



**AUTHORITY, LEGITIMACY AND
LIMITS – WHO SHAPES POLICE
EDUCATION? REFLECTIONS FROM
ENGLAND**

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OVERVIEW

- **Police in England & Wales**
- **Police Education Pre-PEQF (Police Education Qualification Framework)**
- **Professionalisation via Academic Education: Relegitimising the Police**
- **PEQF and College of Policing**
- **Authority and Legitimacy: Police Education as a 'Site of Struggle'**
- **Limits of the Current Model**

POLICE IN ENGLAND AND WALES

- 43 'Home Office Forces' in England and Wales (+ PSNI, Police Scotland, national specialist forces and agencies)
- = 43 Chief Constables + 43 PCCs/PFCCs/Mayors/Deputy Mayors...
- ...implementing a standardised and national PEQF...

<https://www.police.uk/pu/contact-the-police/uk-police-forces/>

POLICE EDUCATION (TRAINING)

PRE-PEQF

- Minimal, drill-based, job-shadowing
- Inter- and post-war years: improving status, standardising training, increased complexity and specialisation
- 1970s: beyond legislation to ‘public relations’ and ‘social skills’
- 1980s: inner city disorders, ‘race relations’, lengthening of recruit training
- 1990s: streamlining provisions, effectiveness and efficiency, corruption scandals, human rights
- 2000s: competencies, customer- and community-orientation, reflective practitioners, mushrooming of university courses in policing

PROFESSIONALISATION

- Or re-professionalization (Holdaway, 2017)
- Why? Increased complexity = broader knowledge, deeper understanding, standardisation, externally recognised qualifications and career flexibility, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, legitimacy, status, economy (Hallenberg, 2016; Brown, 2018)
- What matters is the university experience, not the discipline studied...
- Neyroud (2011) & Winsor (2011/2012)

REDEFINING AND RELEGITIMISING POLICING

(HALLENBERG, 2012)

- Possession and control of abstract knowledge defines and legitimates a profession (Abbott, 1988) and strengthens its institutional jurisdiction and cognitive hegemony (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997)
- Survival in the 'competitive system of professions' (Abbott, 1988) by securing market monopoly, privileges, status
- Professionalisation legitimises symbolic and concrete power, and may act as an 'ideological preparation' for its expansion (Ericson, 1993)
- Monopoly of tools, control of production, training, licensing, *knowledge* (Bourdieu, 1987), economic, *social and cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986)
- Professional institutions/host discipline (field) locked in a permanent symbolic struggle over the tools and capital to define the social world = 'principle of legitimized distribution', particularly between 'theorists' and 'practitioners' (Bourdieu, 1987)

PEQF

- Introduced three new Bachelor level entry routes into policing
 - Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship
 - Pre-join Professional Policing Degree
 - Degree Holder Entry Programme
- National Policing Curriculum (NPC)
- Formalised relationship with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- A radical shift to making policing a graduate profession: mandatory and universal

<https://www.college.police.uk/career-learning/learning/PEQF>

COLLEGE OF POLICING

- Professionalisation results in change in the governance via establishment of an independent socio-cultural authority (Sciulli, 2009), i.e. a professional body
- First mooted in Neyroud (2011), established in 2012
- Company limited by guarantee, 'owned' by the Home Secretary
- An 'arm's length body of the Home Office'
- Sharing knowledge and good practice, setting standards, supporting professional development

<https://www.college.police.uk/>

AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY: POLICE EDUCATION AS A 'SITE OF STRUGGLE'

- A sense-making framework
- Professionalisation via academic education as redefining and relegitimising the police, its exercise of power and its knowledge claim → reflected in police education, which becomes the new 'site of struggle', both in terms of *authority*, and *legitimacy* of that authority.
 - What is the shape and content of police education? Who decides that?
 - How is police education delivered? By whom?
- 'Flexing' of authority as a) a defensive move due to *loss* of authority/uncertain legitimacy, b) an exploratory move due to new spaces for *expansion* of authority/acknowledgement of legitimacy.
- Not mutually exclusive

AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY: POLICE EDUCATION AS A 'SITE OF STRUGGLE'

- **College of Policing: authority and formal legitimacy but weaker 'internalised' legitimacy in the eyes of other stakeholders**
 - **Professionalisation rhetoric interpreted as accusations unprofessionalism**
 - **Lack of unanimous support for PEQF (CoP, 2016)**
 - **Independence from Home Office questioned**
 - **Legal challenges and other opposition to PEQF**
 - **Engaging with HEIs with established cultural and social capital → CoP's tight control of NPC, strict licensing conditions → easing slowly**

AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY: POLICE EDUCATION AS A 'SITE OF STRUGGLE'

- **Police forces**
 - **PEQF severely eroded control over police education/training**
 - **Unavoidable, mandatory involvement of CoP and HEIs**
 - **Overt and covert resistance/challenges**
 - **Relationships with HEIs vary; some highly collaborative and productive, but also cultural and structural tensions and conflicts**

AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY: POLICE EDUCATION AS A 'SITE OF STRUGGLE'

- **Higher Education Institutions**
 - PEQF opened up new areas of business and authority
 - New providers: expansion of authority comes with high reward (student recruitment & income) and high risk (little specific policing experience, significant investment)
 - Experienced providers: PEQF legitimated the value of policing degrees and academic police education and the established authority and legitimacy of HEIs, but also imposed a model and a curriculum that didn't align well with existing provisions and was considered to undermine expertise

LIMITS OF THE CURRENT MODEL

- **Slow implementation: funding, implications to students**
- **Standardisation... Sort of**
 - NPC, levelness
 - Variety of providers and arrangements
- **Differences between entry routes**
- **The letter but not the spirit**
 - NPC too prescriptive, little room for critical thinking, reflexivity, contextual knowledge etc. (e.g. Goode and Lumsden, 2018; Fleming and Rhodes, 2018; Brown et al., 2018)
 - Siloed delivery precludes benefits of university experience
- **Limited opportunities to apply academic education and skills due to structural and cultural issues (Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017; Williams et al, 2019)**
- **Why? Polices' unique role in serving not just the public but also state interests, and the symbolic and actual coercive power this grants inevitably shapes and constrains the process of professionalisation, the relationship between the police and HE, and officers' ability to use knowledge and skills gained through HE study (Cockcroft & Hallenberg, forthcoming)**

CONCLUSIONS

- Expanding the concept of professionalisation via academic expansion as relegitimising policing to understand how and why police education as a field (in Bourdieuan terms) has become a 'site of struggle'
- PEQF → changes to actual and perceived authority and legitimacy of key stakeholders → overt and covert 'flexing' of authority, fuelled by limits of the current model
- Pessimistic view... But!
 - Personal experience of transition
 - Tensions and struggle not necessarily hostile or aggressive
 - Genuine collaboration toward common goal

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THANK YOU

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