

## Police Training or Police Education: View on the Matter

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### Abstract

In any transformational processes taking place in society, the problem of the law enforcement system's unhindered functioning plays a key role. In the light of recent high-profile events related to the activities of the police and other law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, the issue of the high-quality training of police officers has become extremely important. Different views on the course of police reforming, on the possibility or impossibility of forming a reliable specialist – a police officer in a short time are widely discussed in society. That is why it will be useful to attract the positive experience of foreign countries, which will lead to increased interest in studying trends and dynamics of the police system, finding new, flexible, and effective approaches to ensure certain changes and innovations. The paper presents an analysis of the results of reforming police training systems in foreign countries (USA, Europe, and Asia). The material for the study was the doctrines and views of modern scientists on the models and areas of the police institutes' improvement; statistics characterizing the results of the reforms. It was determined that in modern psychological and legal practice, there are at least three approaches to assessing the need to increase the level of police officers' training. It was emphasized that reforming the law enforcement system makes new demands not only on the personality of the police officer but also on the educational conditions of personality formation. It was argued that the content and technology of new police education should be aimed at creating such psychological conditions for the personality development of future professionals, which will ensure the formation of professional competence and actualization of the personal potential of police officers. Particular attention was paid to the consideration of reforms in the structure of the National Police in post-crisis situations. The question of the need to conceptualize the qualification requirements for a police officer and the creation of a modern model of police education was raised.

**Keywords:** police training, police education, police officer, professional competence.

### 1. Introduction

The content of education, including vocational education, reflects the state of society, the transition from one state to another. Nowadays it is a transition from the industrial society of the XX century to the post-industrial (or information) XXI century. The development and functioning of educational processes are determined by all factors and conditions of society's existence: economic, political, social, cultural, and others (Ievdokimova, 2017). Reforming the police training system is one of the most important and difficult tasks of social transformation in any environment. Moreover, it is particularly difficult to reform the police in post-crisis situations, when the implementation of the reform involves much more than just a technical solution or external changes in the activities of police educational institutions. Any changes in the field of police training inevitably have serious consequences both for the results of police officers' professional activities and for the public assessment of the results of their work (Ostapovich, et al., 2020; Shvets, et al., 2020).

In addition, transformations in the law enforcement area are a challenge for the mental and psychological resources of police officers, their ability to perform their functions in a transformational



society (Aleksandrov, Okhrimenko, & Drozd, 2017; Bondarenko, et al., 2020; Prontenko, et al., 2020). At the same time, the study of foreign experience in the functioning of police education is of great importance, especially of those countries where the police have a long history and enjoy a deservedly high reputation. Although police training systems abroad are significantly different from domestic ones and function in other ways, it can still be argued that objective preconditions for constructive thinking and creative application of their experience are actual.

Despite the fact that the psychological aspects of the professional development of law enforcement agencies are a common subject of scientific research, the problem of forming the personality of a police officer in the context of vocational education is especially relevant today. Reforming the law enforcement system makes new demands not only on the personality of the police officer but also on the educational conditions in which such a personality is formed. The content and technologies of the new police education should be aimed at creating such psychological conditions for the personality development of future professionals, which will ensure the formation of professional competence and actualization of the personal potential of specialists in this field. At the same time, the question about the model of a professional which will determine the concept and specifics of police training arises. There is no doubt that in the context of reforming, such a concept in general, and the impact of education on the personality of a police officer, in particular, outlines a number of controversial issues that can not be resolved on the basis of domestic research, which is currently at the initial stage.

## 2. Literature Review

In the global context, the problem of police education and the impact of its various forms on the formation of the police personality does not lose its relevance. Thus, reviewing the Police Academic Education Program, C. Paterson (2015) argues that police education is a major issue in the process of cultural changes and reforms. Such statements encourage serious consideration of the experience of foreign researchers and analysis of their scientific achievements in order to use the psychological support of professional training of police officers in our country.

The link between education and police activities has long been studied by law enforcement professionals. As noted by R.C. Trojanowicz and T.G. Nicholson (1976), among police and criminal justice officials, the need for increased academic requirements for those willing to serve in the police has long been urgent. One of their main arguments was that the level of intelligence of a police officer should be at the same level as that of the average citizen, or even exceed it. Another argument was that the desire to "professionalize" the police considers a degree that corresponds to four years of college as a mandatory requirement.

