

## **Becoming a learning organization: The espoused values of police managers from two Norwegian districts**

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## **825 Becoming a learning organization: The espoused values of police managers from two Norwegian districts**

### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of this paper is to investigate the extent to which espoused values among police managers in the Norwegian police force are compatible with those of a learning organization.

**Methodology:** A questionnaire was developed and administered to police managers in two police districts in Norway. A set of values were developed to measure police culture and their significant correlation with those of a learning organization. All values were believed to represent cultural dimensions of potential importance to law enforcement performance.

**Findings:** We find that police managers espoused values of informality and empowerment rather than authority and hierarchical order. These values are the only police values that we find to be significantly correlated with those of a learning organization. Moreover, these findings contradict the previous literature within policing, which describes a police culture of hierarchy, authority and closeness. Also, these values only represent two out of the eight values we found to be crucial for becoming a learning organization.

**Implications:** There is a need for police managers to both espouse and enact values in accordance of those of a learning organization, but were or study only investigate espoused values. Hence, further research is needed to investigate the possibilities for the Norwegian police force to become a learning organization.

**Originality:** Empirical research to generate insights into espoused values of the Norwegian police force and identify those values that are crucial for their possibilities of becoming a learning organization.

**Keywords:** Learning organization; organizational culture, police culture; police values; knowledge organization

**Paper type:** Research paper

# **Becoming a Learning Organization: The espoused values of police managers from two Norwegian districts**

## **1. Introduction**

Traditionally, police organizations have had more of the characteristics of a bureaucratic, even quasi-military organization, rather than being recognized as open and creative learning and knowledge organization (Steinheider and Wuestewald, 2008). However, New Public Management requires knowledge intensive police forces, recognizing the complexity of policing, and where leaders are acknowledged as crucial to the results, effectiveness and quality of police work (Schafer, 2009). Hence, police culture, especially related to leaders roles, needs to be sufficiently addressed (Fielding, 1994; Reuss-Ianni, 1993; Glomseth and Gottschalk, 2009) to investigate how police culture effects police practice and behavior (Hofstede *et al.*, 1990). For example, Christensen and Crank (2001) studied police work and culture in a non-urban setting in the USA. They found a police culture emphasizing secrecy, self-protection, violence, but also the maintenance of respect. Barton (2004) found that English and Welsh police epitomize organizations that are steeped in tradition, while Reuss-Ianni (1993) found a clear cultural distinction between street cops and management cops in the New York City Police Department. Accordingly, Jaschke *et al.* (2007) found that the style of policing varies enormously from country to country, and within local police forces. In some countries, inhabitants tend to fear the police as corrupt, brutal and untrustworthy. In other countries, as is the case in Norway, police enjoy almost complete trust and confidence. However, due to possible cultural variances between countries, regions and police districts, we need to investigate each local districts to sufficiently grasp the Norwegian police culture

and its consequences for police practice. This is especially true, since our aim is to investigate how the characteristics of a police culture, more specifically the espoused cultural values of police managers, represent the potential of becoming a learning organization.

Firstly, we provide a framework of organizational culture, police culture and police values. Second, we position police values and their consequences for creating a learning organization. Third, we outline the studies undertaken and present some of the common themes emerging from them and explore these in the context of the literature on organizational learning. Finally, we conclude by discussing how addressing police culture can provide a fruitful contribution to our understanding policing in their challenges of becoming a learning organization.

## **2. Organizational police culture and police values**

Organizational culture is a set of shared norms, values, and perceptions, representing a shared system of interrelated understanding that is shaped by its members' shared history and expectations (Veiga *et al.*, 2000). It is holistic, historically determined, socially constructed, and therefore difficult to change (Hofstede *et al.*, 1990). Also, organizational culture might determine how the “organization” thinks, feels, and acts, as it defines the “shoulds” and “oughts” of organizational life (Veiga *et al.*, 2000). However, the “organization” as such can never be known or rationally defined, but it might learn, develop and unfold, as crucial for becoming a learning organization (Clegg *et al.*, 2005). This is important, as organization is about being pragmatic, creative and constructive (Chia, 1998), with the potential of changing the organizational culture.

