

The Quantum Leap: Police Recruit Training and the Case for Mandating Higher Education Pre-entry Schemes

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Abstract Whilst legislation and policy remain reasonably static, the milieu that modern day police officers have to negotiate is multi-dimensional and diverse. The post-modern world is constantly dynamic and complex, dictating that the benefits and attributes of an academic education are required to manage the demands of everyday policing. This article examines the vital role higher education can play in producing critical reflective recruits for the police service. Implicit in this argument, is the service ultimately becomes a graduate profession. The core business of higher education is critical reflection and it has the experience and expertise to prepare recruits for the turmoils of contemporary policing. This article contemplates the capacity of higher education to respond to the diversity of learning styles of students in nurturing critical reflection. It continues by discussing the emerging relationship between the service and academia against the backcloth of the reform agenda and provides a critique of current post-entry academic programmes, highlighting their shortcomings in terms of pedagogy and value. In contrast, the article extols the virtues of pre-entry programmes and argues that the service should have confidence in academia assuming sole responsibility for training recruits. The article concludes with a snapshot of the collaboration between Leicestershire Police and De Montfort University that offers a national model for police recruitment.

Introduction

Contemporary policing is conducted in a multi-dimensional and diverse post-modern world that is constantly changing and the challenges faced are complex, ambiguous, and contentious. While legislation and policy remain reasonably static, the milieu that modern day police officers have to rationalize and operate within is relentlessly dynamic and increasingly dictates that an academic underpinning and perspective is required. The aim of this article is to explore the vital role higher education can play

in producing critical reflective recruits for the police service. The core business of higher education is critical reflection, and academia has the experience and expertise to equip recruits for the challenges of contemporary policing. Implicit in this argument, is an understanding that the service ultimately becomes a graduate profession, like other social welfare agencies. This article examines the benefits higher education has to offer in terms of nurturing critical reflection and, in particular, being responsive to the multi-dimensional learning styles of students.

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It then explores the emerging relationship between the police and academia and the vital role identified for education as an organizational change mechanism within the reform agenda being increasingly instituted by government. A critique of post-entry academic programmes, highlighting their shortcomings in terms of pedagogy and utility, precedes an evaluation of the virtues for all parties of pre-entry programmes and the argument that the police service should have confidence in academia assuming sole responsibility for producing fit for purpose officers. The article concludes with a snapshot of the collaboration between Leicestershire Police and De Montfort University where students are prepared for critical reflective practice through a pre-entry scheme that provides a national model for police recruitment.

The role of higher education

Academic education has a host of benefits for police officers who will be required to work in a highly complex, diverse, and unpredictable society (Home Affairs Committee, 2012a). Social science-based education facilitates knowledge of society and exposure to liberal values thereby nurturing interpersonal and communication skills in difficult and contested scenarios (Marion, 1998; Kratoscki and Das, 2007; Grint, 2007). Higher education provides a socially transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 1991, 2000) that promotes intrinsic learning and broadens cultural awareness. In delivering a pedagogic-based, student-centred, active-learning approach (Knowles, 1990; Haggis, 2006), it cultivates life-long learning and a more reflective, culturally aware individual; one who is less susceptible to the invasive and entrenched cop culture (Loftus 2010) and more 'fit for purpose' for 21st century policing.

Furthermore, academia has adopted an enlightened, responsive, and flexible reaction to the challenges of the new-world order distinguished by

expanding access to contemporary higher education (Guri-Rosenblit *et al.*, 2007; Nicol, 2010), widening participation and introduction of vocation-oriented degrees in response to employability (HEA, 2005; HEFCE, 2013). The modernization agenda within higher education has seen a genuine attempt to be critically inward-looking and address its own problematic prejudicial values caused by outdated processes, structures, and culture against the backdrop of a rapidly changing student market. This has witnessed a transformation away from the rather traditional and conventional teaching culture which was not always positive (Bourdieu, 1988) towards an emphasis upon a far more dynamic, process-based pedagogy that concentrates upon functional 'activities, interaction, and communication' and makes the academic process explicable and valued by the student (Kieran *et al.*, 2003; Haggis, 2006). Increasing focus has been placed on 'the student journey', characterized by engagement, experience, and employability-related curricula—preparing graduates for the workplace and their future careers particularly in an era of spiralling fees (BIS, 2011; Morgan, 2012). While there is always scope for improvement, much has been achieved in transforming contemporary higher education to make it relevant and fit for purpose in producing graduates equipped for practice.

