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## **EXPLORING THE POLICING - ENTREPRENEURSHIP NEXUS**

### **ABSTRACT**

Although the term 'Entrepreneurial Policing' (EP) is in vogue it remains little more than meaningless rhetoric because traditionally, the term entrepreneur itself has not been part of the pragmatic lexicon of Policing. Indeed, the term is little more than a 'buzz word' by those with only a fleeting understanding of entrepreneurship theory *per se*. Consequentially, the power of entrepreneurship to act as an organisational change agent remains untapped. Indeed, at present there is no policing – entrepreneurship nexus to speak of. This is surprising given the fluid nature of policing and the pragmatism of its multi-faceted work force. Although the mental maps of entrepreneurship and policing seldom converge criminologists such as Dick Hobbs (Hobbs 1988, 1991 and 1996) and Robin Fletcher (Fletcher, 2006) have begun to chart this neglected area of research. Hobbs appreciated the entrepreneurial role played by the 'Detective' whilst Fletcher that of the 'Thief Taker' and 'Collator'. These three policing genres acted as entrepreneurs in a policing system where information was traded for results. This briefing paper explores the policing – entrepreneurship nexus, discussing how aspects of entrepreneurship theory such as intrapreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, team entrepreneurship, social capital and networking can be applied in a practical context to transform Policing practices. Entrepreneurship theory properly applied to Policing problems has a role to play in combating crime for those prepared to take the risk! This briefing aims to illustrate how entrepreneurship theory and entrepreneurial practices can be used in a practical context to the benefit of the Police Service.

### **WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?**

Entrepreneurship is a complex behavioural concept and cognitive human behaviour. Even scholars of entrepreneurship have yet to agree an 'all encompassing definition' of what it is and what it entails. This complexity and lack of definition need not be a problem to practical, pragmatic people. Entrepreneurship is often erroneously associated with business. Although most of what we have come to associate with the practice of entrepreneurship does relate to those who practice it in a business environment – entrepreneurship theory can be related to all facets of life making it possible to talk about entrepreneurial criminals and entrepreneurial police officers. Entrepreneurship is the practice of 'Taking between'. At a simple level it is perhaps best defined as being 'the undertaking of a risky venture'. Anderson (1995) defines entrepreneurship as "*The creation and extraction of value from an environment*". This definition takes the practice of entrepreneurship out of the domain of business. In this context it is about scanning one's environment and by dint of self-efficacy and persistence creating something new of value. In a Policing context this may entail creating a new process or policing practice, or perhaps inventing a new product or initiating a new innovative process. Equally it could relate to enacting old practices in a different way. Value need not be monetary. Instead it may entail reducing crime or increasing efficiency. It does involve the risk of failure and necessitates being different. But how different can one be in a bureaucracy?