Research on the benefits of higher education of police officers on the example of the United States can be divided into two distinct groups. The first group includes 1970s research on the impact of higher education on police officers' relations. Police officers educated at the university were less authoritarian (Parker, Donnelly, Gerwitz, Marcus, & Kowalewski, 1976), less cynical (Regoli, 1976) than those who did not study at a university, and the higher the level of education is, the more sensitive to changes the value system of police officers becomes, which provides them with more ethical professional behavior (Guller, 1972). Research has also shown that it is not criminology or criminal justice courses that have led to a more ethical and cultural attitude towards the population, but the experience of studying at the university as a whole (Roberg, & Bonn, 2004).

The investigations by another group of authors, which appeared in the early 2000s, suggest some doubts about education at the university by the future police officers. For example, S. Owen and K. Wagner (2008) found that police officers who had studied criminal justice showed a higher level of authoritarianism than those who had studied other disciplines. B. Bjerregaard and V.B. Lord (2004), who took the influence of education on the attitude to ethics in criminal proceedings as a basis, came to somewhat similar conclusions. This view has been supported by other researchers who have identified a correlation between police education levels and significant changes in their value system (Bufkin, 2004; Hays, Regoli, & Hewitt, 2007).

In addition, it should be noted that the determination of the potential value of higher police education is hampered by the lack of appropriate criteria for its mastery. In this perspective, it is worth noting the lack of clarity of the purpose of practice-oriented education. That is why the study of the special education of



specialists, the development and determination of the professional training indicators of police officers from the perspective of positive foreign experience is an urgent theoretical and applied problem.

**The aim of the research** is to study the results of the reforms of police training systems carried out in foreign countries (USA, Europe, and Asia) in the context of the further use of positive experience and prevention of possible mistakes.

### 3. Method

The material of the research was the doctrines and views of modern foreign researchers on the models and directions of the police institutes improvement; analytical and statistical data characterizing the results of the reforms. The comparative analysis, systematization, and generalization of scientific research data on the outlined issues were used as basic research methods. Particular attention was paid to the current experience of improving police bodies in different countries, as well as to considering reforms in the police structure in post-crisis situations.

The study was performed in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Ethics of Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs, which was developed on the basis of Ukrainian and world experience of ethical rule-making, expert recommendations, taking into account the proposals of the structural units of the university. This document was approved by the Academic Council of the Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs (Protocol № 13 of 24.12.2019) and put into effect by the order of the Rector of the University (Order № 875 of 27.12.2019). According to its provisions, members of the scientific community are guided in their activities by the principles of autonomy, independence in spreading knowledge and information, conducting research, and applying the results. The principles of defending honesty, justice, respect, responsibility, observance of ethical principles, and rules of creative activity are taken into account in order to establish trust in the results of scientific achievements.

### 4. Results

Police officers face more serious challenges in today's world. General training, including tactical training, which is traditionally present in academies, is no longer sufficient. Police officers need more than mechanical skills or the ability to memorize mechanically. Currently, according to American researchers (Hudson, 2014), higher-level training, which would include problem-based learning, the formation of critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills, is required. Improving the level of training can help to reduce public order violations and prepare police officers to interact with people of all segments of the population better. Recent events in the United States confirm this position.

At the same time, P.J. McDermott and D. Hulse (2012) point out that traditional teaching at the academy does not promote problem-solving skills. Instead, they propose an approach to teaching and education in which an instructor first provides the training material and then evaluates its mastery. This position is really rational because police officers have a duty to maintain social order and build public relations. At that time, young police officers, who are just beginning to perform their professional duties, are deprived of problem-solving skills.

Most police academies use a behavioral style of studying in which information is provided through a lecture, and a cadet is expected to apply this information in practice. According to some researchers (Sereni-Massinger, & Wood, 2016), 90% of studying at the academy is aimed at solving problems with the expectation of their understanding. Learning, based only on a reproducible approach, does not provide learners with opportunities to improve problem-solving skills through the use of critical thinking. The training focused on problem-solving, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication will provide modern law enforcement with a set of professional skills that will help cope with the events that arise in the daily activities of police officers more effectively.

Critical thinking is essential for any professional because it gives improved results not only for the individual with critical thinking but also for those who this professional serves. The application of cognitive skills in the decision-making process also helps to achieve a mutually desirable result for both a law enforcement officer and society.