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education explains that the holder of a degree should be able to critically reflect upon and analyse arguments and concepts with a view to applying their knowledge and understanding to practical issues. In this regard, university offers the 'intellectual' environment to assimilate and consolidate these traits; the scholarly time and space to nurture deep learning. It provides the ideological milieu in which to critically reflect and inculcate the constituent building blocks, which lead to lifelong learning (Barnett, 1997; Dawson, 2003). The element of critical reflection and analysis is central to education for practice and is particularly relevant for police recruit training as it better prepares

officers to apply appropriate professional discretion in operational situations and respond to diverse communities (Nellis, 2001; Elliot and Kushner, 2003; Dominey and Hill, 2010).

Moreover, it is argued that there is something far more intrinsic and rewarding to academic education. In a rapidly evolving world, attaining proficiency in a particular discipline is merely a transitory phase of competence; it is no assurance of either being competent in the future or a future discipline shaper. While experience is important, currency is paramount, and continual professional development is the epitome of contemporary practice. In this context, academic education offers a wider scholarship—‘learning to learn’—a capacity to become independent, life-long learners who have the wherewithal to be flexible responders to ever-changing disciplinary developments. ‘Learning to learn’ teaches fundamental generic skills and develops attitudes that are transferable and equips students to adapt promptly and effectively in a variety of social, cultural, and occupational milieux. In this way, academic education provides real-world learning (Costa and Kallick, 2000; Claxton, 2002, 2006; Lucas 2002).

While thinking is a constant and distinctive activity, critical reflection is a self-initiated and structured exercise. Initially, critical reflection is not a natural, habitual discipline and has to be learnt and practiced. Johns (1995) argues that reflection should always be coached or supervised and it is argued that the necessary skills should be acquired prior to practice. The core pedagogic business of universities is critical reflection and analysis; they teach, guide, and advise students to be critically reflective. Academia is able to provide support and different strategies to initially promote and eventually take critical reflection to higher levels (LaBoskey, 1993; Bain *et al.*, 1999; Samuels and Betts, 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2007).

Bean and Stevens (2002) recommend that those new to critical reflection are provided with a ‘scaffolding’ to prompt and support their efforts (Boud *et al.*, 1985; Posner, 1985; Tripp, 1993;

Cox, 2005), while Samuels and Betts (2007) emphasize the importance of constructive feedback to nurture deeper reflection. Acquiring feedback involves complex skills in detecting patterns, making connections, and making appropriate choices (Fook, 2006): cognitive qualities that require time and space to nurture in a safe-learning environment. Boud *et al.* (1985) suggest that while learning the mechanics of critical reflection a semblance of reassuring and cathartic discussions or debriefs are required to rationalize the negative thoughts that arise as a result of reflection. Constructive intervention by tutors may be necessary at times for novice critical reflectors to foster, negotiate, and guide the direction of thought, to ensure that misconceptions do not occur and to reinforce the learning cycle (Cox, 2005). Comment and observations assist with the difficulty of challenging assumptions and enhance critical reflection while some individuals require additional structure and others want space and freedom. Dialogue and supportive advice is an important aspect of learning to critically reflect and helps to ameliorate difficulties, providing confidence and resilience in a process that eventually should not be restricted purely to personal development but has capacity to embrace broader, more holistic topics. This has resonance for practitioners who require flexible and higher levels of reflection to interrogate the goals, values, and assumptions that guide their professional practice. Hence, critical reflection is an acquired and progressive skill that universities are experienced and adept in developing—they are able to provide the necessary ‘building blocks’ that engender and promote critical reflection.

