



Exploration on What Constitutes an Effective General Police Detective in South Africa

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to contribute to the knowledge on police detectives' work practices, and account on how police general detectives view their performance and their understanding regarding what skills needed to handle variety of general cases in their line of duty. The research question that directed this study is what constitutes an effective general police detective? To address this question, this study followed a qualitative ethnographic methodology with fifteen (15) general detectives. Social constructivism, utilising a purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for the nature of this study. The results produced four (4) themes that indicate that detectives' sensemaking of casework took place through two (2) principal practices: a concluding practice and a supporting practice. Furthermore, the findings show that detectives' work is highly social and procedural. This suggests that detectives' work practice is of a social nature and that contacts between general investigators or detectives are important to take into account in the organisation of an investigative department.

Keywords: *Detective; Police; Performance; Skills*

Introduction

One of the most important functions of law enforcement is the investigation and resolution of crimes. In the last two (2) decades, South African Police Service (SAPS) has seen a great deal of advancement and innovation in criminal investigations, starting with the standardisation and automation fingerprint identification system (AFIS). Cases that had to wait almost between three (3) to four (4) months before a general detective would know, if the perpetrator has previous convictions, in a case where the identity is concealed, AFIS provided with a knee jack to the relief of the criminal justice system (CJS) and the general detectives alike. The advent of the AFIS shortened the turnaround time of cases and thus, more cases could be brought to the court of law, with necessary information regarding the background of the perpetrator. These investigations technologies, which informed the outcome of cases, act as catalysts as processing of cases brought improvements in forensic investigation to identify suspects more accurately and quickly. Crime technicians as well as analysts have also become an important part of investigations, assisting with searching for individuals, gathering clues, and generating patterns of

similarities between cases. The above, are small part of a big complex social system that contribute to the police detective performance. This study deliberately excludes the category of specialised detectives. Since in the South African situation, the public have contact with this large group of police officers first, and cases may or may not be referred to specialised units once handled by general detectives (Mofokeng & de Vries, 2012). For simplicity, the term “police detectives” or “general detectives” will be used interchangeably when referring to the general detectives working at local police stations in the nine (9) provinces of South Africa.

This article is an ethnographic study of the SAPS general detectives handling general crime investigation cases. This study advances the knowledge of general detective work and crime investigation work practices by showing how detectives collectively, view their performance, and thus, provide with understanding regarding what constitute an effective detective, and what skills essential towards performance of their day-to-day activities. In this article, the research question that directed this study: what constitutes an effective general detective? The purpose of this article is therefore to analyse the understanding of the general detectives on how they perceive what constitute an effective detective, and what essential skills needed to perform their tasks. To do this, this study followed an ethnography approach of one Community Service Centre (formerly known as a police station) in the SAPS, Gauteng Province.

Literature Review

Performance of Police Detectives

Stevenson (2020:1) posits that the performance of police detectives in successfully disrupting and solving crime is fundamental to the safety and security of communities globally. In order to perform optimally, police detectives must acquire extensive criminal legal knowledge and a diverse inventory of policing skills, as they progress from a novice to an expert practitioner. In modern times, the investigative policing environment is becoming more complex, leading to increased demands on the development of capability among police detectives. The bottom line is little is known whether specific investigative skills influence crime clearances and in turn, crime rates. However, understanding what causes trends of case clearances in police agencies is important, and not only because a significant amount of police resources is spent on investigations. Investigations have symbolic and operational significance in both law enforcement circles and society.

