



## Cognitive analysis of the (Bingol Anti Terror Police Department) BATPD Buddy Program

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### Abstract

Buddy programs help newcomers to smooth transition. The programs also try to increase the performance of the new personnel, give them a moral support and provide a proper atmosphere. This study aims to figure out the deficiencies of the buddy program implemented in Bingol Anti-Terror Police Department (BATPD) and try to develop effective solutions for the program's shortages. Thus, the newcomers are able to adapt to the organization in the fastest way without losing time and energy. In this study, the researcher applied observations and interviews to measure the effectiveness of the program. The participants were selected all of the newcomers who joined the organization in 2012. Data collection process took almost 12 months. According to results of the research, insufficient physical conditions of the unit, multitasking character of the personnel, and incompetent buddies are three reasons that hinder the program from being more successful. Training programs for buddies, focusing on one task at the one time, and more comfortable designed atmosphere in the organization are potential solutions for a better program.

**Keywords:** Law enforcement; buddy programs; cognitive analysis; knowledge sharing; performance increasing

### Introduction

New hires feel like outsiders when they start the job. They have many questions about their tasks, colleagues, and environment of the organization in their minds. Buddy programs help new hires to understand the organization's culture and make them feel comfortable. The program's success is affected by many factors such as the quality of the buddies, communication skills, new hires' capacities, the organizational environment, and buddy/new officer affiliation. Differently from mentoring or coaching programs, buddy programs do not focus on individuals' development or their job-related skills. Buddy programs are performed in armies, police units, hospitals, schools and many other organizations.

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The Bingöl Police Department (BATPD) is a critical unit that fights against terrorism in the east part of Turkey. From different ranks more than 80 officers work for BATPD. Bingöl is the one of the critical and most broad-based city in the east part of Turkey, and it can represent the whole east part area of the country because of this nature. In addition, BATPD is an effective branch that implements numerous operations in every historical period of the country against terrorism. With this characteristic, it has been one of the most significant divisions of the Bingöl Police Department. This unit's success against terrorism is directly related to the east part of the country's general security.

Every year approximately 20 officers leave the department because of different reasons, such as personal conflicts, early retirements, appointments, and discipline punishments. Needless to say, having quality personnel, increasing their retention, and providing a consistent transition that influences this department's accomplishment. BATPD buddy program aims to increase retention of new officers and help a quality transition for them by giving moral support, social connections, and a suitable atmosphere to ask questions. The program covers division chiefs, buddy officers, and new officers. Buddy officers are experienced team members, who are selected by division chiefs. A Buddy officer should be a confident friend, morally supportive, and an experienced resource. They should introduce the department to the new officers and help them to be a team member. The new officers are people, who are either new graduates or are from other departments. They need to be trained in order to learning the culture of the department and their responsibilities.

The buddy program takes one year. During the first month, buddy officers and new officers meet at least twice per week. During second and third months, they meet twice per month. The rest of the year, they meet once a month. Although the program partly contributes to decrease turnover rates and moderately help new officers to learn the department's culture, it needs to be more effective to entirely achieve success. The effectiveness of program and potential success of the unit can be increased by using particular cognitive approaches.

Buddy program in the Bingöl Anti-terror Department (BATPD) aims to increase retention of new officers and offers a quality transition for them by giving moral support, social connections, and a suitable atmosphere to ask questions. Having quality personnel, increasing their retention, and providing a consistent transition influence the BATPD's accomplishment. The program covers division chiefs, buddies, and new officers. The program's success is affected by many factors such as the buddies' communication skills, new hires' capacities, the organizational environment, and buddy/new officer relationship. The buddy program focuses on all of the mentioned factors because they are related to the learning process of new hires. Using critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity can increase the program's effectiveness and potential of its success.