However, it has to be recognized that individuals will possess different attitudes towards critical reflection and personal development. There will be a range of those who actively wish to engage, those who do not see the value, and others who do not have the predisposition or faculty to critically reflect. Kolb (1984) believes that some people have a learning style that predisposes them towards

critical reflection while others do not. Therefore, a variety of teaching approaches may have to be deployed. LaBoskey (1993) distinctly categorized students as either an *Alert Novice*, one who is willing to reflect and learn from their reflection or the *Common Sense Thinker*, who bases actions on what they see to be grounded and reasonable beliefs without reflecting on the consequences. It is argued that this dichotomy is far too simple and that propensity to critical reflection is better classified as follows:

	Predisposition	Non-predisposition
Engagement		
Non-engagement		

In reality, this depiction is also too simplistic as the true picture is far more multi-dimensional and universities are used to dealing with the pot-pourri of student diversity. They have the teaching expertise and experience to cater with these issues and have historically produced critically reflective practitioners, notably in social welfare disciplines such as nursing and social work (Howe, 1996; Girot, 2000; Pierce and Weinstein, 2000; Orme 2001; Lymbery and Postle 2007; Robinson and Griffiths, 2008; Bernhauser, 2010). Christopher (2015) considers the development of the police service as a critical reflective practice and its increasing similarity to other social welfare bodies which have progressed over the decades through becoming graduate professions.

One vehicle for nurturing structured critical reflection is the portfolio that is typically constructed over time and portrays the ongoing development of an individual (Moon, 2002; Barrett, 2007). It contains evidence that demonstrates and corroborates learning that has occurred through critical reflection (Rees, 2005; Butler, 2006); construction of the portfolio, *per se*, represents the learning (Smith and Tillema, 2003) and for Griffin (2003) documenting the process enhances levels of reflection. In this sense, portfolio

production creates the intellectual time and space required for critical reflection and consolidation of learning (Walker, 1985; Wildman and Niles, 1987; Barnett, 1997; Alerby and Elidottir, 2003; Dawson, 2003). A portfolio is capable of recording self-assessment and development of skills, attachment of evidential documentation to support that self-assessment, and suggest ways in which these skills might be developed (Maddocks and Wright, 2004). In this fashion, a portfolio can bring a sense of personal ownership to learning, enhancing the drive to students assuming responsibility for their education (Rogers, 1969; Moon, 2002). Portfolios should be seen as a voluntary, personal aide to underpin learning—a formative, ever-evolving document that supports continuous personal and professional development. As such, the documents are capable of capturing the emotion interwoven through this personal, academic, and professional journey (Rogers, 1969; Boud *et al.*, 1985). It should not be an assessment tool because, however motivating, that misses the point of the exercise (Bain *et al.*, 2002; Biggs, 2003). Similarly, authenticating a portfolio is redundant because critical reflection is about personal integrity (Smith and Tillema, 2003; Barrett, 2007).

Although portfolios possess a variety of purposes (see categorization in Smith and Tillema, 2003), Orland-Barak (2005) argues that the degree of reflection is unaffected by the type. It is argued that portfolios should be considered central to and part of everyday professional practice. They have the potential to document and demonstrate life-long critical reflection and learning; a living document that evidences continuous professional development. Consequently, while one purpose of portfolios is to nurture critical reflection, they are also beneficial for demonstrating competencies and qualifications for professional accreditation, developing a CV or 'showcasing' when applying for a position or promotion (Zeichner and Wray, 2001; Barrett, 2007).

In summary, universities can provide an explanation and understanding of the complexities that

make up post-modern society. Their core business is teaching and nurturing critical reflection in an empathetic fashion, an activity that sits at the heart of quality assured programmes and they have extensive experience of catering with the diversity of predisposition and engagement displayed by students.