On 13 February 2020, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Cyril Ramaphosa on his State of the Nation Address (SONA), surprised many viewers inclusive of academia, when he posits the prospects of establishing the new Detection University. This was despite that there are many public universities which some offer comprehensive policing qualifications, inclusive of crime investigation curriculum. The SAPS has several in-service trainings earmarked for the general detectives. Amidst all these, researchers, policy makers and the public are questioning the competency, performance of the police detectives, more especially, those of the general detectives (Mofokeng, 2012, 2015, 2020; Mofokeng & de Vries, 2012, 2016; Mokwena, Motseki & Dube, 2020). Mokwena *et al.* (2020) posit that criminal investigators within the SAPS are undermined and discredited by society in all spheres of policing sectors. The above statement is supported by Tong and O’Neil (2019), that rarely are the successes of criminal investigation celebrated in politics or in the media. At the same time, perceived failure can result in scathing criticism. The general detectives are shrouded in controversy and often called useless, incompetent and illiterate. SAPS criminal investigators have come under lot of pressure and scrutiny by the media and the public when suspects get bail in a court of law. Thus, possible interventions came in shapes and sizes as early as 2012 with an attempt to mitigate the perceived poor

performance of the police detectives such as the Detective Dialogue: SAPS Detective Service held on 05 September 2012.

This was an attempt to demystify the role of police detective, career pathing, training, modernisation of the services, institutional and equipment challenges, and their role in gender-based violence and femicide (GBV & F), women-and child-centred related crimes, as well as the challenges in the Forensic Services Laboratories. Overall challenges to detective services that were highlighted as part of the challenges confronting the police detectives included language barriers, lack of interpreters, high degree of corruption, inadequate expertise and supervision and inadequate resources (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2012). The list goes on highlighting the legion of challenges inhibiting the performance of the police detectives in South. The Detective Dialogue: SAPS Detective Service was convened with the hope of finding, not necessarily ‘a silver bullet’, but holistic and lasting solutions to transform the Detective Service from mediocrity towards professionalism. Many interventions such as Parliamentary Monitoring Group, was unable to operationalise what was deliberated upon at the Detective Dialogue. Rather, it was against this backdrop that President Cyril Ramaphosa’s SONA on 13 February suggests the possibility of Detection University. Years back, similar narratives - though directed at the SAPS Training College, Paarl by the then Minister of Police, Honourable Nathi Mthethwa, made such declarations about a ‘police university’.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is currently (2021/2022) conducting a feasibility study looking on the prospects of establishing two (2) new universities in the country. The University of Science and Innovation (USI) as well as a new Crime Detection University (CDU). These two (2) will be added to already more than adequate HEIs, Gauteng Province, raising the number from five (5) to seven (7) public universities in one province. The first will be built in the City of Ekurhuleni, East Rand region of Gauteng and the second will be built in northern Gauteng in Hammanskraal. The author of this manuscript, made submission at the DHET Monitoring Group, and submitted whether the President was correctly, advised on the prospects of a CDU. Prior research indicates that there is plethora of evidence that points differently. The establishment of the CDU will complicate what is already, a complex social system that does not need quick fixes. The above statement is supported by Burger and Mbanye (2020) that President’s SONA on 13 February suggests that the President was badly informed about the state of policing in South Africa.

Research Objectives

In order to have an understanding of the general detectives on how they perceive what constitute an effective detective, and what essential skills needed to perform their tasks, the following objectives guided this study:

- to determine how do general investigators perceive their role;
- to identify the skills for being an effective detective; and
- to suggest possible recommendations based on the research findings.

Material and Methods

The researcher used a qualitative descriptive study to obtain the evidence that addressed the research questions of this study. The researcher used triangulation method in this current study. Thus, face-to-face interviews were used to collect data with twenty (20) participants at Eersterust policing area. The analysis herein is built on twenty (20) interviews with general detectives within the aforementioned study area. The age ranged between 27 & 49 years; thirteen (13) were males and seven (7) were females.

The detectives were generally moderately experienced with time served in the SAPS ranging between 10 to 31 years and time served in the detective branch ranging from 4 to 25 years. The participants were from a mixture of a variety of roles including specialist (child protection, sex crime, fraud, homicide and organised crime; N=15), general (N=5). The majority of the sample were solely detectives (N=15), and the remaining, who had all previously worked as detectives, (N=5). Participants were purposefully selected as they were the only population available in the area of research. Following expert recommendations regarding sample size and data saturation within heterogeneous populations such as ours (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2014), the researcher considered that twenty participants, would be adequate for this study. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and the files transferred to a personal computer (PC) for transcription. When transcribing the interviews, participants' names were replaced with code numbers. Participants for both pilot and the big study were assigned the codes P001_F, P017_M, P0018_F and P0019_M. "M" indicates males and "F" stands for female.

