

Case Study 2: The use of Storytelling within the Police: UoA 19

1. Summary of the impact

This case study is based on the use of storytelling research developed in Sunderland, to develop professional practice, management development, and interviewing approaches within the police. The research and subsequent impact developed from the convergence of three separate streams of work: The exploration of storytelling as a means to management and organisational development (the work of Reissner and Du Toit), use of storytelling as a research method (Sanders and Lawson) and a stream exploring investigative interviewing techniques. Application of the approaches developed at Sunderland within the police force regionally and nationally has led to evidenced impact at several levels: individual officers, force development and national policy on interviewing practice.

2. Underpinning research

A team at Sunderland comprising Reissner (Senior Lecturer, 2006 - 2010), Du Toit (Senior Lecturer, 2000 - 2012), Sanders (Professor, 1991 - present) and Lawson (Senior Lecturer, 2010 - present) have been undertaking research to explore and develop storytelling as an approach to management and organisational development. Storytelling is increasingly becoming recognised as an established, valid and powerful method of qualitative research. Initially the research built on previous work on organisational storytelling and defined new insights into storytelling at the workplace in the light of change and sense-making (Reissner, 2004). Organizational storytelling, in particular, is now often used to explore issues in the study of strategy and organizations (Du Toit, 2003).

The work led to a novel model of storytelling, informed by a social constructionist view of coaching, which conceptualises the coaching process as a series of storytelling activities. Empirical evidence of the role that coaching can play in team learning was gathered using a case study of a university development programme for frontline family support workers. Reissner (2008) explored stories of organisational change identifying three patterns of story: stories of “the good old days”; stories of deception, taboo and silence; and stories of influence.

This work was taken forward by Sanders into the University of Sunderland’s Professional Doctorate programme, where it is now used to encourage candidates to explore alternative views of their professional world underpinned with a model of professional identity. Combining storytelling with reflection (Bain, Cooper and Sanders, 2012) can be used as a powerful management development tool, providing experienced professionals with a means to explore their own professional identity and thus gain a deeper understanding of the personal and professional values which drive and enable their day to day practice. The Sunderland team have undertaken several studies to assess the use of storytelling in practice (for example as reported in Reissner, 2008), and have developed an approach which is now being used within several organisations, including the NHS and the Police Force.

Running concurrently with our initial work on storytelling was a parallel research track (Roberts and Horgan, 2010), led by Karl Roberts (Principal Lecturer, 2007 – 2009), exploring terrorism, methods of risk assessments relating to terrorism, and investigative interviewing techniques, particularly with reference to terrorist suspects. Roberts raised issues with the PEACE (Preparation; Engage; Account; Closure; Evaluate) model in 2009, and this was reported in the Bulletin of International Investigative Interviewing Research Group 1(1) ([http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/34884/2/iilrg_Bulletin_-_Volume_1,_Issue_1\[1\].pdf](http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/34884/2/iilrg_Bulletin_-_Volume_1,_Issue_1[1].pdf) Accessed 6 Nov 2013). The PEACE Model is a non-accusatory, information gathering approach to investigative interviewing that has been hailed internationally as best practice, and Roberts highlighted that the skills specified in the PEACE model are not always appropriate for dealing with terrorism suspects. His work led to collaborations with the police and established a long-standing collaboration with the NPIA (National Policing Improvement Authority) National Interview Adviser, who is an international authority on police interviewing, and acts as a consultant to forces investigating major crime and also supports them in formulating implementation plans around the National Interview Strategy. The NPIA National Interview Adviser is now a Visiting Professor with the University, and has been instrumental in the development of the PEACE model and in improving police interviewing techniques in the UK. He has co-authored: “Investigative Interviewing Explained” (Ord, Shaw, and Green, LexisNexis, 3rd Edition, 2011), which is recommended as the standard text on interviewing to police forces across the country. The

University has worked closely with him since 2009 to further develop national interview policy using projects undertaken by police officers to explore individual issues which he has recognised within national interview practice.

The University launched a management development programme for the police service in 2010, and a national conference 'Contemporary Issues within Investigative Interviewing' was held at the Sunderland Business School in 2010. The development programme has been specifically designed for the police. The programme provides police officers with the opportunity to study leadership and management theories in the context of work-based investigative practice. Lawson was appointed to be responsible for development and delivery of this programme, and having experienced the value of storytelling as part of the Professional Doctorate programme, introduced the approach as a development technique for the Police.