### **ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND POLICING?**

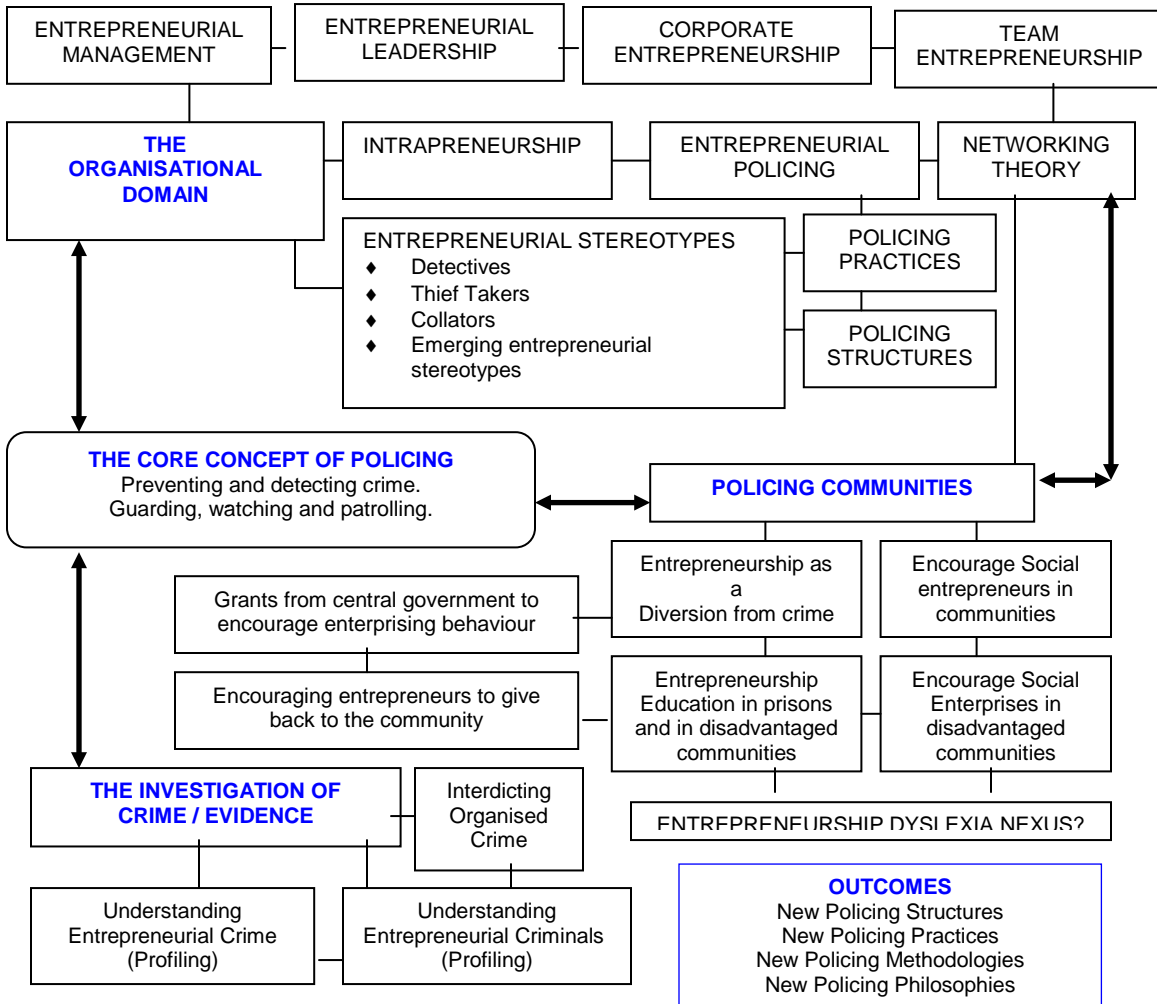
Entrepreneurship pervades everyday life as a "Life theme" (Bolton and Thomson, 2000). The study of entrepreneurship is a specialised area of research and few police scholars or practitioners have the necessary knowledge and expertise to tap into its potential. Entrepreneurship theory can be used in a contemporary Policing environment albeit the subject is not on the mental map of most police officers. This briefing aims to change that.

### **AREAS OF THEORETICAL OVERLAP**

Existing theories of crime and entrepreneurship overlap at many points and so do those of policing. This briefing covers some areas where entrepreneurship impinges upon policing. These roughly correspond to the thematic research groups set up by Sipr, namely 1) Organisational; 2) Investigation of Crime / Evidence; and 3) Communities. These areas of overlap will be expanded upon by recourse to the concept of mental mapping (Gould and White, 1972).

## A MENTAL MAP OF THE POLICING ENTREPRENEURSHIP NEXUS

It is only possible to discuss some of the areas of theoretical overlap discussed in the map.



In relation to the area of Policing Organization the following concepts are of interest.

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS MANAGEMENT

Casson (1982: 355) is an advocate of “Managerial Entrepreneurship”. The link between entrepreneurship and management is a fruitful field of inquiry in relation to Policing. Although entrepreneurship is not a management technique, paradoxically it is a management style. This is important because management (supervision) is central to contemporary Policing activity. Also, to succeed, an entrepreneur must possess managerial skills and the art of superintendence. Minkes (1987: 25) argues that because management is concerned with change, it possesses entrepreneurial aspects. Johannisson (2000: 368) stresses that management thrives on structure, whilst entrepreneurship thrives on process, ambiguity and action. This can be problematic in terms of the inherent Police attitude towards entrepreneurship because its deliberate introduction unleashes forces of instability / disorder, detrimental to managerial ethos, dictating that some practitioners of management may develop an in-built mistrust of entrepreneurs, or vice versa. Also, Policing structures depend on hierarchical management structures and styles. According to Hjorth (2001: 202) managers represent order, whereas entrepreneurs represent disorder and the peripheral. According to Casson (1982) typical entrepreneurs are more likely to be associated with nascence than with established orders. Entrepreneurial managers view entrepreneurship as a set of recognisable behaviours, approaches and processes that can be defined, analysed,

nurtured and developed. Drucker (1985: 24-6) defines it as “systematic, purposeful, managed entrepreneurship”. McGrath & MacMillan (2000: 24) identified common features of entrepreneurship adopted by managers as entrepreneurial practices and suggest that skills, at which many entrepreneurs excel, can be learned as management practices. This is significant because entrepreneurial Policing practices can be taught.

