CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN THE UGANDA POLICE FORCE

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Abstract
Conceptualization of community policing has remained persistent especially in the social sciences where different people are bound to conceive concepts differently. A closer look at the implementation efforts on community policing in Uganda police force brings this to glare the differences in understanding of what it constitutes. The fragmentation of societal needs and priorities may explain this, nevertheless, it is pertinent not to forget the true concept of community policing and its theoretical base. The main objective of this paper is to bring to perspective the concept and theory of community policing so that as implementation efforts are ongoing a certain trend of uniformity can be sustained. Basically, this paper utilized existing literatures on the concept and theory of community policing in seeking and understanding about community policing. The paper identified differences in definition among scholars and also certain principles which are found in almost all models of implementation over time across borders, in which considerable progress have been achieved by adopting them and if followed will offer a coherent approach towards successful community policing. In conclusion, the paper observed that if really community policing is to be advanced, then a proper understanding of what it constitutes in principle most be comprehended by the police, citizens and leadership in general.

Key words: Community policing, society, community liaisons officer, partnership

Introduction
The concept of community policing in the Uganda police force is advently becoming popular in practice; globally the concept is slowly but gradually assuming a multidimensional as well as a multifaceted idea. Yet, the philosophy remains singular all through from the mid 70’s when the drive began to trickle down (Aliyuyero et al, 2012). Ever since, multitudes of literature have piled up all in an attempt to define, explain and theorize community policing. However, one challenge facing community policing today is that of conceptualization. There exist in literature various definitions but most important is where we can point out the demarcating line between community policing and community oriented policing, are the two concepts the same or different? In some instances the two concepts seem to be used interchangeably having the same characteristics. Some scholars seem to take the two concepts meaning different things. On one hand community policing mean a police oriented affair having to deal with how officers will adopt new strategies by collaborating with the community in preventing crime and promoting the sense of security, while community oriented policing mean a community based approach and initiative by the people towards crime control and prevention in an attempt to compliment the effort of the police as well as work in partnership for the betterment of the community. This has affected implementation as a result of consensus and conflict interest which has reduced its acceptance, lack of specific indicators which would have made the impact measureable, lack of an overall strategy within the institutional framework, lack of community consultation and participation in decision making as to the nature, contents and most acceptable and appropriate form of community policing which would promote the partnership being sought. Meanwhile, law
enforcement has been quietly revolutionized assuming a great source of debate as to the exact nature and scope it possess (James, 2002).

Interestingly, there is a consensus among the academia, Uganda police force and government as to the viability of moving towards a community oriented policing in an attempt to reduce citizen fear and overall attainment of the quality of life, or safe city in other instances. It is the intention of this paper to revisit some of the efforts towards conceptualization and theorization of community policing so that practice is aligned towards the core functions of community policing. In particular, the paper will look specifically at the theoretical bases of community policing that will enlighten both policy makers and practitioners in the field.

The Concept of Community Policing

The concept of community policing have been defined by many scholars and practitioners in various ways. Among these conceptual definitions are the institutional. According to the Uganda Police Annual Crime Report (2012), crime and social disorder is the focus of community policing. This is achieved through service delivery which includes aspects of regular law enforcement, prevention, problem solving, as well as community engagement and partnership. Community policing model try to strike a balance between reactive responses with proactive problem solving specifically on the causes of crime and disorder, community policing is essentially about partnership between the police and the citizens. Partnership in this case would mean each party having an agreed stake in the affairs of community policing, but is this the case, the amount of intervention of both the police and community in policing is not known, what is practiced in many Ugandan areas is sensitization programmes as little more than community policing quackery, consisting of pre-crime interventions that are based on neither existing knowledge of the causes of crime or existing knowledge of what programmes are known to change offender behavior.