This case study demonstrates the use of the storytelling approach developed at Sunderland within the management development programme for police officers, presents the impact of our work on interviewing practice, and evidences the impact that the storytelling process has had beyond its initial application to interviewing, through the broader effect that it has had on the way that the police officers now approach their job.

3. References to the research

1. Reissner, S. C. (2004). "Learning by storytelling: Narratives in the study of work-based learning". *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 10 (2): 99-113. *This paper lays the foundation for the storytelling approaches developed by the team at Sunderland. The paper was subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication in the journal.*
2. Roberts, K., & Horgan, J. (2010). Risk assessment and the terrorist. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2(6). *This paper proposes an approach to risk assessment relating to terrorists. The paper was subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication in the journal.*
3. Du Toit, A. (2003) "Knowledge: a sense making process shared through narrative", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 7 (3): 27–37. *This paper explores how organisations can use narratives and storytelling to make sense of their environment and hence create knowledge. The paper was subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication in the journal.*
4. Reissner, S C. (2008) *Narratives of organisational change and learning*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. *This book presents a detailed study of the use of storytelling in three organisations, and how it can be used as a management tool to understand and develop change. This is a research monograph and was subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication.*
5. Bain R, Cooper B, and Sanders G (2012) "Breaking the Boundaries of Professional Knowing through Alternative Narratives" *Work-based Learning* 2(2). *This paper explores the use of storytelling within the context of a professional doctorate study in education. The paper was subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication in the journal.*

Reissner was awarded ESRC funding of £39,000 in 2008 for the work on storytelling. The ESRC project was entitled *Managerial storytelling in practice: Dynamics and implications*. The project was awarded while Reissner was at Sunderland and the University of Sunderland was the lead organisation, however it was transferred to Newcastle University when Reissner left Sunderland and took up a post at Newcastle.

4 Details of the impact

This case study focusses upon the impact of the practical use of the storytelling approaches developed at Sunderland within the police force of England and Wales. The impact is at an individual officer, police force and national level.

The police are currently undergoing the most radical leadership and management reforms of the last 70 years, and a critical spotlight is openly focused on the professional conduct and competence of its investigators. New questions are being asked in the training and education of these investigators. What does it mean to be an investigator? What assumptions underlie and define their professional identities and behaviours? And how can the dynamics of professional competence be developed and embedded in the identities and culture of the police service? The model of storytelling developed at Sunderland has been used to enable the police force to explore these issues.

The management development programme for the police was launched in 2010. To date over 60 officers have benefitted from it, drawn from the following forces: Northumbria, Durham, Cleveland, British Transport police (England and Wales), Cheshire, South Wales, Essex, and the Royal Military Police. The use of our storytelling research currently takes the form of a storytelling workshop, using the model developed at Sunderland (Lawson et al, 2013; Evidence 1). First the officers are asked to remember a crucial professional challenge that they have personally experienced in their career as an investigator, and tell the story to the group. The officers are then introduced to the underpinning theoretical concepts of professional identity, reflective practice, triple-loop learning and storytelling as an autoethnographic research method. In the second phase, they are asked to retell their story using a creative technique as an alternative form of communication, such as a drawing, painting, poetry, or lyrics to a song. In this abstract conceptualisation phase the officers are asked to think through and question their original stories, promoting a more critical understanding of their assumptions leading into, during and after the crucial challenge, and questioning the stories and the assumptions they support. The storytelling is thus being used as a tool to enable officers to explore, question, and develop their own practice. The officers are also beginning to use some of the techniques of storytelling within their own work context, and in some cases as an alternative approach to investigative interviewing.

Impact on individual officers: The impact discussed here is on individual officers, and also has 'secondary reach' i.e. the officers have taken on board the learning and are now using it with new audiences, thus broadening the reach and impact of the research.

An Officer within Northumbria Police (Evidence 2) has developed (early 2013) the storytelling model a stage further and is using it in a major road safety project for Northumbria Police involving schools in the region. This is a high profile arts based project which uses the model of storytelling in a project with six schools in the North East of England. She has secured support for the project from the national road safety programme, BRAKE, and the Sage Gateshead. The project involves 60 students. The students are developing their own stories relating to road safety, and preparing presentations of these stories to present at a regional event, held at the Sage Gateshead, to promote road safety. The Officer states: "The aim of the road safety project is to challenge the students assumptions and behaviour, through the disorientating dilemma of their own characters life changing experience following the collision. The decisions made by their character influence the outcome, and ultimately change their lives. The intention is to give the students an insight into how their decision making can influence their own future in high risk situations, and to prevent them from making the same decisions as the characters in the story."

