

Bridging The Gap: Experiential Learning And Evaluation Dynamics In High-Risk Operational Environments

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Operational safety in high-risk environments, such as the police force, is an area that has been the subject of academic research. There is consensus among scholars about the critical role learning plays in upholding safety standards in these contexts (Antonacopoulou and Sheaffer, 2014; Braut and Njå, 2013; Sommer et al., 2017). While theoretical discussions have been comprehensive, delving deeper into the intricacies of real-life incidents can provide further layers of understanding and insights. Evaluating incidents on a national scale can provide valuable insights, not only from isolated incidents but also in terms of patterns and trends that might emerge from a comprehensive data analysis. These evaluations can further enhance our understanding of organizational learning theories, particularly within high-stakes environments like the police force. Evaluations of these incidents provide insights beyond just identifying successes or challenges; they offer a perspective on how these events align with or diverge from the prevailing theories or models used to interpret such incidents. Moreover, these evaluations are instrumental in informing strategic decisions at the higher tiers of an organization. Recognizing the connection between on-the-ground operational insights and overarching strategic directives is crucial, given its potential implications for both immediate safety protocols and forward-looking policies. Building on this premises, our study initiates a focused inquiry: “How does the evaluation of real incidents influence organizational learning at the operational level in the police?” One critical aspect of this exploration is the dynamics between the operations center and staff, especially during extraordinary events. This becomes particularly evident when considering the intricate relationships therein. Understanding the motivations, strategies, and decisions of the strategic level is beneficial, especially since this level can sometimes appear distant or disconnected from immediate on-site actions and challenges (Steen and Pollock, 2022; van den Heuvel et al., 2014). Furthermore, the emphasis on team development in evaluating actual incidents is of interest. With considerable investments channeled into team dynamics at the operational level, it's vital to discern its influence on the evaluation's depth and applicability (Dooley and Van de Ven, 1999).

Building upon seminal research such as (Argyris, 2002; Tosey et al., 2012) and the insightful '4I-framework' introduced by Crossan et al. (1999), this study delves deep into the complexities of organizational learning. As highlighted by Frankenberger et al. (2013), the 4I-framework encapsulates the essence of organizational learning, threading together key socio-psychological processes—namely intuition, interpretation, integration, and institutionalization. This framework serves as the foundational pillar guiding the theoretical direction of our study. Using an explorative methodology, we conduct semi-structured interviews with ten personnel from the police operations centre in Oslo. The study's findings pinpoint a disparity in evaluation techniques between the tactical and operational levels. Exploring these nuances, how the tactical level harnesses experiential learning compared to the operational level and how both can collaboratively benefit from shared experiences, presents an avenue for enhanced execution of social duties. Further findings underscore pivotal aspects, including the operational level's engagement with evaluations, the continuous emphasis on experience-based learning, and the

organisational infrastructures that either promote or impede effective learning. In particular, while dedicated time and spaces for team development serve as positive catalysts, the absence of clear guidelines and systematic processes has proven detrimental. To address these concerns, the study suggests disseminating guidelines from a broader organisational level, emphasizing a nationally cohesive approach to organizational learning within the police force. There is a pressing need for a unified structure promoting evaluations and sharing of experience between operational centres. Establishing a national 'experience bank' can act as a crucial reservoir for these shared experiences. The importance of conscientiously allocating essential resources to enable genuine organisational learning cannot be overstated.

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