In this paper, we approach police culture as an organizational culture that is socially constructed within the particular profession (Christensen and Crank, 2001). Hence, embedded in the tradition and the history of policing, the police culture contains of accepted practices, rules, values and principles of conduct that are applied to a variety of practical situations at work, and on generalized rationales and beliefs. For instance, studies of cultural values among Norwegian police officers show that their interpretation of their own police culture is that it is more based on collective work and cooperation than working individually in their professional performances (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2010).

Schein (1990) distinguishes between three fundamental levels at which any culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts; (b) values; and (c) basic underlying assumptions. This indicates that when investigating the police culture, police values represent one important characteristic, as values define social principles, goals, norms and what is considered important within this particular police culture. Accordingly, Hofstede *et al.* (1990) argue that values comprise the core of any culture, as values are emotional perceptions of what is appreciated and preferred. In other words, police values are essential for police officers perception of right and wrong, and what is desirable and valuable in professional work. Consequently, it is believed that the police force values dictate the behavior of its officers. For instance, when Kiely and Peek (2002) used a shared value perspective to understand British police culture, they found values such as honesty, morality and integrity regarded as important, resulting in self-discipline, commitment and fairness in police work.

Hatch (2001) focuses on the dynamics among artifacts, values and basic assumptions and how they are interrelated, instead of being hierarchical, with different levels and dimensions

of organizational culture as described by Schein (1990). Also, she does not agree with Schein's argument that when organizations are effective and well-functioning, there is no need to change basic assumptions and values. This is problematic related to organizational learning (Hatch, 2001). A learning organization supposes a changing, dynamic and complex understanding of both organizational culture and learning (Gleerup, 2008) where learning is integrated in the culture, not just from detection of error, but where learning and knowledge development are continuing processes of past inquiries and reflection in and on action (Schön, 1987).

### **3. Values in learning organizations**

The ideal of a learning organization is an organization that continuously learns (Senge, 1990) as it evolves to respond to various pressures (Grieves, 2008), and where it facilitates the learning of all its employees and transforms itself into a learning unit (Pedler *et al.* 1991). That means that for instance cultural values will act as premises for behavior as people continually expand their capacity to create desired results (Senge, 1990). Hence, shared values appears as central in the learning organization literature, where Watkins and Marsick (1992) characterize the learning organization by focusing on employees total involvement in processes of collaboration, with collective accountable changes that are directed towards shared values. However, the learning organization can be incriminating, due to its focus on normative assumptions, not sufficiently addressing how and why learning occurs (Senge and Kofman, 1995). On the contrary, the learning organization literature suffers from unilateral focus on normative models for learning opportunities and best practice (Laursen, 2006; Elkjaer, and Wahlgren, 2006), not attending to the complexity of organizational learning and that organizational learning involves more than just change (Antonacopoulou *et al.*, 2006).

According to above critics, Rebelo and Gombes (2008) argue that the learning organization perspective is more prescriptive than practical, as it is oriented towards models that help organizations enhance learning and benefit from it.

We believe the above references represent important objections, as the literature on learning organizations describes a set of actions that suppose to ensure learning capabilities such as for instance experimentation, continuous improvement, team work and group problem-solving (Pedler *et al.*, 1991; Alegre and Chiva, 2008). However, when Argyris and Schön (1996) outline the goal of double-loop learning, they believe that organizations must learn by continuously questioning and changing basic values, also arguing that the concept of a learning organization is not just normative and practice-oriented.

Despite the concept of the learning organization being quite ambiguous (Örtenblad, 2004) suffering from a lack of clear definition (Garvin, 2000) that we can test, probe and contest (Grieves, 2008), we uses the concept in relation to its important focus on shared values. Hence, we investigate whether the characteristics of a police culture, more specifically the espoused cultural values of police managers, result the potential of the police force becoming a learning organization.

It is argued that organizational learning will vary in accordance with each unique organization, and must be given necessary flexibility to develop its own individual version of the learning organization (Pedler *et al.*, 1991; Senge *et al.*, 1994). Accordingly, Rebelo and Gomes call for more empirical research on organizational factors that promote and facilitate learning in and by each organizations, as becoming a learning organization is challenging

(Bui and Baruch, 2010). We aim at exploring these challenges, recognizing that police values are difficult to change as they are socially constructed within this particular profession (Hofstede *et al.*, 1990) and also the police values most certainly will effect and determine their professional behavior and therefore police practice (Veiga *et al.*, 2000).