Results and Discussions

The core skills that were identified for a detective to perform effectively in their role were organised into four (4) themes namely; (1) the role of the detective; (2) an investigative ability; (3) key skills required regarding the investigative ability and; (4) key skills required regarding knowledge level, which these are discussed below.

Theme 1 - The Role of the Detective

When asked how general investigators perceive their role, it emerged that all the participants concurred that objectives of criminal investigation have something to do with identifying the suspect; collecting evidence; obtaining statements; tracing a suspect; effecting an arrest and preparing the docket for the court process. The participants understood what the objectives of investigation are and that these objectives play an important role in the successful prosecution and/or conviction of a suspect. Some said:

“Through the process of investigation, which begins when, a crime is reported and end after a suspect has been convicted or discharged by a court of law. Their task requires cooperation between various stakeholders such as prosecutors, complaints and investigatory teams” P005_M.

“Their role is to ensure preliminary investigations are conducted that includes receiving non case dockets from CSC to crime office and interview complaints. All leads will then be followed up” P007_F.

“Investigators play a very important role in the justice system as they assist in prosecuting the perpetrators of crime through well investigated case. They are very important role players. They have the ability to lead and the capacity to be a leader” P008_F.

It was encouraging to observe that all the participants had a clear understanding of the role of an investigator. In order to piece together the evidence and witness statements obtained during an investigation, the detectives are expected to be good in analysing the problem. This would include amongst others, the ability to interview victims, witnesses and suspected persons. Criminal investigation is not just a set of task skills, it is equally a set of thinking skills. To become an effective investigator, these skills need to be consciously understood and developed to the point where they are deliberately engaged to work through the problem-solving process that is criminal investigation. Trained thinking and response can be difficult to adapt into our personal repertoires because we are all conditioned to be much less formal and less evidence driven in our everyday thinking. Still, as human beings, we are all born investigators of sorts (Gehl, & Plecas, 2016; Mofokeng & Mathosa, 2019). In many cases, witness

statements will be contradictory, so the investigator must use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to figure out what really happened in a case (Mofokeng, 2020).

Critical thinking skills also allow the investigator to look past the obvious solutions and analyse evidence objectively. In addition to a critical thinking skill needed, it is essential that detectives should be able to write clearly and concisely, where elements of the crime highlighted. The ability to write good and complete statements will go a long way ensuring that public prosecutors would be able to ensure conviction in the court. Sheptycki (2017) and Mokwena *et al.* (2020) posit that investigator's responsibilities include determining if a crime was committed and interviewing victims and witnesses. Mofokeng and de Vries (2012) posit that overall, detectives and prosecutors with their mixture of independence and dependence, their roles as teammates, and their mutual suspicion share a complicated relationship. Simply put, public prosecutors depend on general detectives to investigate and submit a case docket with sufficient evidence and witnesses that are crucial to the successful prosecution of their cases, and given the existing tensions that often characterises the relationships between them, both parties benefit from this mutualism, thus, public prosecutors need to work with the police on an on-going basis.

Theme 2 - An Investigative Ability

When asked what makes an effective investigator, it emerged that that the majority of the participants concurred that investigators must know the type of criminal they are dealing with, should work hand in hand with the informers or members of the community and, should first take all important information before they can send the dockets to court for prosecution. Some said:

“Must be a good communicator and have strong critical thinking skill. Ability to collect, always and compile information gathered from an investigation. A good knowledge and understanding of legal framework and time management” P013_M.

“Investigators must be honest, ethical and law-abiding persons. They should have a strong sense of integrity [sic] . . . Possess high level of communication, interview as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills in order to piece together evidence obtained during investigation” P015_F.