Philosophically, community policing represents a drive which aspires to establish partnership between the people and the police in addressing contemporary challenges to security such as social and physical disorder, crime and fear towards achieving overall quality of life (Trojanowicz and Bucquéroux, 1998). In application however, visibility and acting become the operational role of the police officer who tries to ensure that disorder and crime are managed properly. On the part of the community information, support and feedback are required and police should respond to all concerns (Manning, 2003). At every attempt to define community policing therefore one will be inclined to know from which angle the concept is being approached, this can offer a credible insight as to what actually represents the view point of the author. Nevertheless, having a single definition of community policing remains a fleeting illusion because community policing can also be looked from the perspective of the community policing the police in committing crimes, for instance, many drivers on Ugandan roads have signs that alert fellow drivers of the presence of the traffic police ahead, this is a value most taxi drivers have embraced without regret. Tilley (2008) in his contribution to community policing observed that the importance of policing has to do with the people and for the community rather than policing of the community, it aspires to improve the quality of life, aiming to solve community problems alongside the community and by the community. Beyond this, it has proven difficult to pin down what specifically is involved in implementing community policing. On this point, there exist broad agreement among scholars and many police officers (Tilley, 2008). Stipak (1994) in his
contribution also defined community policing as a management strategy which aims to promote joint responsibility of community members and police for the purpose of safety. In other words, community policing is about police-citizen partnership.

Additionally, The Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice (1994) observed that community policing embodies two major components which include community partnership and problem solving. Problem solving in this context involve diagnosing effective and applicable antidote to glaring community ills. The involvement of stakeholders like the local authorities, schools, churches/mosques, social agencies and business groups in crime prevention partnerships with the police becomes necessary for the success of community policing. However, bringing on board in unison a fragmentation of such society is not easy due to the fact that society will always have intra and inter conflict relationships. Therefore, community partnership in essence must begin with proper communication which facilitates the building of trust between the people and the police, making the use of force unnecessary and useless.

In the final analysis on the concept of community policing, Allendar (2004) states that community policing represents a philosophy of full time service, personalized policing in which a particular police officer patrols and work in an area on a permanent basis from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with citizens to identify and solve problems.

Theories of Community Policing
A number of theories have been advanced by scholars in an attempt to offer explanation in principle, and pave the way for a point of reference in academic discussion as well as a point of departure towards implementation initiatives of community policing.

One theory used to explain the philosophical bases of community policing is the Normative Sponsorship Theory by Tiedke, et. al (1975). The theory posits that a significant number of people have goodwill and that cooperation becomes a necessary factor towards building a harmonious community. It postulates that a community programme will be supported only if it is “within the limit of established standard” to all people (Trojanowicz and Dixon, 1974). Simply put, the police cannot achieve any positive transformation without the support of the public. It’s important to note here that society is divided into strata and classes, with common interests in some areas and conflicting interests in many fundamental areas, As a result of the inequality in access to societal resources, those who have access to resources will want a change in the structure and this is a basis of conflict in society and thus the death of goodwill. Conflict perspective therefore argued, that the police were not created to ‘serve society’ or ‘people’ but to serve some parts of society and some people at the expense of others (Alemika &Chukiouna, 2000).

Another theory advanced specifically to explain community policing is by Wilson and Kellings; Broken Windows theory, based on this theory social psychologist and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepair; all the rest of the windows will soon be broken, the sign of one broken and unrepair window send an indication that nobody cares so another window can also be broken and nothing will happen (Oliver, 2000)

According to Pollard in Bratonet.al (1998), Kellings and Wilson’s preposition is that the moment deliberate discoursity such as drunkenness, begging, vandalism, disorderly behavior, graffiti, litter are not controlled, an atmosphere is created in which more serious crimes will be committed. Till today, any discussion on community policing always go hand in hand with the
broken windows theory (Allender, 2004). However, this theory under scores on the argument that there’s order inherent in society and that this order is consolidated by the fact that different structures in society work together harmoniously for the sustenance of society. The police are necessary to ensure that public peace is guaranteed through the maintenance of law and order, therefore the police are friends of the public since they exist for the good of the people.

From a radically different dimension, Wong (2008) offered a different viewpoint called the Social Resource theory that attempts to address three main prepositions, (a) what is the role and function of the police? (b) What is the relationship of the police with the people, and (c) why do people call the police? The social resource theory re-conceived the idea of crime and policing from the angle of the people and not that of the state. From the people’s viewpoint, crime is a personal problem resulting from people’s unmet expectation, scarcity of resources and police inefficiency. The police in effect are social resources which are supposed to solve the problems of the people. The ultimate purpose of community policing is to ensure better, responsive and responsible efficient and effective police service. The theory is of the people, for the people and by the people, a theory of democratic governance, empowerment, and a theory of self-help (Wong, 2008).