## 1. Literature Review

Lewis (2005) emphasizes the importance of developing creativity, critical thinking and problem solving techniques in education (p.40). In particular, he points out that teaching is a significant part of improvement of critical thinking in children and that creativity should be protected, especially in technology education. In order to protect creativity, cognitive abilities and critical thinking, new standards should be designed in the education of technology. Buckingham (2005) asserts that there are two common flawed assumptions in organizations. First, each person can learn to be competent almost in every field. Second, each person's the greatest growth is in her greatest weakness (p.60). When organizations use this defective approach, they spent money and time to train people and plug their gaps in competence.

According to George and Jones (2007), creativity can be defined as the creation of fresh and practical ideas (p.217). Freshness represents new ways of thinking; practicality means having a potential to contribute to the performance and happiness of the individuals, groups, and organizations. Creativity is an efficient reaction for problems as a result of constant learning. Innovation is defined as a successful practice of creative ideas (Zhang & Bartol, 2010, p.112). A creative process involves the following learning steps: detection of a problem or an opportunity, information collection, creation of creative ideas, choice of creative ideas, and implementation of them. Gong, Huang, and Farh (2009) define creativity as the producing of new and practical ideas. They searched for the influence of employee creativity on job performance (p.766). They found that employee creativity positively affects the employee job performance. Also, employee creativity has an impact on employee learning orientation and transformational leadership (Theurer, & Schmidt, 2008, p.263). Employee creativity and self-efficacy play mediator role in these relationships.

Making good decisions for both individuals and organizations is critical at all times. McGrath (2009) highlights the meaning of making good decisions and shows the ways to improve them as well as investigating the reasons why some can make better decisions than others (p.99). He offers a guide for developing a mind-set enabling good decision-making. In an organization, from executives to employees at all levels, people make decisions. Regardless of the fact that these decisions are big, small, easy, difficult, critical or routine, all of them are significant and have an essential influence on organizations' success. He emphasizes that companies' decisions make them successes or failures. Levine (2010) points out that the critical thinking process targets improving an approach that encourages people to question situations, seeking evidence and searching for the relationship between cause and effect (p.71). People who can think critically seek divergent answers

rather than convergent ones. In addition, he implies that there is a difference between adults and young people in critical thinking and socializing processes. While adults are prone to socializing, young people have a tendency to ask many questions.

Ashley and Oliver (2010) searched for creative leaders' point of views about implementation and evaluation of big ideas by asking more than 120 leaders during a 30-years period. They focused on the process of producing creative ideas in the advertisement sector. According to them, creativity is used to improve and implement new ideas in business environment (p. 118). These new ideas can be practiced in new markets by using new technologies. Also they implied that creative leaders are open for new technologies more than traditional leaders, and creativity has a constantly crucial importance in organizational environment. Lunney (2010) aims to show that critical thinking can be used in the diagnostic process of the nursing care. In order to relieve problems, reduce risks, and develop optimal health, nurses use critical thinking (p.85). During this process, they use many cognitive skills such as information seeking, creativity, intuition, transforming knowledge, and intellectual integrity. All of the cognitive skills cannot be used in every case, but they help the diagnostic process.

Buddy programs are implemented in army, police, hospitals, schools and many other organizations. These programs usually aim to help new employees to understand the organization's culture and make them feel comfortable. New hires feel like outsiders when they start the job. They have many questions about their tasks, colleagues, and environment of the organization in their minds. Differently from mentoring or coaching programs, buddy programs do not focus on individuals' development or job-related skills. They assist new hires to make a quality transition to organizations (Vanderberg, 1998, p.65)

Buddy programs provide several benefits to buddies, and managers aside from new hires. Buddies can build new skill sets, develop leadership skills, and acquire the organization's values. They can also improve relationships while introducing other employees to new hires. Managers whose employees attending the buddy program as buddies and new hires, can build teamwork, improve his/her department's retention, increase his/her employees' performance and leadership skills (Barlow, 2008). Managers select buddies on the basis of employees' commitment to the company's policies. At the beginning of the program, the goal and content of the program are explained to buddies and new hires.