The responses by the participants indicated that the SAPS is trying to be effective at keeping people safe and reducing crime. Significant to these possible outcomes, the investigator must always be ready to explain their thinking and actions to the court. The responses are encouraging as detectives try to keep up this good standard of service. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice process, which means increasing the chances of successful investigation, prosecution and punishment of crime goes a long way ensuring that, citizen have confidence in the criminal justice system. Therefore, based on the responses, participants were of the view that detectives perform beyond their call of duty despite confronted with considerable increase in demand in important areas of policing, such as increased crime and huge workload. For an investigator speaking to the court, this process needs to be clear and validated through the articulation of evidence-based thinking and legally justifiable action. Thinking must illustrate an evidence-based path to forming reasonable grounds for belief and subsequent action. Thinking must also demonstrate consideration of the statutory law and case law relevant to the matter being investigated.

Mofokeng and de Vries (2012) and Becker and Dutelle (2013) posit that prosecutors prosecute cases in which they have confidence and that this confidence is based on the quantity and quality of evidence, the quality of documentation supporting an investigation and the ability of investigative witnesses to communicate from the witness stand. Kyprianou (2010:198) also posits that, during the process of investigation, prosecutors provide extensive legal advice to the police, usually when the police seek this advice, but sometimes because the law officers themselves judge that the sensitivity of a case requires them to intervene. The above statement by Kyprianou (2010), is applicable to specialised units

not necessarily relating to general detectives. Mofokeng and de Vries (2012) posit that over the years there seems to be challenges in the relationship between prosecutors and detectives especially at lower courts. The responses below indicated that the SAPS, at the time this study was conducted, was confronted with a severe shortage of skilled detectives. This is a given fact. A shortage of skilled investigators affects the quality of the investigation and victim care, which confirm the findings of previous research (Mokwena et al., 2020; Mofokeng, 2015; Mofokeng & de Vries, 2016). The general detectives and public prosecutors are supposed to be partners in the fight against crime regardless of their formal autonomy.

Improved efforts are required in pursuit of justice that is, the preparation of case dockets, investigation of crime, gathering of evidence, presentation of evidence, adherence to criminal procedure and the improve relations between detectives and prosecutors. From the findings, there were concerns that some detectives and prosecutors are inadequately experienced and are not open enough to accept advice and assistance from each other. It would seem as if their egos are trumping the pursuit of justice. There is no mutual respect for each other's profession (Mofokeng & de Vries, 2012). For this study, the participants were of the view that the SAPS' general detectives not adequately utilise critical thinking skills during investigation process, which somehow, affect the outcomes of the investigations. The findings of the current study confirm those by Mofokeng (2020), that a critical thinking process within the Detective Service is a borrowed concept. For current study, some of the participants highlighted what has already been established from previous research (Mofokeng & de Vries, 2012, 2016), that their workload is too high and thus affect their ability to pay attention to details. The participants also highlighted that though there was an uplifted moratorium on recruitment of detectives who left the Service, the investigative capacity still remain the problem. Some of the participants said:

“ . . . General detectives should develop several skills and qualities to become an effective investigator and solve cases. During an investigation, one is expected to gather information from physical evidence, interview witnesses as well as suspects and the ability to analyse the evidence to solve the crime . . . ” P014_M.

“ . . . There is such a challenge with the retention of experienced detectives due to many organisational dynamics . . . lack of support from commanders to mentor the inexperienced also added to the lack of performance for the SAPS . . . ” P001_F.

“ . . . The issue affecting the standards of investigation is the quality of supervision. Poor or inconsistent supervision also contribute to the overall quality of the investigation. Too many cases do not make the progress they should. If the Detective Commanders are adequately trained to mentor young and inexperienced detectives, perhaps the lack of performance would be alleviated . . . ” P011_M.

“ . . . There has been restructuring within the SAPS for many years, yet the results thereof are yet to be realised. Therefore, restructuring amongst other things, should ensure that the allocation of adequate human and physical resources be considered. There is surely a need to increase the number of detectives, and a better support for those training to be detectives . . . ” P009_F.

