

# A STAFF DEVELOPMENT TECHNIQUE

By Michael A. Lytle

An objective of criminal justice higher education is to provide the student with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have an immediate application to the student's operational working environment.

We cannot overlook, however, the necessity of cultivating an appreciation in and developing an insight into the longer range environment and realities of planning, organization, directing, and controlling the criminal justice agency. We have an obligation to prepare criminal justice employees with training in administrative skills early in their career — not later, when it is often an afterthought.

It certainly is not fair to the individual or to the functional well-being of the agency to expect superior performance from an employee appointed or promoted to management duties without adequate preparation and training. A variety of seminars, specialist short-courses, and on-the-job-training programs exist in criminal justice to attempt to fulfill this need. Using creative techniques and teaching methods, agency trainers and criminal justice educators can integrate management and staff development into many learning situations.

In the criminal justice program at Cleveland State Community College, Cleveland, Tennessee, most of the students are pre-service and in-service personnel oriented toward law enforcement

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careers. Still, a number of the students have expressed career interests in the social services and corrections.

Cleveland State offers "Externship in Criminal and Juvenile Justice," a six quarter-hour course usually completed by the student during his last six hours in the associate degree program. The externship exists primarily to place the pre-service student in an 80-hour field experience with a host criminal justice agency.

Anyone already employed in criminal justice is permitted to earn his 80 required hours in the course of his normal duties. All externship students are given directed readings and have specified writing projects due each week of the course. Every effort is made to individualize the student's externship to an agency of the student's interest - police, courts, or corrections.

As the externship coordinator, my concern was to provide a worthwhile learning experience for the more experienced students who may have three or more years of in-service agency employment. The concern for these students was not to provide them an introduction to the operations of a criminal justice agency and agency employment, as it is with the pre-service. Rather, the externship designed for these students has as its underlying thesis the development of the student's administrative skill and potential for staff duties later in his career.

It had been this instructor's experience as a military staff officer and later in working with criminal justice education and training programs that little is done to equip the line employee with the necessary skills to perform staff duties effectively. The line employee usually lacks awareness of the decision-making process, critical analysis of data, and the concept of completed staff work.

Another shortcoming that has been observed is that many criminal justice personnel lack training in putting their thoughts down on paper in a logical and workable format. Many an innovative idea has probably been lost because the employee was unable to communicate his recommendations and supporting data into a form useful to a decision-maker (e.g., the chief).

In an attempt to partially alleviate these difficulties, the experienced criminal justice students participate in an externship option that requires each to prepare a comprehensive staff study. Each student selects a topic that is mutually acceptable to the student and the instructor. The students are encouraged to meet with their administrators in order to select a topic. Most of the students are

able to arrange such a conference with ease. Working on real problems adds substance and value to the student's research and problem-solving efforts. By developing a topic in conference with their own agency administrator, the student also senses a bit of the staff role.

Two primary resources have been used to train the students in the purpose, format, and content of the criminal justice staff study. An article by David M. Hanley entitled "The Staff Study: An Administrative Tool for Decision-Making" appeared in the May 1975 issue of *Law and Order*. The other source is a programmed workbook published by the US Army Infantry School - *The Staff Study: A Self-Instructional Lesson*. Each student is provided copies of these sources.

The programmed workbook, approximately 80 pages long, guides the student step-by-step through the preparation of a staff study and contains numerous examples throughout. A sample of the desired finished product is contained in the book. The only limitation with the programmed workbook is that military terminology are examples used to illustrate different teaching points. These tend to distract or confuse the student. This instructor is in the process of seeking permission from the US Army Infantry School to modify the programmed workbook for local use so that it contains criminal justice terminology, situations, and examples.

The course objectives are not achieved solely by writing a staff study. The project needs to be coupled with discussions of the decision-making process, the role of staff in a criminal justice agency, line-staff relationships, and the concept of completed staff work. The writing project requires scheduling at least two instructor-student conferences. The initial conference is used to discuss the student's topic, limit its scope, discuss data sources and available literature, and insure that the student understands the staff study purpose and format. The second conference, at mid-course, is used to monitor the student's progress. A useful monitoring device is to have the student construct a "mini" outline (2 pages long) of his proposed final study using the staff study format. This outline helps the instructor to critique the student's work, check format, and to find out if the student is using sound assumptions, facts, and data to support his conclusions and recommendations.

Based on an experience factor of two years and approximately 30 student staff studies, the following generalizations can be made with some safety:

- the staff study project can be used with in-service personnel employed in all components of the criminal justice system.

- the staff study project is in keeping with the spirit of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals regarding the development of human resources.

- the staff study project can be utilized for in-service management development by agencies themselves, contingent upon the availability of a qualified instructor.

- student participants generally reported a better insight into line-staff relationships and the utility of completed staff work.

- student participants generally expressed increased awareness in the necessity for effective writing and critical analysis of data as an aid to effective decision-making.

- student participants expressed increased confidence in making recommendations for constructive change within their agencies.