Interpersonal communication skills are usually not included in the curriculum, although these skills should be aimed at de-escalating conflict situations (Fedorenko, Dotsenko, Okhrimenko, Radchenko, &



Gorbenko, 2020). Emotional intelligence is considered an important aspect of the ability to control one's emotions. At the same time, as some researchers point out (Sereni-Massinger, & Wood, 2016), emotional intelligence programs work if they are taught and managed by competent instructors. However, many instructors are not competent enough because they are not experts in the empirical training of emotional intelligence. Much of police education consists mainly of the use of firearms, tactical training, and arrest methods. In our opinion, little attention is paid to training that focuses on problem situations and provides a basis for considering human behavior in terms of critical thinking, emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, and conflict resolution. Professional development of transferable skills and an appropriate educational component are needed for today's police to be properly trained for the service.

In addition, increasing educational requirements are emphasized, demonstrating that educated police officers have certain desirable characteristics that their less-educated colleagues lack (Smith, & Aamodt, 1997). Indeed, in comparison with less-educated colleagues, police officers with higher education are less authoritarian and dogmatic, more cautious; have better communication skills, and are characterized by a more positive attitude to the problems cooperating with the community.

In addition, European researchers T. Feltes and R. Peace (2006) underline the importance of conceptualizing requirements and point out that models of police education should include clear goals; socially-oriented content of educational programs; an appropriate method to facilitate the transition from law enforcement to public cooperation. In this view, it can be stated that the transition to police cooperation with the public should be accompanied by reforming police education, aimed at improving the quality of police activities. For example, in the Netherlands, the police use a dual education and training system to facilitate a clear link between theory and practice (Peeters, 2013). This provides a common basis with police agencies for the training of police officers, formulating the professional requirements of different police functions when educational institutions determine the curriculum and training requirements appropriate to the profession.

It should be noted that quite often researchers distinguish the concepts of "training" and "education" in relation to police training. We believe that police education seeks to encourage officers who actively interact with different segments of society to think more flexibly. The lack of special police education programs to support this cultural transition explains the delay between innovations in law enforcement and their application in practice.

In democratic societies, the police exist in a political dimension that recognizes the importance of social justice, social cohesion, honesty, equality, and human rights. R. Roberg and S. Bonn (2004) argue that education (rather than training) is necessary for the development of these values, and therefore it is effective to distinguish between these concepts as it supports and increases police productivity, responsibility, and professionalism. Therefore, it should be noted that the evidence-based relationship between higher education and law enforcement provides a platform for agreement on what the main task of the police is and how to address it, as well as what benefits to consider.

The requirements for democratic foundations of police activities (professionalism, responsibility, legality) provide a potential basis for understanding how a focus on police education can contribute to the training and development of police officers at all levels of the police hierarchy and the recognition of the practical benefits of "values" as engines of police reforms. As recognized by D. Cox (2011), reforming police education and training requires a clear conceptualization of police "values" that can be manifested in all three ways of the police subculture.

Scientists in the United States and Europe are not the only ones emphasizing the need to create a clear model of police education and to define its central principles. For example, researchers from Thailand S. Chatthong, M. Kovitaya, and M. Kongjaroen (2014) point out that the Thai police have been always criticized, which led to the creation of a reform plan. In their opinion, an important component of these changes should be the formation of professional police thinking. There is some agreement on what characterizes effective professional police thinking and what actions should be applied in the training model. Thus, in particular, we can conclude that four key characteristics are preferred in today's policing: ethical behavior, trust, communication, and the ability to think critically, creatively, and strategically. In addition, creating joint plans for the future, generating commitment to the organization, caring for subordinates, and solving problems are important for the work-related consciousness.





Another example of Asian research on police education is the work of L. Cao, L. Huang, and I. Sun (2006), who note that Taiwan's police training system has undergone significant changes during the transition to democracy. This system is a dichotomy in which the Police College provides training for low-ranking police personnel, while the Central Police University is responsible for training senior police officers. A reflection of Taiwan's police reform rejects police education as a closed system, as well as includes more social sciences in the police education curriculum.

As for police training in India, it does not involve the study of the humanities and social sciences. J. Scott, D. Evans, and A. Verma (2009) criticize the training of Indian police officers and argue that calls for reform are generally ignored. India understands the importance of studying the social sciences, but prefers technical skills. The studies on the impact of such a higher education model on police constables in India showed negative results and that higher education police officers had stricter assessment systems and were less interested in protecting citizens' rights and therefore indifferent to legal boundaries.