Two kinds of knowledge are shared during the buddy program between buddies and new hires: explicit and implicit. Explicit knowledge is easy to articulate. Buddies provide some information such as organizational policies, procedures, and rules. These kinds of information are explicit. It can also be acquired from documents, books, and other sources. However, implicit

knowledge is really hard to obtain and share. During the buddy programs, buddies mostly share tacit knowledge with new hires. The organization's culture, strategies, and values are tacit knowledge (Gichuru and Tobin, 2004).

Buddy programs help to new hires in understanding organizational culture more quickly. Organizational culture includes perceptions, mutual beliefs and the employees' expectations from the organization. It is built by the employees' reactions against to specific incidents. Boan (2006) points out that people are architect of their environments, and they build organizational culture by responding to external factors (p.53). Members of an organization are exposed to a large amount of information, and it is hard to deal with for them. They need to develop cognitive strategies to manage this information. Although buddy programs do not primarily aim to increase organizational performance, it indirectly contributes to enhance the performance (Vanderberg & Springle, 1998, p.65). Organizational culture has a significant impact on employees' performance (Boan, 2006). Therefore, there is a relationship between buddy programs and organizational performance.

Konig, Buhner, and Murling (2005) describe multitasking as a skill to succeed more than one execution by switching between tasks simultaneously. According to them, multitasking is influenced by fluid intelligence, working memory, and attention (p.247). Intelligence mostly is a good predictor of several performance features. They claim that there is a positive relationship between multitasking and job performance. In addition, Hembrooke and Gay (2003) investigated multitasking effects on job performance and found out that people's performance increase when focusing on one thing than multiple activities (p.52). Berman and West (2008) assert that emotional intelligence is primarily important tool for public managers to know their strengths and weaknesses, improve their adaptableness, develop their relationship skills and effectively communicate with others (p.751). Also, managerial emotional intelligence is developed by feedback, modeling and mentoring activities.

## **2. Methodology**

This study has been conducted in the BATPD during one year from September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Population of the study is all of the counterterror branch personnel in Bingol, which are 80 police officers. The sample is 20 newcomers who have joined the department in appointment term of 2012. All of the newcomers, who generate whole sample of the study, have attended the buddy program. During this study, observation and interview methods have been used. Before starting the observation, the observation's goal and steps were explained. The participants were informed about the project with all details. The observation time was confirmed as 12 months. This information made the participant at ease, and they were mostly comfortable

during the observations. However, position of the researcher could occasionally disturb the participants by giving them feeling of surveillance. Despite these difficulties, the researcher can collect reliable data by observing the buddies and newcomers throughout the research. In other words, the difficulties experienced did not seriously damage the quality of obtained data. During the observations, the researcher made a chart on the paper \_which can include physical descriptions, acts, and unexpected events\_ were helpful to take legible notes. The researcher motivated the participant to make more contribution to the interview process. He considered the factors that help to motivate the participant to contribute to the interview project. The interview process was recorded and transcribed. For analyzing data, the researcher used cognitive maps and coding method; therefore, he could grasp mentality of the participants.

### 3. Results

Buddy programs' have three components: A buddy, new hire, and organizational environment. The program's success is mainly affected by buddies' interpersonal skills, new hires' capacity, and usefulness of the relationship between buddy and new hires as well as appropriateness of the organizational atmosphere. According to research, BATPD buddy program suffers from several weaknesses. The first flaw is about selected buddies' communication skills. During the program some pairs' relationships were ended due to new hires' request. Buddies were selected on the basis of their understanding and commitment to the organization's policies and values. Using this standard can be effective to select loyal and faithful people, but at the same time a buddy should be a person who is attractive, good listener, easy to talk, and warm. Also, an ideal buddy has to have patience, a good communication and interpersonal skills, and many other abilities. Emotional intelligence is described as a skill to understand and express emotions and to employ this information to develop self-administration and relationship with others (Berman and West, 2008, p.753). Emotional intelligence involves a broad range of abilities and behaviors that include interpersonal and communication skills. Therefore, being a good buddy depends on having a good emotional intelligence. In the selection of buddies, employees' emotional intelligence should be one of the main criteria. Thus, more skillful employees can be picked as buddies.

