agreed to support this research) and professional relationships of the researcher and the supervisory team with Police Scotland officers, additional officers will be identified and invited to take part in the study, again, using purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods. The email invitation for Police Scotland Interviews can be found in Appendix 2, explaining the purpose of the research, its independence from Police Scotland and that responses will be handled confidentially and every measure will be taken to ensure that individuals will not be identifiable in any subsequent write up of the study.

Professionals working in partnership with Police Scotland will be identified by the researcher and the Supervisory team through previous working relationships and with help from SIPR and the close working relationships that they have with partner organisations. Therefore, purposive sampling and snowball sampling will be used to identify those individuals in the best position to answer research question 3. The invitation email for partner agencies will explain the purpose of the study, its independence from Police Scotland and that any responses they give in the interview

will be anonymised as much as possible so that individuals will not be identifiable (Appendix 3). All interviewees will be informed through the invitation email that interviews will be held at a mutually agreed time and place, discussed after they mention their interest in taking part in the study.

Phase 3 participants will be recruited through the help of the programme leaders of the two Policing degrees that are considered in this study. The programme leader for the Edinburgh Napier BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology course, Dr Andrew Wooff, agreed to help with disseminating the focus group invitation email and negotiate access with the programme leader of the University of West of Scotland policing course to send the invitation email to prospective participants. Therefore, purposive sampling will be used to ensure that the inclusion criteria are met and possible respondents are contacted. The researcher will also go to tutorials and lectures in person to invite possible participants, explain the purpose of the study and answer any questions. The invitation email introduces the project and explains the purpose of the focus groups and that all interviews will be anonymised as much as possible so that no individuals in the group are identifiable (Appendix 4). When students agree to take part, a doodle poll will be used to decide on the best time and location to meet for all focus group participants. Answers to the doodle poll and participant information will only be visible to the researcher.

- **Details of any relationship with participants which may affect the research:**

The initial piloting phase involves participants known to the researcher/supervisory team, however, there are no personal relationships involved and participants are only known through professional contexts. Contact details have been shared through attending conferences, meetings and workshops and were specifically shared with the interest of taking part in and supporting this study. Additional participants for the initial piloting phase may be recruited through professional networks of the supervisors. Furthermore, the researcher will ensure that the participation in the study is entirely voluntary and the withdrawal procedure (laid out in Participant Information sheet and Invitation Email as well as Consent Form) will be explained in its entirety to possible participants to avoid any form of coercion. Therefore, even though some participants may be known to the researcher and supervisory team on a professional basis, there will be no special treatment or expectation of participation. As mentioned below, the same process for initial invitation and debrief will be followed and all participants will have the same rights when taking part in the study.

4. Outline of methods & measurements (approx. 500 words)

This study will use a mixed methodology approach to enable triangulation of results. Therefore, the study is split into three stages of data collection and analysis in addition to an initial pilot phase to assure the quality of the methods used.

Piloting/Reflective Phase

After gaining ethical approval from Edinburgh Napier University, the sample survey, interview guide(s) and focus group guide (Appendix 13, 14, 15, 16) will be trialled with selected police officers, professionals from partner professions and policing students known to the researcher and/or supervisory team, to ensure that the questions being asked are appropriate, understandable and asking what was meant to be asked (internal validity). If there are any significant changes that substantially influence the meaning or purpose of the survey/interview or focus group guide(s), new ethical approval from Edinburgh Napier University will be sought for the specific phase of the study that is effected before commencing the research. This will not be treated as a completely separate Pilot Study but rather an initial reflexive phase of the main study, where the researcher will actively reflect upon the data collection instruments and may change the wording and order of questions asked where confusion or difficulties in responding were identified. Due to being part of the main study, to participate in the piloting phase of the study the respondents will go through the same procedures consequent participants of the of

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phases 1, 2 and 3 will go through, i.e. invitation email (Appendix 1-4), Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5-8), Consent Form (Appendix 10-12) and debrief (Appendix 18-20).

For this initial reflective phase of the study, three current police officers known to the researcher/supervisory team will be invited to take part in the survey, two current police officers known to the researcher/supervisory team will be invited to take part in the police interview, two professionals from allied professions known to the researcher/supervisory team will be invited to take part in the partner professions interview and students on the director of studies policing degree at Edinburgh Napier University will be asked to take part in the initial focus group. All participants will be presented with the respective invitation email, participant information sheet, consent form and debrief form relating to their phase of the study. After taking part and going through the debrief process described for the other phases below, participants will be asked for feedback to the researcher about the process either verbally or via email.

As mentioned above, all participants of this initial reflective phase will go through the same process as consequent participants and their responses will therefore be part of the main study and analysed together with consequent findings. Additionally, because the participants in this phase of the study are known to the researcher, they will be advised at the end of the study to not take part in the survey again once the official mail-out and advertisement takes place because their responses have already been recorded.

Reflective practice will be used throughout the whole study, however, specifically for these first responses, the researcher will focus on any aspects of the data gathering process that may need changing to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

Any changes to initial interview schedules will be discussed and reflected upon in detail in the methodology section of the project.

The following phases will be running concurrently and emerging findings from the survey may influence the direction of the interviews and focus groups.