## 5. Discussion

The problem of police education can also be developed in a rather unexpected psychological aspect. In an analytical review of the impact of education on the quality of police activities, C.W. Telep (2011) indicates that even when education does not have a statistically proven impact on police performance, it can still be useful for raising educational standards. Even if the efficiency of work does not change, raising educational standards can lead to increased authority and respect for this area of socioeconomic activity. And, indeed, the requirement of education will help to overcome the misconception that the work of a police officer is characterized by simple tasks that anyone can handle. In this context, attention should be paid to the opinion of R. Roberg and S. Bonn (2004), who argued that the main goal of education should be to abolish the idea that is too common in our society, that if a person does not want to charge oneself with becoming someone of a virtuous profession in the eyes of society, one can always become a police officer. Although the police have large discretion, a lot of responsibilities, and work independently, just like teachers, they also make decisions that affect the lives of citizens, just like prosecutors and judges. However, while these professions require higher education, police lag behind in this context.

Scholars often view education, in particular obtaining a bachelor's degree after four years of study, as a means of improving police relations and executive discipline (Owen, & Wagner, 2008; McDermott, & Hulse, 2012; Telep, 2011). E.A. Paoline, W. Terrill, and M. T. Rossler (2015) support this idea and note that both proponents and opponents of higher police education have not clearly defined the exact characteristics that a police officer with higher education will bring to this field. In fact, this should have promised a more professional police approach, as police officers with higher education should be more open in their belief system and less dogmatic and focused on the use of punishment, less authoritarian, more inclined to accept and understand ethnic issues, more friendly to legal restrictions at work.

Researchers also note that on the basis of mastering educational programs, police officers must have certain psychological qualities: a high level of intellectual performance, emotional stability, honesty, openness, etc. (Barko, Okhrimenko, Ostapovich, Medvediev, & Sprynchuk, 2020; Shvets, et al., 2020). In addition, the negative effects of education were noted. For example, police officers with higher education were less satisfied with their work (Barko, Okhrimenko, Medvediev, Vagina, & Okhrimenko, 2020). Therefore, high-quality education can outline both positive consequences and individual miscalculations. However, the relationship between mastering educational programs and further professional activities is still visible.

Although modern works have corrected some of the shortcomings of previous research on the impact of education on a number of work-related factors connected with the police officers' perception of their role, leadership, organization, and job satisfaction, they have shown mixed results (Paoline, Terrill, Rossler, 2015). In addition, multidimensional analytical models tend to explain little of the differences in attitudes demonstrated by police officers, suggesting other factors.

## 6. Conclusions

Thus, all things considered, it can be argued that in modern psychological and legal practice, there are at least three approaches to assessing the need to increase the level of education of police officers. The first



group of scholars has a rather negative attitude towards educated police officers, saying that, for example, police officers with higher education are usually more demanding of working conditions, less satisfied with their work, more cynical about police activity, and give lower marks to their organization.

The second approach is based on the position that there is no significant difference in the attitude to work of educated police officers and their less-educated colleagues; there is no substantial difference in levels of professionalism, stress, acceptance or rejection of the military model of police organizations, etc.

Finally, the vast majority of American and European researchers consider that "the level of intelligence of a police officer should be at the same level as that of an average citizen, or exceed it." The representatives of this approach convincingly raise the question of the need for at least four years of police training, arguing that in comparison with their less-educated colleagues, police officers with basic education are less authoritarian and dogmatic; are more cautious; have better communication skills and are characterized by a more positive attitude to the problems of interaction with the population.

Determining the potential value of higher police education in Ukraine is hindered by the lack of appropriate modern criteria for training, as well as the lack of clarity of the ultimate goal of practice-oriented education. Therefore, the issue of conceptualization of qualification requirements for law enforcement professional and the creation of a modern model of police education, which should contain clear goals, socially-oriented content of educational programs, and an appropriate psychologically, justified and psychologically developed method to facilitate the transition from law enforcement to the cooperation with the public is becoming even more relevant. Instead, the study of the positive experience of the police provides an opportunity to understand the problems of the formation of the domestic police better and therefore to develop more effective measures for its development and improvement.

*Acknowledgements.* There are no acknowledgements.

*Funding.* There was no outside funding provided for this study.

*Disclosure statement.* No author has any financial interest or received any financial benefit from this research.

*Conflict of Interest.* The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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