The second hazardous fault about the program is organizational atmosphere in which buddies and new hires meet and share knowledge. During BATPD buddy program, a buddy and a new hire are periodically supposed to meet the department's restaurant and cafeteria for lunch and coffee break. When they meet restaurant or cafeteria, they reluctantly shared the same tables with many other employees. New hires need to ask many questions to buddies about the organization's policy, location of facilities, equipment, and supplies and other employees' positions, even if some

of their questions can be called “stupid” questions. They cannot experience an effective communication due to a couple of reasons. First, the noisy atmosphere hinders new hires to understand buddies’ talks. Because every kind of conversation is attractive for new hires, and during their meeting their attention are attracted other employees’ dialogues. New hires also experience the cocktail party problem during their meetings, and they need to use selective attention to track buddies message and at the same time to disregard other officers’ dialogs. Focusing on the buddies’ words, following their characteristics of speech, and turning one of their ears toward their buddies can be a good solution to avoid being distracted by the semantic content of conversation from other employees in the restaurant or cafeteria. Moreover, another solution might be that the department can switch buddies and new hires meeting time or can arrange more appropriate meeting area than the noisy restaurant and cafeteria.

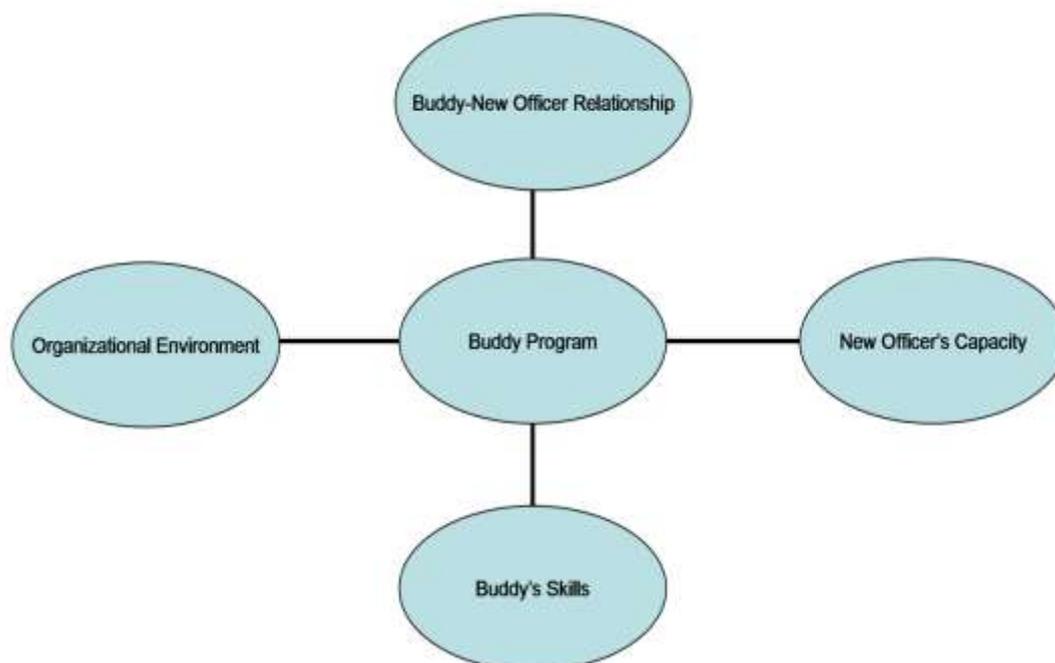
The third risky flaw of the program is buddies’ overloaded schedules that cause multitasking activities. Buddies are experienced officers of their department. Aside from being a good buddy for new hires, many other missions are supposed to complete simultaneously by the department. In particular, buddies are selected between high-performance officers; thus, maintenance of their performance is crucial for the department’s success. In this case, they should perform multitasking activities. As a practical suggestion, it can be offered that buddies make more practice about being buddy and maintaining their other responsibilities. The department should follow a policy in which same officers can be appointed as buddies several times; therefore, buddies turn their responsibilities into automatic processes and implement them fairly fast like daily routines. According to Konig, Buhner, and Murling (2005) multitasking is positively affected by working memory, attention, and fluid intelligence (p.254). Before deciding to appoint an employee as a buddy, the department has to give a test employee to measure their working memory, fluid intelligence and attention skills. Thus, multitasking can be used as a practical time management strategy. If a buddy has a large working memory capacity, attention, and fluid intelligence, s/he should implement multitasking activities. If not, one task at a time is appropriate for her (Konig, Buhner, and Murling, 2005, p.256).