Phase 1

Phase one, the quantitative part of this study, will involve a survey distributed to Police Scotland officers across ranks and divisions to achieve a wide variety of responses with different years of experience and educational backgrounds, with a target number of approximately 300-600 respondents. Due to the relative lack of research on Police Education through surveys and unknown response rates of police surveys especially in the Scottish context the net will be cast as wide as possible aiming for a minimum of 300 responses. The survey will be live for 2 months from October till December 2019. The survey will help to identify some of the backgrounds, motivations, experience and perceptions of police officers in relation to education and training, as well as identify how or if certain types of education and training efforts have influenced their practice and personal or professional development positively or negatively (Appendix 13). The survey will be hosted on the web platform *Qualtrics* (served in EU and previously approved for data collection) and will take no longer than **20** minutes to complete. The first page of the survey will introduce the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 5) and will inform the participants of the purpose of the study and the rights of the participant. The Participant Information sheet is followed by a consent form, where the participant has to explicitly mark a box acknowledging that they have read the participant information sheet and consent form and consent to take part in the survey (Appendix 10).

The next page will take the participant to the demographics and educational background part of the questionnaire so that findings can be analysed in relation to rank, years in service and educational background (see research question 1 above). Further questions will explore motivations and understandings of different types of engagement with education and training in relation to police practice and professional development to identify opportunities and barriers in this area. Survey questions will also give police officers the chance to make suggestions about what they would like to see change concerning their education and training and what possible

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changes they would consider less helpful in relation to police culture and practice. At the end of the survey, respondents will be presented with the debrief sheet and asked if they consent for their data to be used in this study, confirming by selecting the 'submit' button (Appendix 17).

Survey data will be analysed through the quantitative data analysis software SPSS provided through Edinburgh Napier University, using multivariate analysis and descriptive measurements to demonstrate trends, correlations and significant relationships in responses across police officers and the different variables in this data set.

Phase 2

Phase two, the first qualitative aspect of this study, will involve 30 semi-structured interviews with both police officers and professionals working in a close partnership role with Police Scotland, including nurses and social workers. Interviews will take a maximum of 90 minutes each. Interviews will be conducted between 1st September 2019 – 1st February 2020. All interviewees will be presented with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 6 & 7) before taking part in the study and offered time to ask questions. The researcher will verbally go through the Participant Information Sheet in person before starting the interview. Once the purpose of the interview is clear, participants will be presented with the consent form, informing them of their rights and through signing the form consenting to take part in the study (Appendix 11).

Police officer interviews will follow on from the phase 1 survey questions and responses, and go into more depth looking at the engagement of police officers with education opportunities outside of and within the police service, the role of education for personal and professional development as well as Police Scotland as a professional learning organisation, and the barriers and opportunities they identify in this context (see Interview guide Appendix 14). Interviews with partner professions will build on some of this, by offering them a chance to talk about their experiences with police officers, and how they understand the role of education in the improvement of partnership work as well as identifying lessons that can be learned from their own educational opportunities and experiences, which could benefit Police Scotland in the future (see Interview guide Appendix 15). After the interview participants will be asked if they have anything they would like to add and if they are happy for the interview to be used for this study. They are then provided with a debrief sheet, giving researcher and supervisor contact details in case they want to get in touch or have a copy of the findings (Appendix 18 & 19). All Interviews will be audio-recorded with the consent of participants established through the consent form before commencing the interview.

All interviews will be transcribed and analysed by the researcher using NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis tool provided through Edinburgh Napier University. Thematic analysis will be used to identify common themes and trends across the data.

Phase 3

Phase three of this study, the second qualitative aspect, involves approximately three focus groups with 4-8 students each from across those universities offering policing degrees in Scotland (Edinburgh Napier University, University of West of Scotland). These focus groups will take a maximum of 90 minutes to conduct. Focus groups will be conducted between 1st October 2019 – 1st February 2020. After responding to the initial invitation email (which also includes the participant information sheet), answering any questions they may have had and agreeing on a date, time and place acceptable for everyone involved in the focus group to meet, participant's will be presented with the participant information sheet again in person on the day of the focus group and offered the chance to ask questions before starting the focus group interview (Appendix 8). The researcher will go through the main points of the participant information sheet

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to ensure that all participants understand their rights and the purpose of the study and more specifically the focus groups and the next steps. Additionally, since participants had the participant information sheet before agreeing to meet for a focus group, they were offered the chance to ask questions on a one-to-one basis (either via email or in person) before being in a group setting to answer any questions that participant may not want to ask in a group setting (see invitation email appendix 4). If all participants are happy to take part in the study and understand the participant information sheet and the consent form presented to them and do not have any further questions, they will be asked to sign the consent form before starting the interview (Appendix 12).

These focus groups offer a unique opportunity to explore policing degree students' perspectives on the role of education in developing police officers in Scotland, their motivations to engage with higher education, what role they see higher education play in their development in becoming a police officer and identify the educational needs of prospective police officers for their personal and professional development (see Focus Group guide Appendix 16).

If focus group participants indicate relevant personal stories during discussions the researcher will guide the discussion back to the topic at hand and consider further interviews in cases where personal case studies may be interesting and important to shed further light on this topic. In this case, participants would be invited separately from the group by the researcher after the focus group debrief and asked if they would agree to a follow-up one-to-one semi structured interview. The participant would be presented with an interview participant information sheet and consent form and the interview would be held at a mutually agreed place and time (Appendix 9,11). They will have the chance to ask questions and will receive a full debrief after the interview.

Focus groups (and possible follow-up interviews) will be transcribed and analysed by the researcher using NVIVO and through thematic analysis key themes and trends across interviews will be identified.

After analysis of the data collected in all three phases, the triangulation of results will offer an important insight into the role of education in the development of police officers in Scotland and look for overall themes and trends as well as differences in the data that may influence future developments and improvements in this area. The mixed – methods nature of this research ensures that the power of numbers is supplemented by the power of stories, making the findings more meaningful and reliable.

5. Risks to participants' and researcher's safety & wellbeing

As researchers, there is a 'duty of care' towards our participants as well as ourselves.

Therefore, the risks to wellbeing and safety during research always needs to be taken into account. However, no serious risks to the wellbeing and/or safety are anticipated for participants of this study or the researcher.