So far we have been on the surface, talking about the importance of shared values in learning organizations. To be able to address police values, we need to be more specific on what values that are believed to support a learning organization, and hence what police values we want to investigate in our studies. Our choice of values is related to both the literature within police culture and learning organization. In Argyris and Schöns' double-loop learning (1996), where a learning organization supposes to continuously question and change basic values, they differ between espoused values and values used and enacted in practice as theories-in-use. Hence, theories-in-use might differ from espoused values, while enacted values represent the characteristics and possibilities of becoming a learning organization. Consequently, espoused values is used here to clarify the distinction between what we have studied and what values people hold (Kabanoff and Daly, 2002), as values that are enacted and explain practice (Schuh and Miller, 2006).

First, the police culture is characterized as bureaucratic and not open and creative (Steinheider and Wuestewald, 2008), while a learning organization needs enabling structures (Pedler *et al.*, 1991) for empowerment (Gardines and Whiting, 1997), involving all employees in decision (Watkins and Marsick, 1992). Accordingly, the following values are explored:

1. Equality and empowerment versus hierarchy, *i.e. short distance between layers versus hierarchy in status.*
2. Open versus closed. *i.e. communication with the environment during investigation, or secrecy, loyalty and no communication outside the force.*
3. Freedom versus control, *i.e. being creative versus controlled behavior*
4. Privacy versus openness, *i.e. how the social condition in the unit is characterized as private or more intimate and open.*

This last value is also in accordance to Christensen and Crank (2001) characterizing of a police culture being closed with secrecy and self-protection.

Second, Barton (2004) talks about a traditional police culture, while a learning organization require continuing learning (Watkins and Marsick, 1992) and openness to new ideas (Tannenbaum, 1997) and experimentation (Pedler *et al.*, 1991). Hence, the following values are explored:

5. Change versus tradition, *i.e. encourage new methods versus holding on to how tasks were solved in the past.*
6. Security versus challenge, *i.e. adapting to security versus possibilities of challenges*
7. Stability versus instability, *i.e. harmony and predictability versus unpredictability and some confusion.*
8. Firm leadership versus individual creativity, *i.e. practicing strong leadership versus facilitating individual creativity.*

9. Practical versus philosophical, *i.e. having a practical and pragmatic orientation versus a theoretical and philosophical orientation*
10. Security and integrity versus effectiveness and productivity, *i.e. focus on integrity and accountability versus being effective by preventing crime in accordance with each officers' consideration of best practice.*
11. Traditional organization versus knowledge organization *i.e. further establishing of a traditional police organization versus a knowledge organization.*

Third, it is believed that the police culture is more collectivistic than individualistic (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2010). This is in accordance to a learning organization with focus on collaboration, team learning and participatory decision-making (Pedler et al., 1991; Watkins and Marsick, 1992). Accordingly, the following values are explored:

12. Individualism versus group orientation, *i.e. strong individual responsibilities versus cooperation in teams and partnerships.*
13. Individual competition versus cooperation, *i.e. competing individually versus cooperation in solving police work.*
14. Task versus relationship, *i.e. focusing on task versus being more relational oriented.*
15. Informal versus formal, *i.e. communicating and interacting informally versus mostly relying on formal communication.*

Finally, a learning organization must also include characteristics such as facilitation of learning opportunities and information flow, both direct through training, but also indirectly (Griego *et al.*, 2000), tolerance of mistake to ensure creativity, and to protect financial and

knowledge performances in its future (Tannenbaum, 1997; Pedler *et al.*, 1991). Hence, our final choice of values is as follows:

16. Short-time versus long-term, i.e. fast solutions and results or a long-term perspective
17. Work versus balance, i.e. work being most important versus creating a balance between work and private life.
18. Direct versus indirect, i.e. using an open and direct communication style versus communicating more indirectly.
19. Act versus plan, i.e. focus on action and practice versus more focus and planning and “paperwork”.
20. Time firm versus time float, i.e. punctuality or less time consciousness
21. Learning versus non-learning organization i.e. fulfill necessary requirements characteristic of a learning organization versus not practicing learning and knowledge-sharing.