Officers can understand written rules, task requirements, and they acquire other information from booklets or brochures. When it comes to learn organizational culture, which usually is more important than written rules for increasing performance, one-on-one relationships and unofficial atmospheres come into play. As an unofficial educational process, the buddy program is an effective way to transfer and share tacit knowledge for new officers and buddies. The program’s success is affected by many factors such as the quality of the buddies’ communication

skills, new hires' capacities, the organizational environment, and buddy-new officer affiliation. Figure 1 presents the relationship between buddy programs and other factors.

Though the program provides many benefits, it suffers from some weaknesses. Division chiefs select buddies and incompetent people are sometimes appointed as buddies. Some buddies either do not have good communication skills or empathy that hinders them in understanding the challenges new officers try to deal with. Also, some buddies are not trained well. The other buddies do not have enough experiences. Besides unskilled, untrained, or inexperienced buddies, the incompatible matching between buddies and new officers is a perilous problem that threatens the success of the program. The wrong matching is derived from having different personal features, working in different offices, or being in different shifts. In addition, it is hard to find an appropriate atmosphere in which a buddy and a new officer meet to share and transfer information. Some buddies make complaints that they have to do both their professional duties and other buddy-related tasks.

**Figure 1**



#### **4. Discussions**

Although the program partly contributes to a decrease in turnover rates and moderately helps new officers to learn the department's culture, it needs to be more effective to achieve success entirely. There is a gap between the new hires' current retention rates and ideal retention rates. The problem-solving cycle can be followed to find an effective solution. In the first step, the problems related with the buddy program should be identified. During the program, some

relationships between pairs were ended due to new hires' requests. Therefore, the first flaw is about buddies' communication skills. In spite of that, it is assumed that buddies are selected on the basis of their understanding and commitment to the organization's policies and values. On the contrary, some selected buddies are not competent as far as their communication skills are concerned. There are two possible alternatives: selecting skillful people after rigorous testing or deciding on satisfactory individuals and training them. Selecting the right person for the right position is a kind of art, and it seems to be an effective strategy to solve the program in this context. If organizations focused on selecting talented people, they would not have to spend much time and money. Strength covers talent, skills, and knowledge. Talent includes recurring feelings, thoughts, and behaviors; it also cannot be taught. A manager should select people depending on their talents and focusing on their strengths more than weaknesses. In addition, making correct matches between people and positions is crucially significant (Buckingham, 2005).

BATPD buddy program managers should select buddies depending on their communication skills. In other words, they have to seek and hire good communicators as buddies instead of selecting unskilled people to train for these positions. In this stage, the critical question is that how the BATPD could assess buddy nominee's communication skills. Communication skills can be evaluated by using The Therapeutic Communication Program that assess people's engagement in a conversation, understanding other's perspective, tracking other's emotional states, and eliciting relevant knowledge (Shapiro, Lancee, and Bentley, 2009, p.4). Selecting and hiring the right buddies by using this evaluation program requires having enough money, time, and other reserves. BATPD should be sure how much time and money could be set aside for this program. The next step is implementing the determined strategy to determine the good communicators. The last step is assessment of the selected buddies' performance. Pre- and post-tests can be used to evaluate the performance of the selection process.