All face-to-face interviews and focus groups will be conducted in public places or buildings and rooms appropriate to the research (university rooms, libraries, professionals' offices or police stations) in line with the University Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers, suggesting to build safety into the research design. Additionally, the researcher will be in contact with their flatmates and/or partner before and after the interviews and focus groups have taken place and discuss times they are expected to be back home. Furthermore, where possible focus groups and interviews will be conducted during day time to ensure night travel especially on public transport as well as walking at night is limited. The Director of Study, Andrew Wooff, and the rest of the Supervisory team will also be available during fieldwork for health and wellbeing support and research specific support where needed. The researcher also knows the key services available within the university for personal wellbeing support where needed. No personal mobile phone number or address will be shared with participants. A dedicated phone number for a separate phone will be used for the duration of the study, ensuring that participants will only be able to reach the researcher during office hours on a dedicated phone or during the hours agreed upon for the interviews and focus groups to take

place in case these are out of office hours. The address shared with participants will be the University address (Sighthill campus).

Taking into account the topic of this study (the role of education in police officer development in Scotland) causing distress is not considered a significant risk to this study but will briefly be mentioned below. Coercion will be minimised by using overt research methods and offering detailed information about the study and participant rights in the participant information sheet and offering the chance to ask questions.

Due to the two qualitative aspects of this study and the online survey, the immediate risks for participants are considered to be privacy, deception and data protection. A number of safeguards have been put into place to address these and will be talked through in detail in the next few paragraphs.

6. Consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing, withdrawal from the study

To ensure informed and voluntary consent the researcher has put in place different stages of offering the participant all the information needed to take part in the study, time to ask questions and ensure they know about their rights as participants before they take part. The researcher understands that ensuring informed and voluntary consent is a continuous process and has therefore built this into the research design.

Participants are introduced to the study via email and presented with the initial information about the purpose and aims of the study before being introduced to the participant information sheet which is attached to the email/first page of the survey (Appendix 1-8). Participants will receive direct emails to their work accounts, not disseminating them through higher ranking officers or specifically encourage them to take part in this study by higher ranking officers within Police Scotland, therefore ensuring that officers are not pressured directly or indirectly to take part in this study. This is an important consideration since Police organizations are hierarchical organizations and where officers are asked to participate by higher ranking officers, there is no clear indication that this participation was voluntary or not. Additionally, the participant information sheet will clearly state the independence of this research from Police Scotland and that participation is entirely voluntary and not dictated by the organization (Police Scotland). The participant information sheet will go into further detail explaining the study, giving as much detail as possible while still leaving enough imagination to the participants to give unbiased and open minded answers not guided by research questions (Appendix 5-8). Participants will also be informed about the withdrawal procedures in place for the respective phase of the study as well as anonymity and confidentiality information discussed further below. The researcher and supervisor contact information in the email as well as the participant information sheet offers those participants taking part in the survey to get in touch if they have any questions beforehand. Additionally, contact information about an independent person from the University knowing about the study will be provided on the information sheet to answer any questions relating to the ethical approval of the study.

Those participants taking part in the focus groups and interviews will have the chance to ask the researcher questions in person on the day, before starting the interview as well as via email. Additionally, the researcher will go through the information sheet verbally on the day to ensure that participants know exactly what their rights are and what taking part in this study entails. After all questions are answered, participants are presented with a clear and concise consent form, ensuring they acknowledge and understand the information presented to them by either checking a box for the online survey or signing the consent form on the day of the interview/focus group (Appendix 10-12).

Participants do have the right to request transcripts of the data and can suggest reasonable amendments to their data. This is only feasible and possible for the interview and focus group transcripts because survey data will be collected anonymously and it will not be possible to assign responses to a singular respondent. Reasonable amendments to focus group and interview transcripts can be requested within two weeks after conducting the interview/focus

group. This will be explained to participants before and after the interview with the participant information sheet and debrief sheet (Appendix 5-8, 17-20). Beyond this two week period, data will be anonymised and analysed, therefore amendments will not be possible.

7. Anonymity and confidentiality

It is almost impossible to ensure complete anonymity, however, the researcher has put a number of safeguards into place to assure the highest degree of anonymity and confidentiality possible is offered to participants. Anonymity and Confidentiality information is outlined in the initial invitation email as well as the respective participant information sheets, however, will also be reinforced in the debrief sheet and by the researcher in person for interviews and focus groups, to ensure transparency and honesty during the research process.

Before taking part in the study, participants will be fully informed through an initial invitation email (Appendix 1-4) and the provided participant information sheet (Appendix 5-8), both of which reassure the participant that no personally identifying data like their name is needed and that if they choose to consent to being audio-recorded at Interviews and Focus Groups, recordings will be anonymised, safely stored and destroyed after transcription has concluded. Names will be on the signed consent forms, however, these will be stored securely in a locked cabinet only the researcher has access to and separate from the rest of the data including transcription and pseudonymisation keys. This ensures confidentiality, additionally audio-recordings and notes taken during interviews, will be kept in a separate secure cabinet only accessible by the researcher.

Where demographic information might be asked of participants (like gender, age, experience), this will only be provided voluntarily and participants are reassured that this data is not going to be used in a way that identifies them directly but rather to identify broad trends across police officers that may help our understanding of the role of education in police officer training and education and Police Scotland as a whole. The data collected from the survey is anonymised through the use of numerical identifiers within any stored records of data. Additionally, as indicated in the participant information sheet for the survey, no specific response will be shared and single responses to the survey will not be attributable to an individual as names are not required for the survey.