“ . . . There is a need for the SAPS Top Management to build capacity and address the reasons why experienced detectives do not want to remain in the Service until they reach retirement age . . . ” P005_M.

The above responses pointed out that good supervision and mentoring are some of the essential support bases needed by the detectives. The participants were of the view that good supervision from the detective commanders was a great need. Allocation of resources were viewed as the enabling tool in the form of human and physical resources such as digital devices, such as smartphones, tablets and network-

connected computers would go a long way in developing investigators' skills and supports their efforts to make the SAPS improve on service delivery.

The evaluation of detectives' development also (re)confirms the value of the improved learning outcomes of curriculum coupled with mentorship that include problem solving, creativity, collaboration, communication, empathy, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking, to name several. This recognition has fuelled the emphasis from not merely establishment of a CDU as envisaged, based on the SONA and subsequent needs analysis by the DHET, but with attention to redesigning a general and specialised curricula with many universities' faculties involvement from sciences, mathematics, humanities and social sciences, towards shaping an 'ideal police detective'. For Tong and O'Neill (2019), training, education and development does need time to evolve with the benefit of research and evaluation just like any type of operational police activity. Research seldom focuses on the transition from learning to practice.

For the futuristic police detective, there should be a provision for the beneficiaries of the curricula, to be allowed or it would benefit the SAPS to incorporate opportunities for detectives to design their own curriculum of at least two (2) different fields of study in consultation with a transdisciplinary group of faculty and features inquiry-based learning with a real-world investigation component (Shapiro, 2017). The intention is in part to "cultivate dispositions related to creative problem solving" but with the recognition that "the prospective career path for detectives is unknown," the value lies in the intended ability of detectives to be able to generate interconnections within and across diverse disciplines and tolerate ambiguity. Researchers and policy makers made an attempt to diagnose what works and what seems not to be working (Sanders & Sheptycki, 2017). No effort yet, has been pursued to test the above approach yet. Retired detectives can point a way forward.

Theme 3 - Most Important or Key Skills Required Regarding the Investigative Ability

It emerged that the majority of participants indicated that the most important or key skill required for an effective detective was the ability to communicate. Communication was overwhelming the most frequently cited skill by the participants, followed by decision-making skills. Opposites denoting less effective communication included not personable, inarticulate, no empathy, not caring, judgemental and standoffish.

"Engaging with the public, informers, colleagues, victims, witnesses and suspects is a vital component of being an effective detective. Communication skill is therefore, one, which has often proven to yields successful conviction and build public confidence with the public. As methods of communication change, detectives also need to improve their verbal and non-verbal communication skills and improve on how they engage and communicate with the public" P005_M.

"It is important that the detectives learn how to connect with the public through various platforms and know how to communicate effectively as well, including social media. The youth are on these platforms and the way to get their attention as well as corporation in sharing crime related incidents, it is essential to speak their language. Therefore, the demands brought by change are that detectives should not only know how to print the details of the case from a standalone computer, but also the know how in embracing social media, such as but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. It is important for the SAPS to have coherent strategies for the use social media where local detectives will be able to reach out to those marginalised communities" P020_F.

From the responses above, it was clear that from the moment a member of the public contacts the police, officers and staff must reassure and support victims as well as keeping them safe and collecting

evidence. That requires effective communication. This makes it more likely that police will solve the crime and bring the offender to justice. Due to a lack of resources, such as insufficient vehicles to attend to the victims or provide feedback, the SAPS or local police station should be able to use different techniques to deal with increasing levels of demand with fewer resources. One example is phone investigation. In cases where there are few investigative opportunities and it is unlikely the detective will catch the offender, making enquiries and updating the victim by phone can be a practical way to complete an investigation. Currently at Eersterust policing area, not all detectives use this method. But it has the potential to give victims of crime a prompt and efficient service. The concern, if forces use it inappropriately, is that they will miss opportunities to arrest offenders and to keep vulnerable victims safe. It is very important that phone investigations are properly allocated, well supervised and only used in appropriate cases. The ability to close an investigation when there are evidential difficulties and the victim does not support police action, even if they know who the perpetrator is. It is important for detectives to understand why victims might not want to pursue prosecutions. There may be good reasons, particularly if they feel intimidated.