The second issue about the program is the organizational atmosphere in which buddies and new hires meet and share knowledge. During the BATPD buddy program, a buddy and a new hire are periodically supposed to meet in the department's restaurant and cafeteria for lunch and coffee breaks. When they meet in the restaurant or cafeteria, they reluctantly shared the same tables with many other employees. New hires need to ask many questions of their buddies about the organization's policy, location of facilities, equipment, and supplies and other employees' positions, even if some of their questions can be called "stupid." They cannot experience effective communication due to a couple of reasons. In this situation, the main problem is lack of an appropriate environment to make an effective communication for buddies and new hires. This is a kind of ill-structured problem because it cannot be perceived by the administration like new hires

and buddies. In other words, the managers think that the provided atmosphere is suitable to share knowledge.

The first step should be to provide a free atmosphere for buddies to express their ideas about the buddy program's shortcomings. If the organizational atmosphere is arranged to allow people to think outside of the box, people can be creative and think productively. Creativity requires some particular characteristics for both individuals and organizations. A creative person should have individual differences. It means that they should be "open to experiences, self-confident, and internal believers about locus of control." Also, they should have task-relevant knowledge and intrinsic motivation. When it comes to organizations, "level of autonomy, form of evaluation, reward system, and importance of a task" are important factors that make a creative organizational atmosphere (George & Jones, 2007, p.216). In order to find an appropriate place for buddies and new hires to meet, the organization can arrange a special room or provide financial support to the buddies to meet outside of the organization. Also, if managers, buddies or new hires encounter a similar problem, they can easily find a solution by using the positive transfer method.

The third problem of the program is buddies' overloaded schedules that cause multitasking activities. Buddies are experienced officers in their department. Aside from being a good buddy for new hires, many other missions are supposed to be completed simultaneously by the department. In particular, buddies are selected between high-performance officers; thus, maintenance of their performance is crucial for the department's success. In this case, they should perform multitasking activities. According to Davidson (1996) multitasking is good for computers but not for human beings. When people work on one thing at a time and give their complete and undivided attention to the particular issue, they can be more productive. But BATPD buddy program demands to be multitasking from buddies.

Redefining the problem can be a good starting point. Buddies are people who have to perform their daily tasks in the organization, and they should be effective buddies for new hires. The problem is that some of the buddies could not perform well these multitasking activities spontaneously. What are some creative solutions for the problem? First, the buddies could be chosen based on their multitasking skills. Then can be trained to multitask. Second, buddies should not be employed to perform more than one task. One of these alternatives can be determined, taking into consideration the number of buddies and new hires as well as other factors. Also, conducting surveys or performing pilot studies can test the results of the selected solution. During the solution-seeking process, having domain knowledge can be helpful. Critical thinking requires approaching problems from different sides than other people. When making decisions about buddy multitasking, managers should identify and reduce risks. Every project has some weaknesses, and

some obstacles will be encountered. Hiring the right employees for the buddy program can be helpful to overcome obstacles. After implementing the project, its pros and cons can be observed, and it can be periodically developed.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

BATPD buddy program suffers from several weaknesses. These problems are buddies' inadequate communication skills, inappropriate organizational atmosphere to effectively share knowledge, and buddies' multitasking activities. Combining critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving techniques, a practical solution can be developed to produce a more effective buddy program. As a first step for each problem, the creative process can be followed: recognition or redefinition of the problem, information gathering, construction of creative ideas, choosing the solution, and execution of the solution. These stages are implemented for each problem. For example, in order to adjust the organizational atmosphere to develop more effective communication between new hires and buddies, the problem is recognized. Buddies and new hires complain about an inappropriate environment that prevents them from communicating with each other effectively. Collecting data is the next stage to understand the problem deeply and provide opportunities for people to contribute to the solution process. How important is an appropriate atmosphere for buddies to perform highly during the buddy program? What kind of pace do they need? These kinds of questions can be asked to gather information. After gathering information, people should focus on producing creative ideas. In this stage, the organizational culture can positively or negatively affect people in expressing their ideas. If the buddies and new hires feel free to explain their ideas, more alternatives can be produced. Useful ideas can be selected from many creative ideas by assessing their pros and cons in the fourth stage. Implementation is the last stage of the creative process. In this stage one or more selected ideas are executed. The selected program is regularly tested and improved.