Interview and Focus groups transcripts will be anonymised through pseudonymisation and a pseudonymisation key will be developed by the researcher. Only the researcher will have access to this key and as mentioned above this will be kept separate from consent forms as well as the analysed data in a secure location only accessible by the researcher.

Especially when conducting focus groups, it is important to put safeguards into place to ensure confidentiality and anonymity considering deliberate and accidental disclosures of information that might happen otherwise. Participants of focus groups will receive clear guidance on the importance of confidentiality in a focus group setting before starting the interview. Participants will be advised that nothing discussed during the focus groups should leave the room and if participants know other students taking part in this study, no discussed questions or topics should be shared. Focus groups participants will be advised that they should not share other participants information with anyone after taking part in the study. This will ensure confidentiality for participants of focus groups. It is likely that students already know each other and therefore anonymity in this setting is difficult to contain, however, participants will be asked through the consent form to respect the privacy of other participants and not share names and views of other participants beyond the focus group. This information is reiterated in the participant information sheet and consent form (Appendix 8 and 12) and after the focus group has concluded. As mentioned above, a pseudonymisation key will be used to anonymise responses so that individuals within a focus groups are not identifiable in any write-up or report.

Furthermore, in line with the Research Data Management Regulations of Edinburgh Napier University (<https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/Documents/Research%20Data%20Management%20Policy.pdf>) and the General

Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679, participants will be informed that all survey data, transcripts, audio- recordings and other relevant electronic participant information will be safely stored on Edinburgh Napier University secure systems on the researchers' password protected computer provided by the University. All electronic data will be kept securely for ten years before being destroyed in accordance with Edinburgh Napier University guidance on the safe disposal on confidential waste. A link to the privacy statement (see Appendix 22) as required by Edinburgh Napier University Governance and the GDPR, will be made available to participants on the Information Sheet.

Furthermore, at no stage in the research process from data gathering to dissemination will the identity of the participant be disclosed to anyone outside the research team, and all reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that participants remain non-identifiable, meaning identifying information will be removed for example through pseudonymisation, in the dissemination of any reports/outputs that may follow this study.

8. Data protection arrangements

As mentioned above, all digital data (audio-recordings, transcripts, analysis, and survey data) as well as any data generated from the information provided by participants will be kept on the researchers' university computer, located in Sighthill Campus of Edinburgh Napier University, secured through password encryption and only accessible by the researcher. University-managed data storage is resilient storing multiple copies in more than one physical location to protect against corruption. Daily backups are kept for 14 days, and monthly backups for an additional year, covering the relevant timescale for the proposed project. Through the use of pseudonyms to describe participants as well as specific locations, organizations or specific case examples that may lead to the identification of a participant, the risk of identification of participants is minimised in created reports and outputs of this study. Where pseudonymisation keys are used, they are stored separately from the consent forms to avoid any confidentiality breaches. No participant information will be passed on to third parties. Further information on data protection arrangements can be found in Appendix 21, the Data Management Plan.

9. Ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them

Some of the ethical considerations concerning this research like anonymity, confidentiality, data protection and informed consent have been addressed above. Additionally, physical harm to participants is very unlikely in the context of this study as the online survey does not require any meeting in person, furthermore, for the interviews and focus groups every step will be taken for both the participants and the researcher to choose locations and times that offer the safest environment. This includes meeting in public or professional buildings, during the day and ensuring accessibility for all participants. Psychological harm and distress is minimised by ensuring that participants are fully informed of the purpose of this study and the methods used to gather data. Additionally, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy and data management procedures are communicated effectively before and after taking part in the study. Using these overt research methods avoids any type of deception, minimizes distress and mistrust by potential participants. Furthermore, the topic explored in this study (the role of education in the development of police officers in Scotland) is not necessarily a particularly sensitive topic and using open- ended questions in interviews and focus groups will allow participants to go into as much detail as they feel comfortable in doing. The debrief session will help to return to a pre-interview emotional state, if sensitive topics did come up during the interview/focus group. The questions used in the different phases of this research study will, furthermore, only link to the previously outlined purpose of the study, explained in invitation emails and participant information sheets.

Another ethical consideration involves the responsible use and management of data. As mentioned above, a data management plan has been developed by the researcher (Appendix 21) outlining the University regulations and how the researcher plans on ensuring the responsible use and storage of data. Furthermore, a risk may be the loss of data through losing the Dictaphone used to record interviews and focus groups. This risk is considered to be low and will be minimised with particular care taken by the researcher when using the Dictaphone

Appendices

for this research project. In addition, the researcher has experience in conducting interviews with professionals in the public service industry and therefore firstly, knows the importance of ensuring gathered information is safely stored and not shared and secondly, knows how to conduct field research without risking the loss of data. An additional risk might be if University computer systems are compromised. This would be a high risk for data security. However, the likelihood of this happening is low and as previously mentioned, the University uses numerous backup measures to ensure data security. Furthermore, any audio-recordings and notes will be deleted after transcription.