The police–academia dynamic

However, before discussing how higher education can support the development of police officers as critical reflective practitioners, it would be apposite to examine the recent history of the synergy between academia and the police service in the UK. To provide some backcloth to this discussion, there has been a historical debate, which still continues, as to the status of policing; for some, it is an artisan trade or mythical craft (Police Federation, 2011), while for others, it is should clearly be classed as a profession (Neyroud, 2011). Traditionally, though, policing has not been perceived as a graduate profession but rather as an occupation that, in the main, requires functional ‘on-the-job’ training (Kakar, 1998; Emsley, 2005) with education deemed superfluous. This does not mean that those who joined the police with minimal educational qualifications do not possess the capacity and acumen to become graduates—it was, and to a significant extent still is, just not a customary prerequisite for recruitment, progression, or promotion, albeit this is gradually changing. Consequently, the police service has been intentionally academic diverse in the belief that educational qualifications are inextricably linked to social elitism, a correlation that has been significantly eroded in modern times, especially with regard to the higher education widening participation agenda (HEA, 2005). The 21st century, to date, has witnessed a diversity explosion hitherto experienced in higher education—a kaleidoscope of students from a gamut of social class, ethnicity,

academic, and disability backgrounds raced to enrol in universities (HEFCE, 2013). This diversification of higher education student recruitment has led to greater societal representativeness among the student body and actually represents a positive avenue for enhancing the racial and gender mix within the police service. While widening participation may result in its own unique problems and may become the first victim of higher education funding policies, the ever-broadening diversity of the student population represents an opportunity from which the police service may benefit to improve its own demographic.

A problem that has existed is the extent to which, historically, those chief officers that oppose higher education standards for policing have had upon the national training agenda. For decades, their overwhelming influence has meant training delivery has been targeted at to the lowest common denominator of academic diversity and has delayed the creep of academia; higher education input was viewed as ‘additionality’ as opposed to ‘centrality’ (Home Affairs Committee, 2012a). Hopefully, the College of Policing will be mandated to set standards for all 43 Home Office police services. However, it should be observed that the historic obduracy in academic diversity has been a major hurdle to policing, unlike other public social welfare agencies such as nursing and social work, not evolving into a profession (Tweddell, 2008).

Notwithstanding this backcloth, some believe that higher education can bring positive contributions to police training (Lee and Punch, 2004; Carlan, 2007; Punch, 2007; Wimshurst and Ransley, 2007; Crisp and Ward, 2008; Stone 2009), while many others continue to contend that it is an unnecessary indulgence and even a ‘contradiction’ (Police Review, 2009; Wood and Tong, 2009; Dominey and Hill, 2010; Police Federation, 2011).

However, it is argued that the operational world that contemporary police officers inhabit, rationalize, and construct is becoming increasingly

complex, opaque, ephemeral, and challenging as the post-modern world so rapidly evolves. Moreover, the history of past well-publicized failings persistently hangs like a permanent Damocles sword over the policing of today. Hence, the modern-day role demands a broad range of competencies, approaches, and critical reflection; traits based on reliable and valid research, knowledge, and understanding (Foster, 1999; Stelfox, 2009; Tong *et al.*, 2009; Sherman, 2011) that was not being delivered in the much-criticized training recruits received previously (HMIC, 2002a; BBC, 2003). As such, there is an expanding corpus of evidence and policy that indicates the need for far more academic content in programmes that prepare police recruits for their challenging role (Foster, 1999; HMIC, 1999; Flanagan 2008; Wood and Tong, 2009; Neyroud, 2011). Moreover, academia has the capacity and competency to effectively professionalize and modernize policing on behalf of the service as a change agent (Home Affairs Committee, 2012a).

The new millennium has witnessed, consequently, broader academic education identified as the key mechanism in the change management strategy; it is seen as fundamentally instrumental in forging improved professionalism and reforming the occupational culture of the service (HMIC, 2002a; Home Office, 2002; Flanagan, 2008; Neyroud, 2011). Flanagan, as Chief HMIC, was particularly prescient in his *Review of Policing* in observing that it was essential that the police service moved away from training towards education of its officers, while Neyroud sees academic education and qualifications as precursors for entry to a professional body. The last decade, therefore, has witnessed recruit police training in the UK become an increasingly collaborative initiative between academic institutions and police services (HMIC, 2002a).