A Detective Inspector in the North East (Evidence 3) saw the potential for using the storytelling techniques developed by the Sunderland team within his own work practices. He is applying storytelling in the work he does for the prison service in the North East (during 2012/13). He uses the techniques developed at Sunderland with young offenders in attendance centres, with each playing different roles in the re-enactment of a crime scenario. One offender will play the role of the perpetrator, while another plays the role of the victim. Another young offender might play the role of a family member of the victim. The offenders use the storytelling approach to relate the story of the crime, as they see it from their own perspective. The offenders then reflect on the stories, and discuss how their actions impact upon others. The Detective Inspector states: "by the use of storytelling as a reflective practice, this has identified to many young offenders the realisation of how their actions can affect others and therefore their own lives."

Impact at police force level: This case study is particularly focussed upon a professional leadership module within a management development programme, which asks participants to

reflectively explore crucial experiences that they have found challenging in the management of investigations. They use storytelling as a research method to engage and explore issues of practice and identity. In so doing the police officers develop a deep understanding of the practical issues of managing and leading investigations with a view to improving current practice. Many of the police students express concern that the majority of their investigative problem solving skills have been passed down from more experienced detectives who simply attempt to replay the successful actions of the past, without questioning the thinking strategies behind those actions. The exploration of alternative narratives and the use of images, or poetry etc. can provoke a change in habitual thought patterns and aid the questioning and testing of assumptions. We have collected qualitative evidence from officers which demonstrates that the approach is resulting in a change of practice by the individual officer and that these officers are also influencing officers within their force to change practice. This work has been presented at an international conference in a joint paper with the NPIA National Interview Adviser (Evidence 1), and has received recent (July 2013) international interest with a Police force in New Zealand discussing taking up the concepts in their practice, and colleagues from the Department of Entrepreneurship Education, Universität Kassel, using the techniques in management development programmes (Evidence 4).

Impact on policy: A national conference 'Contemporary Issues within Investigative Interviewing' was held at the Sunderland Business School in 2010 (Evidence 5). The conference attracted delegates from police forces travelling from all parts of England, and was led by the NPIA National Interview Adviser (Evidence 6). The NPIA National Interview Adviser has collaborated with the Sunderland team to sponsor projects which have explored known issues with the PEACE model and investigative interviewing. These include a research project undertaken by a police officer which redefined national British Transport Police training programmes on interviewing. The officer examined the tier one interview training within British Transport Police and reviewed the component parts that make up the various stages of that training. Another officer has worked with Sunderland staff to research methods of recognising deceit in interview. This research has shown that interviewing resources need to be flexible and examine physiological responses such as micro facial expressions, body language, verbal contents, voice, and verbal style. This work is beginning to feed into national policy through the Visiting Professor's national role as NPIA National Interview Adviser.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1 Ron Lawson, Gary Shaw, Gail Sanders, Peter Smith, The use of storytelling as a research method: the case of the Police Service of England and Wales, paper presented at ECRM13, 12th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies, University of Minho, Guimaraes, Portugal, 4-5 July 2013. This paper details the approach taken, and the impact it is having, in the form of change of practice, on individual officers and their forces.

2 Contact at Northumbria Police: contact details can be provided. Contact details can be provided to corroborate the use of our storytelling techniques in a road safety project with young people.

3 Detective Inspector, Major Crime Team, Wallsend. Contact details can be provided to corroborate the use of our storytelling techniques with young offenders.

4 email communication with police projects in New Zealand and Germany. These emails can be provided, and corroborate the wider reach of impact of our work.

5 Conference 'Contemporary Issues within Investigative Interviewing' held at Sunderland in 2010

<http://www.dstics.co.uk/investigatorNov2009.pdf>

http://www.the-investigator.co.uk/files/January_2010_Issue.pdf

These links are provided to demonstrate the deep relationship with the police, and the standing of Sunderland as a centre for discussing and developing issues related to investigate interviewing.

6 NPIA National Interview Adviser. Contact details can be provided

The NPIA National Interview Adviser is now a Visiting Professor at the University and has been awarded a higher doctorate, as reported in the Sunderland Echo 2009

<http://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/local/all-news/honour-for-the-police-s-chief-inquisitor-1-1067346>