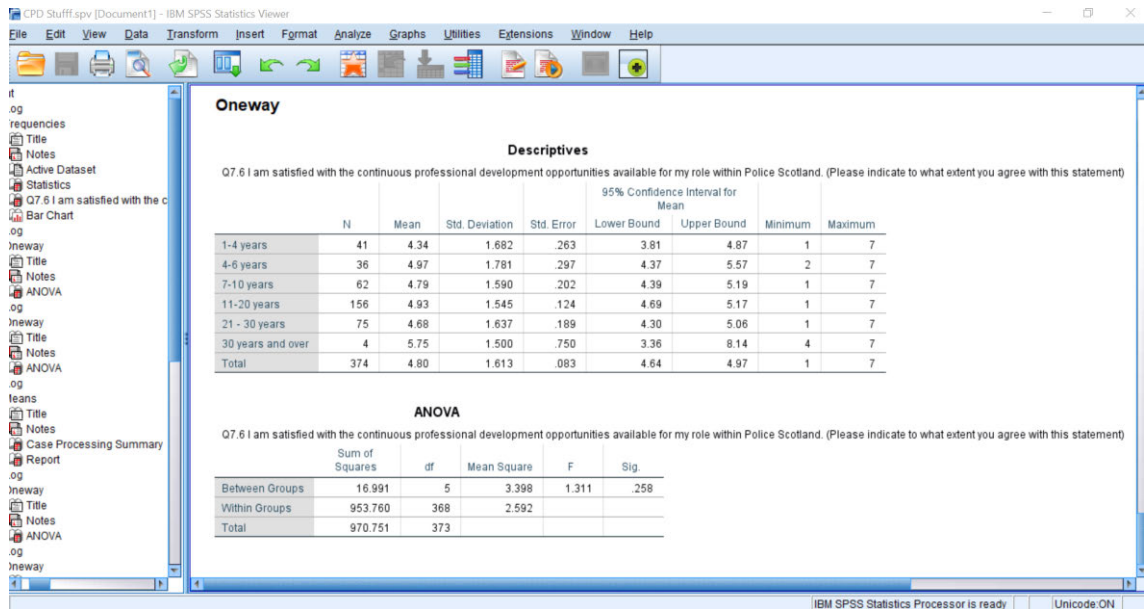
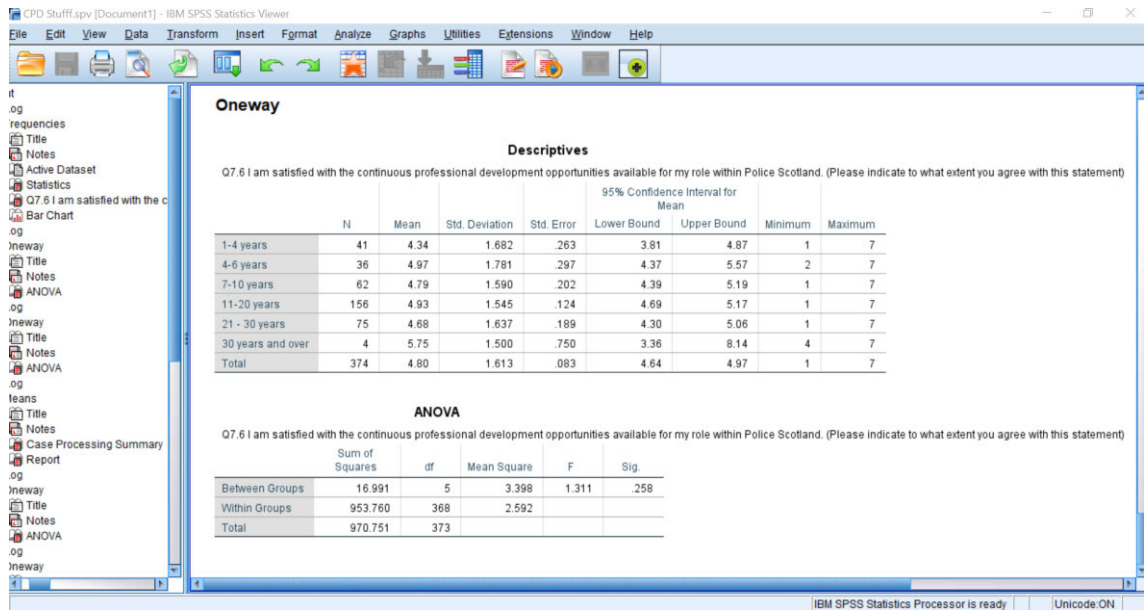
Lastly, since this research is specifically about the role of education in police officer development in Police Scotland, the researcher puts particular focus on ensuring participants that this research project, even though supported by Police Scotland through the dissemination of invitation emails, is an independent piece of academic research funded mainly through Edinburgh Napier University and additional financial support from the Scottish Institute for Policing Research. Participants will be made aware that the disseminated survey is not an official Police Scotland survey, that it will only be the researcher based at Edinburgh Napier University handling the data, and that they are by no means obliged to participate in the research or asked to do so by Police Scotland. All participants are reminded of this both in the initial invitation email as well as the information sheet and therefore participation will be of their own free will.

Appendix J: Sample of interview codes/nodes from NVivo

The screenshot displays the NVivo 12 Pro interface for a project named 'Police Learning PhD.nvp'. The main window shows a list of nodes under the 'PO Revised Nodes' category. The nodes are organized into a hierarchical tree structure on the left and a detailed list on the right. The list includes columns for Name, Files, References, and Created On.

Name	Files	References	Created On
Learning		0	02/10/2020 13:35
Benefit of external engagement		2	03/10/2020 22:43
Bringing in Expert Knowledge		7	19/01/2021 10:12
External training		7	20/01/2021 23:11
Learning from others		12	19/01/2021 19:09
Recognising limits		4	19/01/2021 20:58
Geographical Challenges		21	03/10/2020 23:09
Green Shoots		13	02/10/2020 22:55
Guided by priorities		13	03/10/2020 13:31
Wrong priorities		12	03/10/2020 14:43
Higher Education		0	02/10/2020 17:19
Choice		3	18/11/2020 19:03
Direct Entry		12	06/10/2020 11:46
Half-hearted attempts		14	04/10/2020 13:29
HE studies not an assurance		18	03/10/2020 13:43
Interest in HE		14	03/10/2020 23:37
Irrelevance of HE		25	06/10/2020 11:19
Lack of interest		19	09/10/2020 19:18
Lack of support		15	09/10/2020 19:45
Opportunities		9	16/10/2020 19:37
Personal benefit of HE studies		26	02/10/2020 17:22
Connections		1	21/01/2021 11:51
Kept separate		4	18/10/2020 15:47
Knowing how to learn		2	21/01/2021 15:30
Proud of academic achievements		4	13/10/2020 18:37

