

Police Learning in the Context of Change and Diversity

Tracey Green and Stephen Tong

Editorial

This special edition is concerned with international developments in police education. It is common before attempting significant policy implementation for policymakers seek out examples of change in other police jurisdictions to assess potential benefits and the chances of implementing successful reforms. In the United Kingdom, the Police Qualification Education Framework (PEQF) has recently been introduced to facilitate degree entry into the police and higher education accreditation of initial police learning. This is a significant step within the UK and is not without precedent.

Police education and training have received little research attention until recently. While police research has flourished more in some countries than others, police research has predominantly focused on external researchers examining police practice. A few studies focused on the content, delivery or outcome of police training or education although early studies in the United States did attempt to assess the value of a college education for police officers with very little success (Volmer 1936; Wilson 1968). Despite the absence of a comprehensive evidence base to guide policymakers, in the delivery of approaches to police learning and preparation for the role of policing, significant reform towards the establishment of a profession of policing as well as the professionalisation in policing has been established in some countries and pursued in others.

However, police engagement with higher education is not new to police services around the world. The aim of this special edition is to provide a critical overview of examples of police education and perspectives of their usefulness or otherwise. The editors have selected a variety of papers from authors working in different jurisdictions with experience of researching, delivering or managing police education. This edition aims to provide insights into attempts to deliver learning through higher education to or with the police. Specifically this Edition hopes to utilise some of the lessons learned on an international scale to inform the practice of those policing agencies and higher education institutes engaged in this space.

The police service has a long history in recruiting widely from society, presenting public service values at the core of their mission, and usually aspiring to high standards or recognition of excellence. While often, these characteristics are common among police services across the world, responsibilities and expectations can vary. Although the challenges and dangers officers face across the world may be similar, the history of police vary from country to country resulting in police services evolving in a variety of ways with very different functions and relationships to citizens and the state. Mawby (2008: 18) outlines the police in six 'societal groupings' ranging from England and Wales, Colonial, Continental, Communist, North American, Far East and Eastern European. These police arrangements can reflect a variety of differences from different structures, sources of legitimacy and function. The differences can be quite significant from militaristic models through to policing by consent accompanied by a range of different resource and equipment to fulfil their responsibilities. Police services also have a different balance to of 'crime-fighting' 'reassurance' policing (Bowling, Shepticki & Reiner, 2019) or implementing structural reform from local to national police services. Inevitably, the diversity of police roles, models, expectations and relationships with communities requires different skills, knowledge and competence, which in turn have implications for the demands made on training and education.

A good reference point to consider the degree of variance between policing agencies is the initial preparation into the role of a police officer. This can vary greatly, from 2-3 years in Northern Europe through to 19 weeks in North America (Fielding, 2018). The difference between training and education is distinct but to achieve the level of a competent practitioner both are required. Educational police programmes beyond the recruitment level have also been specifically developed to enhance the work of specialist roles such as intelligence officers (Harrison, Walsh, Lyson-Smith, Truong, Horan and Jabbour, 2019) or detectives (Tong and O'Neill, 2019) direct entry leaders or graduate police officers. These programs, specifically those initiated by the police are closely associated with the organisations pursuing a greater level of professionalisation.

The idea of professionalisation or changing from an occupation to a profession requires several characteristics to be in place (Kleinig, 1996 Gates & Green 2014). Although this editorial is not the platform to fully debate the competing perspectives of the characteristics required to identify a profession, we will use the characteristics of a police profession as described in Kleinig (1996) and Gates and Green (2014). They describe a 'police profession' as provision of public service, code of ethics, specialist knowledge and expertise, higher education, autonomy and discretionary authority and self-regulation. So, education and knowledge can be a key pillar in establishing a 'profession'. The concept of being a 'profession' is often confused and somewhat diluted by the notion of police being 'professional' in their conduct. Police behaving professionally does not constitute a profession of policing (Lanyon 2007, Gates and Green 2014). However, progressing beyond this step to the adoption of any form of higher education model for policing remains controversial and not without its critics (Haynes 2009). Policing has been traditionally seen as a craft, with recruits not necessarily requiring high educational requirements for entry. Formal learning in the police has never really enjoyed high status like other specialist areas in policing, with police recruits advised to 'forget everything you've learned in the academy because the street's where you'll learn to be a cop' (Van Maanen, 1973; p414). Challenges from serving police officers recruited and trained through different arrangements can feel undermined and question the need for higher education when they did not see a need for it in their careers (Heslop 2011). Supporters of higher education point to an increasingly demanding role for police officers with more legislation, greater complexity of crime, the growing range of technology through to police learning in the past not attracting any education accreditation.