However, it is argued that the relationship between policing and higher education to date has not been as sufficiently embedded as in other disciplines, such as nursing, probation, and social

work—a feature echoed by the College of Policing in seeking a more ‘intimate relationship and interaction’ (Pearce, 2013)—and the challenge for academic institutions, in collaboration with the service, is to design and develop realistic, practical, and relevant programmes that incorporate the necessary degree of reflection and critical analysis. This does not mean producing a stream of navel-gazing, ‘essay-writing cops’, but responding to the professional requirement for individuals who think deeply, constructively, and appropriately about their important role in society. Inherent in this argument is that the service needs its officers to be critically reflective practitioners in order to manage the complexities of their everyday role. The organization has moved on from the 20th century and is mutating into a broader, post-modern social welfare agency that requires officers on the frontline who are capable of critical reflection. While possibly undervalued and resisted in the past, thoughtful and constructively challenging officers will be required as the norm, as opposed to the exception, for the future service (see Christopher, 2015).

Police and higher education collaborations have led to the development of a variety of pre-entry and post-entry foundation honours degrees in policing (MacVean and Cox, 2012) and with responsibility for police education devolved there has been little control on standardization across the country. In the post-entry model, recruits attend a local university and study for a foundation degree in police studies as an integral component of their initial training with the delivery and assessment of the programme being funded by the force. Although very much in the early days, research (Wimshurst and Ransley, 2007; Blakemore and Simpson, 2010; Heslop, 2011; MacVean and Cox, 2012; White and Heslop, 2012) and personal anecdote tend to suggest that the post-entry option is problematic on several grounds and creates ‘unintended consequences’ (Merton, 1936).

First, the police service first and foremost appoints individuals who they feel are likely to be

competent in effectively discharging the array of professional duties expected of a constable. Historically, appointment has not necessarily been based on academic achievement and, as such, there is broad range of educational qualifications held by new recruits. The academic profile of police students differs significantly from that of other university students; over a third have only General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Police Federation, 2011). Individuals with this level of educational accomplishment would not normally be accepted onto a Foundation Degree—yet, the police service is expecting them to study at an academic level possibly beyond their capability. A number of post-entry students find understanding the academic process and requirements incredibly difficult and there is a genuine sense that the police service, in reality, have unintentionally set up students to fail. Some would argue that higher education should possess the capacity to develop critical reflection, knowledge, and lifelong learning in all student recruits, irrespective of educational calibre, and the inability to do so is a fundamental contradiction of its academic purpose. On occasions, academia simply cannot cater for the lower levels of academic diversity that lack the wherewithal to cope with the demands of higher education. Consequently, an alternative, more realistic perspective may contend, therefore, that far from being a shortcoming of higher education, it represents a failure of the police service on occasions to recruit officers capable of critical reflection and academic learning. Ultimately, the incapacity to think circumspectly and learn from experience—the essence of academic education—calls into question the ability to manage and negotiate the challenging vagaries of the operational police world. The reality is that the demands of contemporary policing have changed significantly from the golden era days of Dixon of Dock Green to a complex, opaque, and challenging world that requires critically reflective practitioners (see Christopher, 2015). Critical reflection is not necessarily a factor of academic qualification

but a capacity and willingness to think with an open mind; time and space is required for this, features that full-time higher education affords. Therefore, academia should not be held to account for the recruitment policy and standards of the police service; it has proven over centuries the capability to instil critical reflection and lifelong learning in suitably receptive and equipped students.

Secondly, it is considered that the design of post-entry Foundation Degree programmes is pedagogically flawed in the sense that the teaching police students receive is excessively intensive (As a rule students normally received a combination of professional training and academic teaching for 6 hours per day, 5 days a week for 13 weeks) and does not allow the time and space necessary for critical reflection, assimilation, and consolidation of knowledge. The design of post-entry programmes does not compare with conventional undergraduate pedagogic models and should have catered for the content to be delivered across a greater time span. However, this is not possible because of the demand for students to start their police duties as soon as practicable once their professional training is completed.