Appendix K: Sample from survey analysis in SPSS



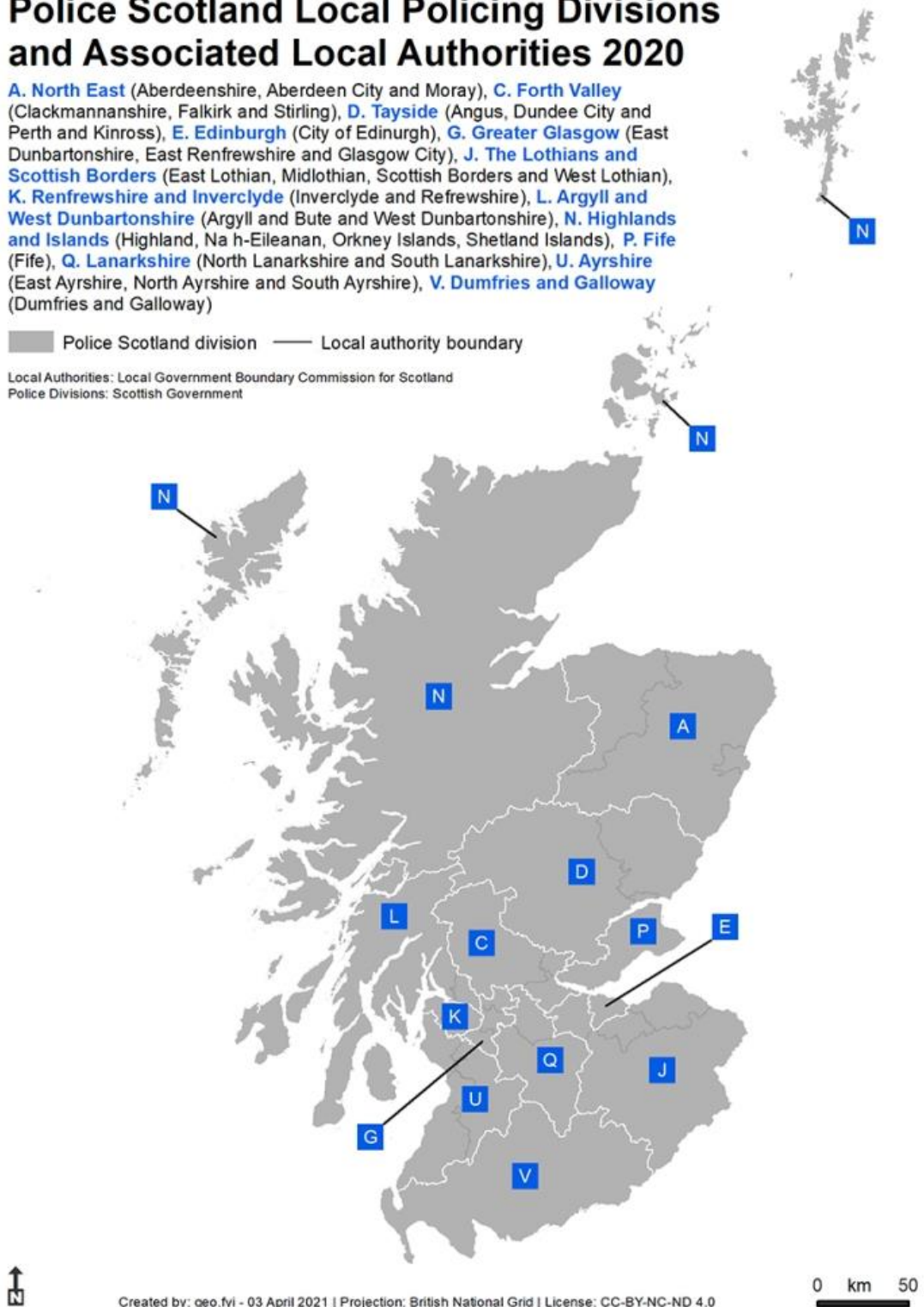
Appendix L: Map of Police Scotland divisions

Police Scotland Local Policing Divisions and Associated Local Authorities 2020

A. North East (Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray), **C. Forth Valley** (Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling), **D. Tayside** (Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross), **E. Edinburgh** (City of Edinburgh), **G. Greater Glasgow** (East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City), **J. The Lothians and Scottish Borders** (East Lothian, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and West Lothian), **K. Renfrewshire and Inverclyde** (Inverclyde and Renfrewshire), **L. Argyll and West Dunbartonshire** (Argyll and Bute and West Dunbartonshire), **N. Highlands and Islands** (Highland, Na h-Eileanan, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands), **P. Fife** (Fife), **Q. Lanarkshire** (North Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire), **U. Ayrshire** (East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire), **V. Dumfries and Galloway** (Dumfries and Galloway)

■ Police Scotland division — Local authority boundary

Local Authorities: Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
Police Divisions: Scottish Government



Created by: geo.fyi - 03 April 2021 | Projection: British National Grid | License: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