The social resource theory begins from observing that crime represents illegality but only from the state point of view. However, for the people crime represents one of the experiences of life, the theory represents a radical shift in theorizing community policing because it completely gave people the power in effect and made the police influence a social resource, made visible by the state by choosing within the citizens to address societal ills (Wong 2008). This theory overlooks the issue of partnership, in partnership it’s a win win situation, if then community policing is advocating for partnership, then the issue of social resource by the police doesn’t arise.

Methodology
This article was generated from a qualitative approach. Methods employed included documentary review, interviews and observation. The Police’s policy on community policing was reviewed. Further, visits to police units and communities were conducted to observe the situation. The author also observed the situation by the roadside in urban areas to establish the partnerships in the communities.

Findings and Discussions
Policy and Managerial Implications
In Uganda, as elsewhere, the training of police officers and support staff needs to be set in the context of a comprehensive human resource strategy if it is to ensure that training is focused on the strategic needs of the organization and that valuable skills gained in training are not wasted through unnecessary transfers. The problem of transfers has been pervasive and wide-ranging in the Uganda Police Force, with countless examples of officers transferred without apparent regard to the training investment made in them. This issue, which reflects wider weaknesses in personnel policy, has affected community policing bearing in mind that partnership is the basis and yet built after a reasonable period of time. The transfer policy of the police is three years but most often personnel are transferred thus affecting community policing taking root in the communities it’s supposed to operate.
Facts about Community Policing
Without clear indicators and wider research it is hard to be certain, but it seems doubtful if Community Policing, as currently practiced, has yet led to any substantive change in the public image of the Uganda Police Force. Indeed the obstacles to a full realization of the benefits of Community Policing in Uganda remain formidable. In discussion with police and non-police sources alike there are clear signs that the police regard community policing primarily as a means of instructing local populations, rather than of listening to them. They thus learn less than they might, while doing little to mitigate their authoritarian image. A more practical problem is that the lack of an effective monitoring support service for Community Liaisons Officers in the field means they are left largely to their own devices to interpret and deliver training.

Conceptualization of community service
This has been defined in many different ways. According to one Uganda police Magazine. In its most basic form it is aimed at removing the barriers between the Police and the public. It is also described as a policy and strategy aimed at achieving more effective and efficient crime `control reduced fear of crime and improved quality of life. It is aimed at improving Police service and legitimacy through proactive reliance on community resources that seeks to change crime causing conditions. It assumes a greater accountability of the Police and a greater public share in decision-making. It should show greater concern for civil rights and liberties. This can be summed up as a partnership approach to policing, the police and the public together”.

The Training Notes produced by one of the Community Liaisons Officer clearly outline “an approach to community policing aimed at “lowering and if possible, removing those real or imaginary barriers which exist between the public and the police”. The Notes go on: “The role of a Community Liaison Officer is to be a Police Officer in that he will go to the public, teach them, assist them in their dealings with the police, advise them on crime prevention matters, demystify the law and police procedures and form an open, friendly and readily available conduit of communication between the public and the police”

In regard to the above, the need to “prevent crime” seems to be central to their approach to community policing. This does not seem to be quite how the Uganda Police Force saw it. From the notes crime prevention, although important, is a less immediate issue than improving the public image and community-police relations generally.

On the other hand, police officers are biased about the concept of community policing “Some colleagues of ours are not supportive and not interested in community policing because it is assisting the public to become aware of the law and their rights. Some do not wish the public to know about community policing issues such as bond and bail. They say community policing is spoiling our things” (Female CLO).