Obviously, dichotomizing values as being “either ... or” is problematic, and in relation to organizational learning it can often be a question of having values that include, for instance, being both individualistic and group-oriented. These issues will be addressed in our discussions of how the espoused police values of police managers represent a potential for becoming a learning organization.

#### **4. Research Design**

Norway has one police force. The organization of the Norwegian Police is based largely on the principle of an integrated police force, where all police functions are collected in one

organization. There are 27 local police districts, each under the command of a Chief of Police. In addition to the police districts, there are five central police institutions. About 13,000 personnel work in the Norwegian Police force in some capacity. Approximately 9,000 are trained police officers, while almost 800 are lawyers, and 3,200 are civilian employees.

The Norwegian police and prosecuting authority follow a parallel system, where responsibility for combating crime is shared between the Police Directorate and the Public Prosecution, which are both linked to the Department of Justice.

The Chief of Police in each police district has full responsibility for all kinds of policing in the district. A police district has its own headquarters, as well as several police stations. All police officers in Norway are trained to be generalists, able to fulfill every aspect of ordinary police work, including criminal investigations, maintaining public order and community policing.

Implementing New Public Management requires a knowledge intensive police force. Also, they recognize that New Public Management represents new challenges on how to perform as police managers. Hence, the police force wants to become a learning organization to be able to address these new challenges. This represents the basis of our studies, where we start with investigating police values among police managers. Two police districts were selected for this research. Both of these districts have several towns and rural areas, and they have similar geography, demography and crime statistics. In both police districts, executive training programs were carried out in 2008/2009/2010. Participants in these programs were selected for this research; 60 and 70 managers respectively. Recognizing the biases of asking police

managers about their values, in which they themselves are responsible of, might give contradictions between espoused and enacted police values, with consequences of them becoming a learning organization. Hence, we account for these possible contradictions in our analysis. Also, our study of espoused values represent a first study for further investigations of addressing both espoused and enacting values in the Norwegian police force.

A questionnaire was developed to measure leadership roles and espoused values, where we report the results of their espoused values. The questionnaire was first tested on fifteen police managers at different leadership levels, from different police districts. Seven of them provided written comments, and some others made verbal comments on the telephone. All comments from the pretest were considered, and several changes were made to the questionnaire. The study is based on a convenience sample. All participants from the two police districts were asked by e-mail as well as encouraged by their chief constable to fill in the online survey. The study was carried out in March and April 2010. 65 out of 130 managers responded to the questionnaire, thereby representing a response rate of 50%. Most of the respondents had worked in the police for more than 25 years. 44% worked at a local police station, while 49% worked in a functional unit.

## **5. Results**

Among the respondents, 49% were first-line managers, 27% were middle managers, while 22% were top managers. In terms of leadership position, 28% had 0–5 subordinates, 22% had 6–10 subordinates, 26% had 11–20 subordinates, and the remaining 24% had more than 21 subordinates.

38% had been in a management position for more than 11 years, while 62% had been in a management position for less than 11 years. 81% were trained police officers, while 5% were lawyers and 13% were civilian employees. 80% were men and 20% were women. Most respondents were in the age ranges of 41–55 years old. Retirement age for police officers is 57 years. 33% of the respondents had 3 years of education, while 21 % had 4-5 years of education. Police education in Norway is 3 years in terms of a bachelor degree, and lawyer education is 5 years in terms of a masters’ degree.

The value scales applied give a measurement of 1 as for instance very individualistic versus 7 as very group-oriented. The measurements are listed in Table 1. We find that by creating a middle of (4), the values are believed by the respondents to be “either ... or”, but also more a combination of both. Actually, many of the measurement scores can be found around 4.