### **CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Corporations are viewed as the antithesis of all things entrepreneurial. However corporate entrepreneurship is its practice within and between corporations at a higher level and different dynamic, occurring in a matured business environment. Police Forces are comfortable with the corporate ethos but unlike true corporations are not free to hire and fire entrepreneurial talent in senior management positions. They therefore do not benefit from the necessary “exchange of ideology between spheres” (Olsson, 2002: 145). However, Hisrich & Peters (1992: 534) sum up the guiding principle of corporate culture as *“follow instructions given, do not make any mistakes, do not fail, do not take the initiative, but wait for instructions, stay within your turf, and protect your backside. This restrictive environment is of course not conducive to creativity, flexibility, independence, and risk taking - the jargon of intrapreneurs”*. Likewise, Kirby (2002: 302) argues *“large organisations often see enterprising individuals as loners (not team players), eccentrics, interested in pet projects, cynics, rebels, free spirits, responsible for sloppy work”*. Donald & Goldsby (2004) highlights that viewing corporate entrepreneurs as visionaries who do not follow the status quo can be misleading because corporate entrepreneurs are often forced to walk a fine line between clever resourcefulness and rule breaking in the pursuit of entrepreneurial activity.

### **TEAM ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Entrepreneurial teams can be very effective by creating small autonomous groups within an organization. Bennis (1966) referred to these as adhocracies. By using the entrepreneurial spirit latent in its members of staff, bureaucracies benefit. Stephenson (1995: 35-52) carried out research into the formation of “Entrepreneurial Groups“, which harness the synergy between entrepreneurial collective action and bureaucracy and concluded these groups work because they push against accepted practices and struggle for legitimacy. However, when legitimised within an organization they lose entrepreneurial drive. The Police are adept at team working.

### **INTRAPRENEURSHIP**

The notion of intrapreneurship has considerable relevance to contemporary policing practices. It is the practice of entrepreneurship within organizations (Pinochet, 1985) and an intrapreneur is an enterprising person, working in a company, public body, or organization utilising entrepreneurial practices or management techniques to succeed. Its practice can be difficult in corporations whose structures stifle and prevent innovation and change.

### **ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP**

Leadership is a function associated with entrepreneurship (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000: 301). According to Casson (2000: 10) we are socially programmed to exalt leaders and entrepreneurs gain power and legitimacy from twin levels of social approval – from being a leader and an entrepreneur. For Casson (2000: 8) the supply of potential leaders is a function of demography dictated by the number of people of a suitable age, experience, education and stature. This is particularly true in relation to the Policing where being seen to differ can be detrimental to one’s career. However, entrepreneurs as leaders emerge, whereas the bureaucratic leader is appointed. Entrepreneurial leadership is associated with charisma and communicational ability.

### **ENTREPRENEURIAL POLICING (EP)**

At a practical policing level EP involves refusing to accept the status quo of organisational performances and capabilities. It involves making better use of available time and resources. It necessitates empowering employees at all levels to take ownership of the problems that beset

communities. This requires partnership working. It can also involve aligning existing policing practices such as zero tolerance policing, problem solving policing, action plans, directed patrolling, and the use of anti social behaviour legislation with community policing. However, it must be grown from ground level and cannot be imposed from above. It is about implementing a new take on old problems such as setting up persistent offender programmes. It is a mindset that can achieve results. EP as manifested in disadvantaged communities can take many forms – e.g.

- Entrepreneurship can be used as a diversion out of crime. There is a link between entrepreneurship, dyslexia and crime which could be exploited by testing for dyslexia and communicational deficiencies at an early age. Dyslexic children could be encouraged towards creativity and away from crime thus breaking the cycle of criminal families.
- Much more could be done to encourage Social Entrepreneurship in our communities by helping people volunteer to set up Social Enterprises or to tackle the root causes of crime in our communities by becoming Entrepreneurial Mentor Figures.
- Motivational programmes of Entrepreneurial Education should be encouraged.

In Policing terms it requires enlightened Chief Constables to take the lead.

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