- student participants identified the relationship between sound planning and agency effectiveness.

- student participants felt they had been equipped with a useful managerial tool as a result of the writing project experience.

In-service personnel involved in the staff study project have been mostly law enforcement personnel from a variety of agencies. Some of the agencies represented included the Tennessee Highway Patrol, the Chattanooga, Red Bank, Spring City, Dunlap, Athens, and Cleveland (TN) Police Departments, the Hamilton and Bradley County Sheriff Departments, and the Security Division of American National Bank.

A closing would not be in order without the comment that several of the finished student projects were of such high quality that they have been utilized by the agencies. Several of the student staff studies have been the basis for implementation or modification of various techniques, procedures and training programs. One hopes that the projects have served to stimulate the development of managerial talents in those criminal justice practitioners who have participated in this learning experience.

The author, Michael A. Lytle, is an instructor in the Criminal Justice Department at Cleveland State Community College, Cleveland, Tennessee 37311. Mr. Lytle extends his thanks and appreciation to Chief Clyde Willholt of the Chattanooga Police Department for the enthusiastic support and assistance he has given the externship program.



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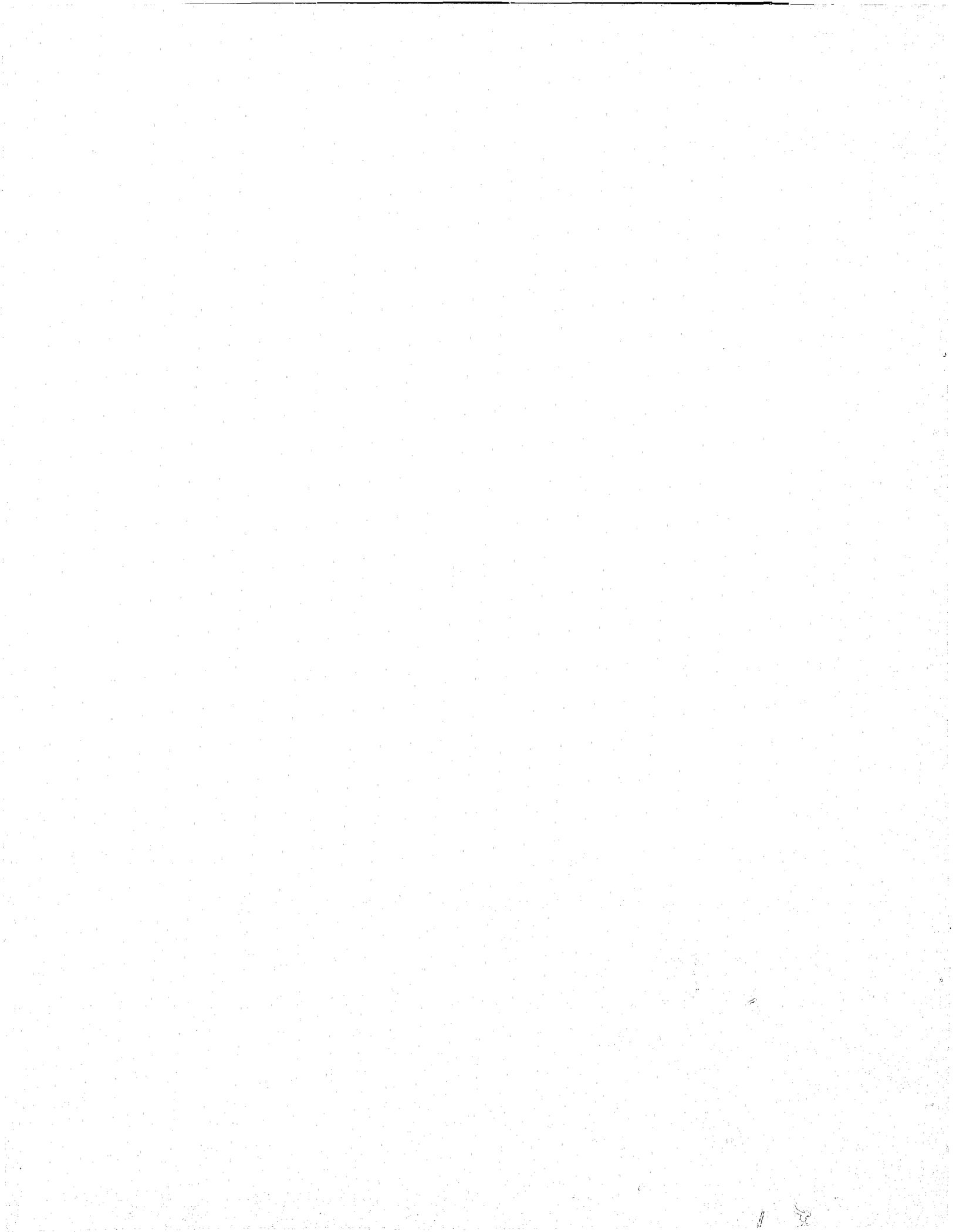
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