The responses above suggested that the detective role is complex and challenging, and requires a combination of diverse skills. The skills identified are sometimes desirable for a detective to be personable and approachable as well as methodical and attentive to detail. It is likely to be challenging to find or develop this array of skills in one individual. There is so much hype on the advancement of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) within which will fundamentally alter the way police work (Schwab, 2016). For the general detectives, it will take another decade to catch-up with the rest of the specialised detectives, for the first-line detective commanders and general detectives to embrace the 4IR. The futurists' laundry lists of desirable skills for the 21st century is varied. The World Economic Forum (WEF), as part of their list of the sixteen (16) skills, included six (6) foundational literacies (literacy, numeracy, scientific literacy, financial literacy, cultural and civic literacy, and literacy in information and communication technology); four (4) competencies (collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking/problem solving), and six (6) character traits or aptitudes (curiosity, initiative, perseverance, adaptability, leadership, and social and cultural awareness) (Soffel, 2016).

These skills, are without doubt also essential for a general detective to function in a way, the Detective Service can transform into an entity that will bring credibility and improved trust to the public. The advancement of criminal challenges brought so much demand on the SAPS general detectives, to bring innovative investigative ability. Many general detectives, also to a large extent, still depend on retrieving evidence from digital devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers if prosecutions are to succeed. The backlogs of general cases as well as those involving forensic evidence, keep on increasing and this might have unintended consequences on the trust level by the public. One participant said effective detectives should be good communicators and have strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

All participants mentioned communication at some stage during the interview and it was the most frequently cited skill category with each of the three (3) interview methods used. This finding is consistent with other studies which have also found communication is essential to effectiveness (Tong & O'Neill, 2019). Detectives' description of communication, as the flexibility to talk to anyone, anywhere, at any time and for any purpose, fits with Hobb's (1988) notion of the entrepreneurial nature of detective work. The types of communication interactions described by detectives were diverse, and often emotional and high-stake. Perhaps like few other jobs, detective work demands that the individual communicates with such a variety of people and in complex and varied circumstances. For example, a detective may be required to take an initial complaint from a member of the public, and interview victims, witnesses, and suspects related to the same case (Mokwena *et al*, 2020). Mofokeng (2015) and Mofokeng and de Vries (2012, 2016) highlight the importance of collaboration, teamwork, collaboration and mentorship within the CJS for all role players, to communicate with others in the justice system such as fellow detectives,

uniformed officers, their supervisors, medical professionals, defence and prosecution lawyers, judges and public prosecutors. Therefore, the outcome of each interaction also varies, for instance, interviewing a victim may range from communicating with someone who is traumatised but forthcoming with information to someone who is hostile towards police and reticent to talk (Mokwena *et al.*, 2020).

Mofokeng and Mathosa (2019) posit that the process of interviewing a suspect may range from communicating with an aggressive individual with a mental health problem to a co-operative, but upset suspect who wants to reveal all. Interactions are also likely to involve people from groups that are over-represented in the crime statistics and different to detectives themselves. A diverse skill-set is likely required of detectives to cater for this range of people and scenarios. Bull (2013) posits that further research into investigative interviewing may help to define effective communication, but even this extensive body of research pays little attention to how to adapt to meet the diverse needs of different individuals' detectives encounter. Some generic features may apply to all communications, identifying what these are could help more clearly define effectiveness. More research is required to validate what motivates a detective, but the very nature of the detective role may fuel the motivation to see justice done. Unlike other professions in the justice system, detectives deal with those who are affected by and commit crime near crisis point. Alleged offenders are often intoxicated, stressed and aggressive, and victims are often suffering from extreme psychological and physical trauma. Facing the emotional extremes of this raw face of crime may drive detectives to see justice done, especially if the desired empathetic approach is adopted.