Besides the above-mentioned creative process, problem solving and critical thinking methods can be effectively used to solve one of the buddy program's setbacks. This time buddies' ineffective communication skills can be dealt with. Using the positive transfer method, past knowledge can be utilized. Past knowledge includes personal experiences, other's practices, and conducted research. The BATPD can conduct research or a survey to use employees' past knowledge. Mentally creating the desired results is helpful to clarify project goals. Having a good communicator for the buddy program can be defined as a desired outcome. Making an outline for the project is practical to maximize the time and other sources and minimize frustrations. The outline can involve investigation, money, time, and other resources. How much money and time do

the BATPD need to improve buddies' communication skills by means of this project? If this framework is determined before starting the task, a more reasonable project can be designed. Implementing scientific searches leads to better judgments; thus, collecting data is one of the most important parts of the problem solving process. The BATPD can determine available alternatives through conducting brainstorming sessions. Then, the most appropriate solution to execute is determined. Sometimes change or modification can be required. After implementing the project, testing and comparing desired outcomes and current results can be helpful. If there is a gap, the project should be modified. The BATPD can test the results of the Buddy Program and modify it if the program needs to be changed.

Using critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity help people to solve problems effectively. During the implementation of the buddy program, BATPD has encountered several problems. Critical thinking helps people to see outside of the box. Therefore, people come up with many ideas to solve problems. The project manager of the buddy program has many alternative solutions. Problem solving methods assist people in understanding problems and improving a practical method to solve them. Also, people efficiently use their sources to find the most appropriate solution. If the problem solving method is not used to find solutions, the process would be adversely affected, and resources like time and money could not be utilized effectively. Creativity leads to innovation and practical ideas to solve problems. An innovative approach and useful thoughts help people to deal with the buddy program's issues. If creativity is not applied to find solutions, problems will not be solved.

The BATPD buddy program has two main actors: A buddy and a new officer. Their personal and professional features are important and affect the buddy program's success. Their relationship's quality and the department's environment are equally important for a successful program. Due to the fact that buddies mostly share tacit knowledge with new officers, they should be good communicators, role models as well as intelligent people. Buddies are selected in two steps. In the first step, nominees are selected depending on their commitment to department values and policies and performance history. In the second step, the selected nominees are evaluated to measure their emotional intelligence capacity, interpersonal and communication skills. The buddies attend a buddy preparation course, which aims to teach what buddies do by using cognitive approaches. The training sessions can be helpful to improve emotional intelligence. Berman and West (2008) suggest that training helps to develop emotional intelligence (p.744). After the training, candidates take a test, and only successful officers become buddies. Hence, the best candidates are chosen as buddies.

The organizational atmosphere has a vital impact on the interaction between buddies and new officers. There are two alternatives to provide an ideal atmosphere for buddies and new officers. First, an appropriate schedule is arranged for meetings. When buddies and new hires go to the restaurant and cafeteria then can be alone and talk about new officers' concerns and questions without disturbed by others' noises. Changing the buddies and new officers' lunch and coffee break times the new schedule can be arranged. The second alternative is arranging different restaurants for their meeting; thus, they can talk without restraint. The department should separate a budget for these kinds of activities.

Buddies should be multitasking to handle both buddy's duties and other professional tasks. The buddies' multitasking activities are significant issue that may cause program failure. Some buddies cannot effectively perform their duties because of their excessive workload. Therefore, in the new implementation, buddies are selected on the basis of their working memory capacity, fluid intelligence, and attention; thus, they can deal with multitasking activities. Experienced buddies are employed for constant buddy program. They are used to multitasking activities making practice, and they can effortlessly handle both their professional responsibilities and buddy program tasks. After modification, the program becomes a great tool to achieve the departments' goals.

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