0 km 50

Appendix M: Data Management Plan

0. Proposal name
The role of education and training in the development of police officers in Scotland
1. Description of the data
<p>1.1 Type of study</p> <p>This is a mixed methods study integrating quantitative methods, specifically a survey distributed across Police Scotland and qualitative methods including semi- structured interviews with police officers and partner agencies in Scotland as well as focus groups with prospective police officers undertaking the BSc (Hons) Policing and Criminology and Edinburgh Napier University.</p> <p>1.2 Types of data</p> <p>Statistical survey data collected through the software <i>Qualtrics</i> provided through Edinburgh Napier University. Approximately 300 survey responses are anticipated. Audio-digital recordings, transcripts and notes of interviews and focus groups collected only by the lead researcher. The researcher anticipates to conduct approximately 30 semi- structured interviews and 3 focus groups.</p> <p>1.3 Format and scale of the data</p> <p>Statistical survey data will be captured by the survey platform programme <i>Qualtrics</i>, a programme provided through Edinburgh Napier University and collected responses will only be accessible by the lead researcher through a password protected profile. Additionally, data will be downloaded only on the personal password protected computer of the researcher and analysed through SPSS a quantitative data analysis software provided by Edinburgh Napier University. Files will only be kept on the researchers personal password protected computer. Audio recordings of all interviews and focus groups will be recorded with a password-protected digital Dictaphone and captured as MP3 files. These will then be transcribed into a Microsoft Word document on the researchers personal password protected computer and stored there for data analysis.</p>
2. Data collection / generation
<p><i>Make sure you justify why <u>new</u> data collection or long term management is needed in your Case for Support. Focus in this template on the good practice and standards for ensuring new data are of high quality and processing is well documented.</i></p> <p>2.1 Methodologies for data collection / generation</p> <p>With the collaboration of Police Scotland and the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) key email distribution lists and ways to advertise the survey will be identified. The survey will be administered online through <i>Qualtrics</i> and any data collected will only be accessible by the researcher through a password protected login. Any analysis done from the survey responses will only be accessible by the researcher on their personal password protected computer.</p> <p>Some interviewees will be identified from the questionnaire, with an option to show interest to take part in a follow up interview at the end of the survey. Additional interviewees from Police Scotland will be identified with the help of the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, the researchers and the Supervisors professional networks with the police and with the cooperation of Police Scotland. Interviewees from partner agencies will be identified through networks available within Edinburgh Napier University who is offering both social work and nursing degrees as well as personal connections of the researcher and the supervisory team with practitioners in Scotland. Participants will therefore be invited to participate both via email and in person. Lastly, focus groups will be identified through the help of the Director of Studies, Dr Andrew Wooff, who is the programme leader for the Policing and Criminology degree at Edinburgh Napier University, and knows the programme leaders of other policing degrees across Scotland. Participants will be invited via email and in person by the researcher.</p>

All interviews and focus groups will be conducted and transcribed only by the researcher, Larissa Engelmann, and take place in locations most convenient to the participants but also safe for the researcher. Field work notes taken by the researcher during interviews and focus groups will be selectively transcribed by the researcher and any hand written excess information which might identify any participant will be destroyed after transcription.

2.2 Data quality and standards

Initial pilot interviews and surveys (around 2 to 3 for each research method) will ensure the quality of the data collection tool is up to a high standard and understood by prospective participants, which will increase data quality and standards. Additionally, transcriptions and quantitative data analysis through SPSS will be reviewed and supervised by the supervisory team of this research.

3. Data management, documentation and curation

Keep this section concise and accessible to readers who are not data-management experts. Focus on principles, systems and major standards. Focus on the main kind(s) of study data. Give brief examples and avoid long lists.

3.1 Managing, storing and curating data.

Research data will be stored on the University's V:drive. **University-managed data storage** is resilient, with multiple copies stored in more than one physical location and protection against corruption. Daily backups are kept for 14 days and monthly backups for an additional year.

3.2 Metadata standards and data documentation

All research data will be organized as per the Universities metadata standards <http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/research-data/Pages/Organising.aspx>

3.3 Data preservation strategy and standards

Plans and place for long-term storage, preservation and planned retention period for the research data. Formal preservation standards, if any. Indicate which data may not be retained (if any).

The [Edinburgh Napier Data Management Policy](#) requires research data to be retained after project completion if they substantiate research findings, are of potential long-term value or support a patent for at least 10 years. The policy also requires that funders and/or sponsors requirements are met. Long term storage is provided through the University data repository. However, any written notes from interviews or focus groups that have personal information of participants on them will either be digitalized and then destroyed or if not needed destroyed via confidential disposal consoles available in the University.

4. Data security and confidentiality of potentially disclosive information

4.1 Formal information/data security standards

The University complies with the International Standard for managing the security of information (ISO 27001:13) and therefore this study will be compliant with these formal information and data security standards like the Information Security Classification Scheme (ISCS) and any other [Information Security Standards](#) set by the University.

4.2 Main risks to data security

All personal data has an element of risk. Summarise the main risks to the confidentiality and security of information related to human participants, the level of risk and how these risks will be managed. Cover the main processes or facilities for storage and processing of personal data, data access, with controls put

in place and any auditing of user compliance with consent and security conditions. It is not sufficient to write not applicable under this heading.

To ensure that data submitted through the online survey are secure and the risk to participant's confidentiality and security of information is limited, data will be collected through password protected systems only. These are only accessible by the researcher. Additionally, no names or other directly identifiable data will be asked of respondents and all data will be anonymised as much as possible.

All interview and focus group transcripts will be kept on the researchers' personal password protected computer in the researchers' office. Additionally, though keeping data on the University's V: drive backup and security of the data will be ensured as much as possible.

5. Data sharing and access

Identify any data repository (-ies) that are, or will be, entrusted with storing, curating and/or sharing data from your study, where they exist for particular disciplinary domains or data types. [Information on repositories is available here.](#)

5.1 Suitability for sharing

Data generated by the project (identified above) will be made open once appropriate changes have been made to honour assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. It will offer important insight into the field of training and education of police officers and only through sharing will enable Police forces to learn from the findings.