*Table 1. Measurement of police values*

| <b>Scale</b> | <b>Police Culture Value</b>               | <b>Measurement</b> |
|--------------|---|--------------------|
| 1            | Time firm versus time floats              | 3.03               |
| 2            | Change versus tradition                   | 3.97               |
| 3            | Individualism versus group orientation    | 4.40               |
| 4            | Freedom versus control                    | 3.21               |
| 5            | Privacy versus openness                   | 4.14               |
| 6            | Informal versus formal                    | 2.98               |
| 7            | Individual competition versus cooperation | 5.12               |
| 8            | Equality and empowerment versus hierarchy | 2.91               |
| 9            | Short-term versus long-term               | 3.14               |
| 10           | Work versus balance                       | 4.16               |

|    |  |      |
|----|--|------|
| 11 | Task versus relationships                                    | 3.42 |
| 12 | Direct versus indirect                                       | 3.84 |
| 13 | Act versus plan  | 2.95 |
| 14 | Practical versus philosophical                               | 2.35 |
| 15 | Security versus challenge                                    | 2.54 |
| 16 | Security and integrity versus effectiveness and productivity | 2.23 |
| 17 | Firm leadership versus individual creativity                 | 4.05 |
| 18 | Open versus closed   | 3.14 |
| 19 | Traditional versus knowledge organization                    | 3.44 |
| 20 | Stability versus instability                                 | 3.55 |
| 21 | Learning versus non-learning organization                    | 3.78 |

Our findings indicate that police values are not very prominent and that the dichotomy can be problematic. Also, it can be a result of police managers not being conscious of police values and thus, they are more neutral in espousing them. Consequently, with regard to a learning organization, respondents' answers show a moreover "neither ... nor" interpretation of whether the police force is a learning organization or not. Only a few measurement scores indicate significant values, such as:

- Cooperation is considered to be more important than individual competition in policing
- Informal communication is more common than formal communication in policing
- Equality and empowerment are more prominent than hierarchy and authority
- To act is considered to be more important than to plan in the police force
- Cooperation is more prominent than competition
- Police officers are more practical and less philosophical

- Security and integrity are more important than challenge and productivity in the police force

We then ran a correlation of coefficients linking espoused police values to those of a learning organization.

*Table 2. Correlation coefficients linking values and learning organization*

| <b>Scale</b> | <b>Occupational Culture Value</b>                            | <b>Correlation</b> |
|--------------|--|--------------------|
| 1            | Time firm versus time floats                                 | .186               |
| 2            | Change versus tradition                                      | .388**             |
| 3            | Individualism versus group orientation                       | -.019              |
| 4            | Freedom versus control                                       | .239               |
| 5            | Privacy versus openness                                      | -.182              |
| 6            | Informal versus formal                                       | .355**             |
| 7            | Individual competition versus cooperation                    | -.212              |
| 8            | Equality and empowerment versus hierarchy                    | .372**             |
| 9            | Short term versus long term                                  | -.101              |
| 10           | Work versus balance  | -.045              |
| 11           | Task versus relationships                                    | -.358**            |
| 12           | Direct versus indirect                                       | .372**             |
| 13           | Act versus plan  | -.038              |
| 14           | Practical versus philosophical                               | .025               |
| 15           | Security versus challenge                                    | .192               |
| 16           | Security and integrity versus effectiveness and productivity | .062               |
| 17           | Firm leadership versus individual creativity                 | -.069              |
| 18           | Open versus closed   | .491**             |

|    |   |        |
|----|---|--------|
| 19 | Traditional versus knowledge organization | -.303* |
| 20 | Stability versus instability              | .384** |

Hence, these 20 espoused values are correlated with important characteristics of a learning organization (value 21), and hence intend to explain the police managers exposed values of the police force being a learning organization or not, which was quite neutral (3.78).

Accordingly, a number of significant correlations emerge in Table 2 on whether those values we measured were in accordance to those of a learning organization.

1. A learning organization is related to change rather than tradition, and to a stable rather than an instable organization
2. A learning organization is related to informal rather than formal communication and a direct rather than an indirect form.
3. A learning organization is related to equality and empowerment rather than hierarchy, and an open rather than closed culture
4. A learning organization is related to relationships rather than tasks, and is a knowledge organization rather than a traditional organization.

Consequently, our results show that the only espoused values that the police managers report that are significant correlated with those of a learning organization are informality and equality/empowerment over a formal and hierarchic police force. This indicates two important police values in order for the police force to become a learning organization. But due to the number of neutrally related to police values, we also believe that the police managers not necessary are awareness of own police culture, especially related to values such

as change, stability, directness and openness as crucial for a learning organization. As a result, they do not espouse values that the police force can be characterized with the total set of necessary values of a knowledge organization or a learning organization. Or in other words, we find some espoused police values that just represent a potential for becoming a learning organization.