Theme 4 - Most Important or Key Skills Required Regarding Knowledge Level

The majority of participants concurred that there is an expectation for police investigators to maintain and demonstrate a high level of competency. It also emerged that participants highlighted that though criminal investigator must follow practices of identifying, collecting, recording, and preserving evidence; in the case of the unknown suspect, additional thinking skills of analysis, theory development, and validation of facts must be put to work. This requires institutional knowledge gained through experience (Mofokeng & de Vries, 2016). Experience as a police officer and as an investigator, as well as knowledge were perceived to lay the foundation for effective performance (Mokwena *et al.*, 2020). Although to be effective, learning from experience requires expert feedback which is gained through mentorship (Mofokeng, 2015, 2020), which may or may not be present in detective learning programmes (Ericsson, *et al.*, 1993; Mofokeng & de Vries, 2012, 2016). Teamwork and leadership were also prominently cited skill categories.

The need for these skills is likely to be closely linked to communication and suggest that the ability to work in a team is a core component of detective work. The importance of leadership found in the present study also suggests that detectives not only need the ability to adapt to perform specific roles within the team, but also to take charge and lead when required. For example, leadership may be required when a detective is in charge of their own investigation whereas teamwork may be required when working on a major investigation such as a homicide. Further emphasising the complexity and demanding nature of the role, tenacity and resilience were also identified as important characteristics. Unlike the ability to communicate and work in a team, these skill categories are likely to be more internally driven.

Summary

The purpose of this article is to contribute to the knowledge on police detectives' work practices, and account on how police general detectives view their performance and their understanding regarding what skills needed to handle variety of general cases in their line of duty. The research question that directed this study is what constitutes an effective general detective? Based on the research results, four (4) themes emanated which have the capacity to be evaluated and be used for sharing of operational tacit

knowledge of police detectives. The findings highlighted that a criminal investigation is not just a set of task skills, it is equally a set of thinking skills. To become an effective investigator, these skills need to be consciously understood and developed to the point where they are deliberately engaged to work through the problem-solving process that is criminal investigation (Gehl, & Plecas, 2016). As highlighted in this study, there is a need to go beyond training detectives to rely upon investigative procedures, which involved method style towards encouraging detectives to allow their experiences, intuition and creativity to guide them in an investigation, skill and risk styles. This will generate personnel who are innovative, creative and who can adapt to the dynamic nature of criminal investigation.

Unless the SAPS has investigators, who are able to adopt different approaches to investigating crime, leads will continue to dry up and they will continually be faced with the dilemma of the investigative 'dead end'. As previous interventions fail to yield expected outcomes; in order to remedy the poor performance of the Detective Service, it is not too late, for all the role players to ask difficult the questions of what else need to done, or considered in order to improve the existing complex social system without complicating it further. A CDU, if introduced into this context, should instil a status and gravity in the policing landscape and should be a high order entity which will have to co-exist with the Academy of Police Science, attracting functional curricula developers, educators and administration that would play a catalytic role in the effectiveness of the CJS. It must exist and live up to the University status, side by side with the existing independent mainstream universities locally and internationally. But one nagging question what also needs to be answered, is what is the core business of the SAPS? Do the SAPS have the capacity to deliver in this regard without compromising its core business in terms of the provisions of the Republic of South Africa Constitution, 1996? Elsewhere, there are enticing examples of Detective Academy's operations and prestige facilities such as those in the United States (US); the Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex at Indian River State College (IRSC), the United Kingdom (UK) West Midlands Police Detective Academy and as Major General Botha made mention of Netherlands - the Dutch Police Academy - and other systems that can add to our understanding, beyond the model of the South African system. One can take note that many borrowed concepts and models, should be critically reviewed, to avoid the 'cut and paste' phenomenon, which Bruce (2003) warns us about. At the end of the day, something should be done, to transform the Detective Service into a functional and respected entity.

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