The Image of the Police
Community Policing has focused on crime prevention, and only limited efforts have been made to improve the image of the police. Significant work remains if the police are to regain their credibility and the trust of the public. Uganda Police has in some instances turned into a very brutal anti-people force. It has been involved in some of the most violent encounters in which many unarmed civilians have lost their lives. The Mabira protests, the Kayunga protests, the Kiseka market protests, and the Kasubi tombs protest; all of them saw loss of innocent lives.
However that may be, the establishment of community policing was perceived by police and public alike as a key element in the establishment of the Uganda Police Force as a credible and effective force. Widely seen (not least by the Ugandan press) as corrupt, inefficient and brutal, the Uganda Police Force itself tended to see community policing as a promising way to bridge the gap between the Uganda Police Force and the public, and establish a new approach to policing based on mutual trust and cooperation. It was also the hope of the Uganda Police Force, if not a specific intention of the project, to use community policing to improve its public image, and thus help to secure public confidence and cooperation.

**Identification of Community Needs**

Community policing is centrally controlled from divisional and district Headquarters. Monthly returns are filed covering meetings, problems encountered, and assessments of the local situation. Headquarters officials write to each District telling them “what to cover during the following month”. Assessing community needs tends to reflect policing priorities in crime detection. There is no evidence (such as focus group reports, lists of focus group questions; questionnaires; needs assessment guides) of any systematic consultation of community members to determine their needs and priorities. Community Liaisons Officers are expected to develop their own course outlines and content. There is no feed-back or monitoring system in place for community policing, and no indicators for measuring the impact of activities.

**Challenges**

Taylor (1998) identified five major challenges community policing is facing (a) insufficient holistic researches, most evaluations are carried out on specific programmes, (b) general implementation especially by city government, (c) problem of full implementation by, most of what constitute community police remains in paper, (d) involvement of politics, protecting community policing from criticism, and (e) difficulty in determining the intricate relationship between community policing and crime. The above challenges identified by Taylor (1998) still remain valid today in the Uganda Police Force in addition to poor motivation of Community Liaisons Officers in terms of promotional opportunities, community policing has suffered due to un-coordinated transfers, no consultation with the general public concerning appropriate time of meetings, no notice required and seasonal preferences are not considered to promote better attendance, lack of provision of guidelines and training materials to Community Liaisons Officers so as to facilitate a more effective, efficient and targeted approach to community policing. Additionally, Hills (2011) also identified another source of challenge to community policing which is “policing a plural society where inter communal conflict as well as inter religious conflict flourish”. In a situation like Uganda where the community is fragmented in terms of tribe, religion, there’s a like hood that crime and criminality will be rampant and the community that is supposed to collaborate to tackle security challenges in collaboration with the police is party to the crime then community oriented policing is out of question or were the police officers are also influenced by their values and affect their decision then there cannot be community policing.
In essence therefore community policing must be capable of moving towards the most difficult of security challenges facing human society while tackling the minor criminal elements that could lead to crime.

Conclusion and Suggestions for future research
The foregoing review has shown that organizational and institutional arrangements are important variables in determining the successful conduct of community policing in Uganda. The article has marshaled evidence that the concept isn’t well understood by both the police officers and the general public. Over all, the article demonstrates that Community policing do appear to represent a different mode of operation which encourages openness and flexibility, some of which include the public education, neighborhood watch, neighborhood town meetings, store front ministrations, weed and seed, foot patrol and so on. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the current tempo is sustained and improved upon, there should also be a continuous stride towards making the command structure less central and continuous engagement of the whole rank and file in the drive, both senior and junior police officers should participate in different ways to foster greater understanding among them.

Furthermore, the article has taken stock of some of the challenges facing community policing in Uganda. Among the challenges noted include poor motivation of Community liaisons Officers, in terms of promotional opportunities, community policing having suffered due to uncoordinated transfers, no consultation with the general public concerning appropriate time of meetings, no notice required and seasonal preferences are not considered to promote better attendance, lack of provision of guidelines and training materials to Community Liaisons Officers so as to facilitate a more effective, efficient and targeted approach to community policing.

It is on the basis of the foregoing account that the following issues and areas for further research are put forward in a bid to improve future community policing in Uganda and possibly beyond.
• Community policing should be perceived and practiced as a professional endeavor based on principles of policing and management ethics. However, a conducive political environment is also important in community policing.
• Strategic planning with specific objectives and targets should be in place to enable the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system that measure impact rather than performance.
• The restoration of public confidence and trust should be central to community policing.

REFERENCES