5.2 Discovery by potential users of the research data

Datasets will be allocated a DOI and stored on our open access Research Repository in accordance with the University research data deposit process. The DOI and the datasets will be made available to the UK Data Service ReShare repository within three months of the end of the grant.

5.3 Governance of access

Dr. Andrew Wooff, Director of Studies

5.4 The study team's exclusive use of the data

Access will exclusively belong to the research team of this study until the data collection has finished. Data may be used for journal papers written and submitted by the research team of this study after data collection has finished. All papers will adhere to common journal publishing expectations and data (anonymized/pseudonymised transcripts) procured from this study and underpinning the research findings will be made available at the point of publication.

5.5 Restrictions or delays to sharing, with planned actions to limit such restrictions

Restriction to data sharing may be due to participant confidentiality, consent agreements or IPR. Strategies to limit restrictions may include data being anonymised or aggregated; gaining participant consent for data sharing; gaining copyright permissions. For prospective studies, consent procedures should include provision for data sharing to maximise the value of the data for wider research use, while providing adequate safeguards for participants. As part of the consent process, proposed procedures for data sharing should be set out clearly and current and potential future risks associated with this explained to research participants.

Participants will be provided with information sheets and consent forms communicating what kind of data may be shared through this study and how it may be shared to ensure that restrictions and delays to

<p>data sharing will be limited. If issues arise after all, the research team will obtain advice from the Edinburgh Napier University Research Innovation Office (RIO).</p>	
<p>5.6 Regulation of responsibilities of users</p> <p>No external users of data are anticipated.</p>	
<p>6. Responsibilities</p> <p>The first point of contact for all queries in relation to this data is the PI, Larissa Engelmann. Who will also have overall responsibility for the production and maintenance of metadata. Quality assurance of obtaining the data, transcription and subsequent data analysis as well as data security will additionally be supported by the wider research team (Dr Andrew Wooff, Dr Elizabeth Aston, Dr Martha Caddell) and University IT support services. Preparation and upload of the data will be carried out by the team with the support of the University's Information Services staff.</p>	
<p>7. Relevant institutional, departmental or study policies on data sharing and data security</p>	
Policy	URL or Reference
Data Management Policy & Procedures	https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/research-innovation-office/Documents/Research%20Data%20Management%20Policy.pdf
Data Security Policy	https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/governance-compliance/governance/DataProtection/Pages/default.aspx
Data Sharing Policy	https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/governance-compliance/governance/DataProtection/Pages/DataSharing.aspx
Institutional Information Policy	https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/cit/infosecurity/Pages/InformationSecurityPolicy.aspx
<p>8. Author of this Data Management Plan (Name) and, if different to that of the Principal Investigator, their telephone & email contact details</p> <p>Larissa Engelmann</p> <p>████████████████████</p>	

Appendix N: Conferences and Seminar Presentations

September 2022

European Society of Criminology Conference, Malaga, Spain (Oral Presentation)

September 2020

European Society of Criminology Conference 2020, Online (Oral Presentation)

March 2020

6th International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH), Online (Oral Presentation)

February 2020

Policing and Society Conference, University of Akureyri, Iceland (Oral Presentation)

December 2019

Scottish International Policing Conference Postgraduate Symposium, Edinburgh, UK (Oral Presentation)

October 2019

5th International Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH), Edinburgh, UK (Oral presentations for the postgraduate research student event and the main Conference)

September 2019

European Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Ghent, Belgium (Oral Presentation)

December 2018

Scottish Institute for Policing Research Annual Conference, Postgraduate Symposium, Edinburgh, UK (Poster Presentation)

Appendix O: Publications associated with this Thesis

Engelmann, L. (2021) The value and role of learning for police officers and the police organisation in Scotland: Preliminary Findings, DOI: [10.13140/RG.2.2.34895.56484](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.34895.56484)

Engelmann, L. (2021) Police Scotland a learning organization? – Assessing the role and value of learning in Police Scotland: A mixed-methods study, SIPR Annual Report 2020/21, p.64-65.

	Author	(Working Title)	Journal	Submission	Progress
Journal Articles	Larissa Engelmann & Dr Katrina Morisson	<i>'Coming in, staying in, getting out and staying out – how to safeguard against up-tariffing and net-widening'</i>	Punishment & Society	April/May 2022	In preparation, early draft version
	Larissa Engelmann	<i>'We're pretty much doing the same thing we've always done': Police as learning organisations? A Scottish Case Study.</i>	The Learning Organisation	May 2022	Draft version (PhD chapter)
	Andy Tatnell & Larissa Engelmann	<i>'Police Education – a comparative perspective on police learning and resistance to higher education'</i>	Policing and Society	September 2022	In preparation
	Larissa Engelmann & Andy Tatnell	<i>'The role of the tutor constable – overlooked, undervalued and underutilised?'</i>	Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice	December 2022	In preparation
	Larissa Engelmann	<i>Multi-agency partnerships and the learning landscape: a critical analysis of the role, value and culture of learning within the law enforcement and public health arena.</i>	Policing and Society	August 2022	In preparation
Book Chapters	Larissa Engelmann & Dr Andrew Wooff	<i>'Re-assurance policing in rural areas'</i>	Encyclopaedia of rural crime	Published	Published December 2022

Appendices

	Dr Andrew Wooff & Larissa Engelmann	<i>'Anti-social behaviour in rural communities: Police-community relationships'</i>	Encyclopaedia of rural crime	Published	Published December 2022
	Larissa Engelmann & Andy Tatnell	<i>Researching police professionalisation in Scotland, Sweden and Finland</i>	<i>Introduction to Police Research, Lessons from Practice. 2nd edition.</i>	Peer reviewed and accepted	In press for next year 2023