## **6. Discussions**

Measuring the correlation coefficient between our choice of police values with those values that are crucial for a learning organization, we are left with 8 of the police values that we selected for our study. All these values have support in previous learning organization literature. It is argued that a learning organization needs enabling structures (Pedler et al., 1991) for empowerment (Gardiner and Whiting, 1997), involving all employees in decisions (Watkins and Marsick, 1992), which supports the values of

1. Equality and empowerment
2. Openness

Also, a learning organization require continuing learning (Watkins and Marsick, 1992) and openness to new ideas (Tannenbaum, 1997) and experimentation (Pedler *et al.*, 1991), which supports values of

3. Change.
4. Stability
5. A knowledge organization, thus knowledge-orientation

Finally, a learning organization must focus on collaboration, team learning and facilitation of learning opportunities (Griego *et al.*, 2000; Pedler *et al.*, 1991; Watkins and Marsick, 1992) and give us the following values:

6. Relationship orientation
7. Informal communication
8. Direct and open communication

When we compare these 8 values with espoused police values, we find that police managers only recognize a police culture characterized as informal and empowering as oppose to formal and hierarchic. Critical then is other important values such as change, relationship-oriented, directness, openness, stability and knowledge-oriented. Hence, we believe the police managers are not that conscious of the importance of their police values and how they relate to police work and consequently their possibilities of being a learning organization. Given the values that police managers espouse, the police culture is more cooperative and collectivistic than individualistic which is evident in studies of the Norwegian police force (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2010). Also, police officers must follow rules and instructions, to ensure their own and their partners' security in dangerous situations. Thus, accountability and collective work is crucial (Edelbacker and Ivkovic, 2004) within police culture, but is this at the expense of change?

Our studies show that security and integrity are considered more important than challenges and proactivity. Hence, our studies confirm previous studies of police culture. However, within a learning organization managers must facilitate challenges and change through their own participation in an environment characterized by equality and empowerment (Watkins

and Marsick, 1999; Conner and Clawson, 2004), but where change and openness for new ideas are victim of a more neutral interpretation from the police managers. Equality and empowerment however, meaning a short distance between layers are found to be an important value in our two police districts. This is confirmed by previous studies in Norwegian police forces, but only among counter-terrorism officers and not among criminal investigators, as espoused values (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2010). Criminal investigators claim safety versus challenge to be equal, thus safety is not believed to be a more dominant value than challenge. Security is also linked to integrity where informal communication is more common than formal, and where police officers prefer not to communicate with the environment when working on police investigations.

Even when reporting of a police culture characterized by empowerment and equality, the police managers also espouse values a traditional organization rather than a knowledge organization, as we believe to be a discrepancy between their espoused values. Within a learning organization, management is supposed to participate on all levels in the organization, relying on a short distance between layers, minor differences in status and a tight social environment, thus a learning organization rely on empowerment and equality. This is obviously also believed to be an important value in the police culture. However, this is not in accordance with, for instance, studies of the Australian police, where Moir and Eijkman (1992) report of a strong hierarchy. Hence, just investigating espoused values is not sufficient to claim that the Norwegian police force is less hierarchical, especially since no previous studies can confirm this (Glomseth and Gottschalk, 2009).

A learning organization representing change rather than tradition is supported by contributions stating that learning *is* change, and that employees learn and transform themselves within a learning organization (Senge, 1990; Pedler *et al.*, 1991). So, change rather than tradition is recognized. Change is, however, not the same as learning, because learning involves more than change, and change alone tends to amplify stability (Antonacopoulou *et al.*, 2006). Also, we find that a learning organization is related to a stable rather than an instable organization. This can be understood in accordance with Gherardi and Nicolini's (2000) argument that learning and knowledge is as important to both facilitate continuity and stability as it is to facilitate change (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000). This is due to the fact that change and flux are the natural state of an organization, and therefore stability is not a natural state within an organization but an accomplishment (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Clegg *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, a learning organization characterized by change and an organization characterized as stable is not a contradictory. Rather, organization is a process of increasing complexity and reducing it (Clegg *et al.*, 2005). Organization and learning qualify as an oxymoron, because learning is to disorganize and increase variety, while organization reduces this variety (Weick and Westley, 1996). However, police managers do not espouse necessary values related to either change or stability. Concerning informal rather than formal communication and a direct rather than an indirect form only gives us espoused values of informality.