While progress has been made in delivered higher education policing, as evidenced in this edition, it is clear that there is still not a decisive body of work that can clearly articulate the full range of benefits higher education can bring to policing. This is in part due to the difficulties in measuring the role and effectiveness of a police officer beyond the kind of statistical data relied upon to measure police force performance. Some police partnerships with universities have also been fraught as they can have very different cultures, priorities and operating systems. Both sides need to embrace a flexible and collaborative approach to reconcile each other needs which if not working well has a fatal impact on the success of the program (Heslop 2011, Bradley & Nixon 2009)

The third point of impact on the success or otherwise of police and higher education partnerships, in particular when the collaboration is engaged in the preparation of officers for the role of Constable is the political environment in which policing invariably to some degree or another operates. This is clearly evident in the papers of Rogers and Gravelle (2019) and Wood (2019) but the fluctuating needs and demands of governments to bolster policing agencies in one political campaign and shed resources due to budget restraints can be at odds with the timelines and need for financial viability of a higher education partner (Martin and Woof 2019).

As this edition highlights, there has been progress in overcoming the many hurdles for policing and higher education and like many other professional areas before them (Murray 2007) higher education

is broadening its reach and effectiveness across policing. This is representative of the general population who the police have for so long claimed to be representative of (Manning 2009). Countries examined in this special edition have 40% (or more) of their population holding a higher education qualification, this is one of the many arguments, along with the increased sophisticated police responses, technical advances, and high public expectations which support the need for police to have comprehensive education for the police now and in the future.

This special edition explores some of the numerous approaches and initiatives, which have been implemented to address a range of identified educational opportunities for policing. Two of the papers, in particular, have a longitudinal approach and discuss initiatives in the Netherlands (Huisjes, Engbers and Meurs 2019) and the USA (Cordon 2019). These two papers span over 20 years of experience in policing education and summarise their very different journeys through the landscape. Whilst Cordon (2019) speaks with a level of dismay about the change in policing education to very much a focus on 'Criminal Justice' and a lack of practitioner focus, Huisjes, Engbers and Meurs (2019) describe their close collaboration with the police in the Netherlands and the recognition that for the program to be successful it requires strong reflection between theory and practice. A third paper also has a 20-year history with Tong and O'Neill (2019) reflecting on their efforts between 2000 and 2006 to provide a specialised Criminal Investigation higher education program in collaboration with Kent Police. The piece reflects of the lessons learned, the hurdles, and the success of the program and looks at how these lessons can be learned to improve the outcomes of current opportunities to revisit this area of professional development for policing.

Two of the papers focus on the newly introduced programs in response to the College of Policing decision to introduce the PEQF framework. Rogers and Gravelle (2019) focus their paper on learning lessons from past collaborative endeavours to move forward with well informed and future-facing initiatives to be in a strong position to deliver the various requirements of the PEQF in partnership with a range of local forces. Wood (2019) discusses the potential opportunities for long term change and improvement to the currently offered policing degrees but acknowledges that this will require genuine engagement and change in culture to fully support this new suite of education and professional development opportunities. Wood (2019) like Huisjes, Engbers and Meurs (2019) identify that for the higher education initiatives to have genuine success they need to embrace the professional practice of policing and embed the educational opportunities in an applied program.

The experience in Scotland is analysed by Martin and Woof (2019) from the Scottish Institute of Police Research. Examining the landscape for Police and higher education partnerships in Scotland, Martin and Woof (2019) select a case study to discuss the various approaches possible for police higher education /collaborations or co-operations. Reflecting on Police Scotland 2026 strategy and the experiences of a 'co-operative' rather than a 'collaborative' approach to police education Martin and Woof argue for a sound basis for a variety of considerations highly relevant for newly developing police/higher education partnerships.

The paper presented by Harrison et al, (2019), 'Moving Criminal Intelligence Practice to a Profession through the development of a Criminal Intelligence Training and Development Continuum', takes the concept of a collaborative program to a new and different level. Inspired and driven by policing who identified the need to improve agency performance and increase opportunities for cooperative and multi-agency teams the police approached higher education to help problem solve the complex and increasingly demanding challenges faced by Intelligence operatives. The educational continuum is designed to provide a common education and training strategy which improves interagency functionality and acknowledges the level of education and training required for this sophisticated area of practice.