Previous contributions claiming that experimentation, continuous improvement, teamwork and participating decision-making provide equality and empowerment over hierarchy (Pedler *et al.*, 1991; Alegre and Chiva, 2008).

Necessary focus on people interaction and their insertion into an organizational environment is essential to a learning organization, which indicates that a learning organization is more prescriptive than practical, in order to enhance and benefit from learning (Rebelo and Gomes, 2008). Consequently, these characteristics call for a real knowledge organization as a precondition of a learning organization (Uretsky, 2001; Örtenblad, 2004), but where police managers do not recognize the characteristics of a knowledge organization.

Consequently, our studies confirm that police values relating to those of learning organizations are quite limited, when we explore espoused values of police managers. Only informality and equality/empowerment are espoused as police values of the 8 values that are significant correlated with those of a learning organization. When Reuss-Ianni (1993) argues that police cultures are characterized as formal, closed, secret with no communication with the environment during a police investigation, our finding of equality as an espoused value is characterized by short distances between layers in the organization, minor differences in status, and a relatively tight social environment. However, Reuss-Ianni (1993) distinguishes between managers (management cops) and police officers on patrol (street cops) with widely different cultures between the two groups. Police officers who do not hold managerial positions display a general feeling of mistrust for managers because they have lost touch with everyday practical policing. Traditionally, the police hierarchy encourages a culture of strong managers, where the unit manager makes decisions that are implemented by unit officers.

Contradictory then, the two police values that our studies outline as most important characteristics of the police culture in the two police districts are empowerment and informality, which are the two values that were also significantly correlated with a learning

organization. However, empowerment and informality are not confirmed by previous contributions of enacted values within police culture. For instance, Moir and Eijkman (1992) find that hierarchy and authority result in conformity rather than openness and change. They argue that policing must learn to live with the stress of experimentation and innovation through openness and allowing trial and error, as well as risk as a natural element of police work. The contradiction between our respondents' espoused values and those enacted through practice might differ, as confirmed by the work of Moir and Eijkman (1992). Accordingly, Miller (1995) argues that police cultures are characterized as closed and by feelings of solidarity and "us versus them". Also, Vickers and Kouzmin (2001) find an increased concern about the cost and effectiveness of policing, but also find that modern policing remains fundamentally unchanged as an authoritarian organization. Thus, enacted values of closeness and authority do not help the organization to learn.

## **7. Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to investigate how the characteristics of the Norwegian police culture, or more specific, the values of the police managers, and discuss to what extent these values are compatible with those of a learning organization. In doing so, we conducted a questionnaire to identify police managers' espoused values. Then we measured the possibilities of significant correlations between those values and the values that are believed to be crucial for a learning organization. The result was 8 values of change, informality, empowerment, relation-orientation, directness, openness, knowledge-orientation and stability. Our findings suggest that espoused police values that are believed to be critical for the police force to become a learning organization are limited. Only 2 out of the 8 values are espoused, those being informality and empowerment. Hence, they are the only two values that are

significantly correlated with those of a learning organization. Other values, such as cooperation, acting, being practical and security are espoused values within the police culture, but describe a traditional organization rather than a knowledge organization and do not enhance a learning organization.

We conclude that police managers espouse values of informality and empowerment rather than formality, authority and hierarchy. These values are significantly correlated with values that are important to a learning organization and, consequently, these values are supported by previous literature within learning organizations. However, espoused values in our study are not in accordance with previous studies of police cultures. These studies report of hierarchical order, authority and closeness within the police force. Thus, our findings of informal empowerment rather than formality through authority and hierarchical order need to be explored further as possible enacted values within the Norwegian police force. Also, police values such as change, relation-orientation, directness, openness, knowledge-orientation and stability must develop both as espoused and enacted values as crucial for the Norwegian police force to become a learning organization.

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