Finally, the reflection piece by White and Rogers (2019) focuses on the need for higher education to resonate with police leadership and the development of future police leaders. Reflecting on his own experience as a Police Chief in Ottawa and now a Canadian Senator, White (2019) argues that police leadership is stunted by the lack of real willingness to change the existing environment and no genuine understanding of the leadership required to make substantial progress from the status quo. The paper describes the changing environment in Canada and outlines the need for police leaders to have sound political acumen, good research skills and police specific higher education to equip them with the capacity to lead effectively in the current age.

This special edition is hopefully thought-provoking and presents a variety of experience from around the world to reflect upon as we go about our endeavours in the pursuit of police education. Further research is required to understand better how police can learn more efficiently and effectively to fulfil their roles in a variety of context. Furthermore, knowledge on police learning needs to embrace longitude research to better support the needs of police officers throughout their careers and how initial learning when starting their career can support sustained learning in a role subject to continued change and development.

Prof Tracey Green and Prof Stephen Tong.

References

Bowling, B, Shepticki, J & Reiner, R (2019) *Politics of the Police*, 5th Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bradley, D. & Nixon, C. (2009). Ending the 'dialogue of the deaf': Evidence and policing policies and practices. An Australian case study. *Police Practice & Research*, 10(5–6), 423–435. doi: 10.1080/15614260903378384

Cordon, G (2019). 'Police Education in the USA'

Cordon, G. (2019) 'Police Education in the USA'. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, doi: 10.1093/police/pay064.

Gates, A. and Green, T. (2014) 'Understanding the Process of Professionalisation in the Police Organisation.' *Police Journal: Theory, Practice & Principles* 87: 75–91.

Harrison, M; Walsh, P; Lyson-Smith, S; Truong, D; Horan, C; & Jabbour, R (2019). 'Moving Criminal Intelligence Practice to a Profession through the development of a Criminal Intelligence Training and Development Continuum' *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. doi: 10.1093/police/pay053.

Haynes, C. (2009). Boffin bobbies. *Police Review*, 18–21

Heslop, R. (2011). Reproducing police culture in a British university: Findings from an exploratory case study of police foundation degrees. *Police Practice & Research*, 12(4), 298–312. doi: 10.1080/15614263.2011.563966

Huisjes, H, Engbers, F, & Meurs, T (2019) Higher Education for Police Professionals. The Dutch Case *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, doi: 10.1093/police/pay089.

Lanyon, I. (2007). Professionalisation of policing in Australia: The implications for police managers. In M. Mitchell & J. Casey (Eds), *Police leadership and management* (pp. 107–123). Sydney: Federation Press.

Kleinig, J (1996) *Ethics of Policing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Manning, P. (2009). Policing as self-audited practice. *Police Practice & Research*, 10(5–6), 451–464. doi: 10.1080/15614260903378434

Manning, P. (2009) 'Policing as Self-audited Practice.' *Police Practice & Research* 10 (5–6): 451–464.

Martin, D, & Woof, A (2019). Treading the Front-Line: Tartanization and Police–Academic Partnerships, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. doi: 10.1093/police/pay065.

Mawby, R. I (2008) 'Models of Policing' in T. Newburn (ed) *Handbook of Policing*, 2nd Edition, London: Routledge, pp. 17-46.

Murray, J. (2007). Countering insularity in teacher education: academic work on pre-service courses in nursing, social work and teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 33(3), 271-291.

Rogers C, Gravelle, J (2019) 'Implementing a Police Foundation Degree—Insights from South Wales' *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. doi: 10.1093/police/paz028

Tong S, & O'Neill, M (2019). Professionalizing Criminal Investigation—An Examination of an Early Attempt to Support Specialization in Criminal Investigation, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. doi: 10.1093/police/paz010.

Van Maanen, J (1973) Observations on the Making of Policemen. *Human Organization*: Winter 1973, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 407-418.

Vollmer, A. (1936). *The police and modern society: Plain talk based on practical experience*. Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith. (1972 reprint of original).

White, V & Rogers, C (2019). 'Education, transformation and police leadership – A personal view', *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*.

Wilson, J. (1968). *Varieties of police behaviour: The management of law and order in eight communities.*: London: Harvard University Press.

Wood, D, (2019). Embedding Learning and Assessment Within Police Practice: The Opportunities and Challenges Arising from the Introduction of the PEQF in England and Wales. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. doi: 10.1093/police/pay087.