Another pedagogic weakness is that generally academic assignments are required to be completed in the private time of the students. In a busy life of competing professional, domestic, and personal demands, it is understandably difficult to prepare for and draft an assignment usually in academic isolation from fellow students and the academic institution. While this obstacle is mitigated somewhat by the use of electronic communications, it does not replace face to face support and guidance with an academic tutor. The process also makes the submission of assignments akin to distance learning and, in hindsight, it may have been preferable for the programme to have been designed and delivered in this fashion.

Thirdly, when these students commence their academic studies they are attested police officers and, quite naturally and understandably, they are eager to fulfil that role. They are keen to learn the

necessary knowledge and skills to be a police officer; however, they do not see the purpose or benefit of the wider academic input as being relevant to their future role. Their focus and engagement, then, is concentrated more upon the police trainer inputs rather than the academic sessions (It is interesting to observe, anecdotally, that when students return for the second year of the Foundation Degree following several months in practice, they tend to acknowledge the value of the broader academic insight and are far more prepared to engage with the learning process.).

Fourthly, Wimshurst and Ransley (2007) contend that, in reality, there 'is little evidence to suggest a significant change in police behaviour' following exposure to university education, while MacVean and Cox (2012) argue that, although the transformative programme is very much in its early stages, the impact of police education upon the negative aspects of occupational culture remains minimal as the mechanisms for its socialization still exist. Devolving the responsibility for training to police forces and incorporating the academic expertise of higher education establishments was intended to disrupt the process of police culture socialization (Blakemore and Simpson, 2010). However, this does not appear the case maybe for the following reason.

When joining the police, most individuals buy into the normative and social culture of the occupation. The investment of self into the specific culture tends actually to reinforce and sustain the distinctive character of the occupation and is itself an implicit, transformational learning experience. It is also a tacit expectation of the police institution and colleagues. For Foster (2003, p. 219),

the apparent unchanging nature of police culture...has become part of policing mythology

Embracing the transformation offers mutually beneficial personal and professional positives such as common understanding, operational standards,

identity, comradeship, support, and protection. Loftus (2008, p. 757) describes police culture as 'a set of shared informal norms, beliefs and values that underpins and informs police outlooks and behaviour' which, it has been argued, are nurtured as a coping strategy because of the isolated role of policing in hazardous environments (Paoline, 2003; Sato, 2003). Commentators on police culture are unanimous in identifying its strength, complexity, and problematic characteristics such as machismo, cynicism, mission, them/us, persecuted, conservatism, racism, sexism, and homophobia (Manning, 1995; Chan, 1997; Waddington, 1999; McLaughlin, 2007; Skolnick, 2008; Loftus, 2009; Reiner, 2010). It presents as an occupational super-tanker—institutional, constantly buttressed, and hence an extremely enduring, inward-looking phenomenon that was formally socialized, cultivated, and assimilated into police recruits at regional training centres (Fielding, 1988; Prokos and Padovic, 2002; Skolnick, 2008) as exemplified by the seminal broadcast of *The Secret Policeman*.

Heslop (2011) found in his research that student officers failed to engage with the academic programme, held negative views of the university experience, and constructed a distinctive police culture within universities. This is contra-rationale and 'turns the reforming standpoint on its head' (Heslop, 2011).

The strength of the student comments from the Heslop (2011) study prove disconcerting;

'The university part was patronising at best'
 'I felt like I was bullied by one of the tutors'
 'This is shit...It was a zoo some days'
 'The majority of lecturers...seemed to have issues with police and look down on us'
 'They treated us like second class citizens. They thought we are all thick'
 'I felt out of my depth'
 'I just felt at a disadvantage'

Support for the Heslop findings can be evidenced in the following sample of equally concerning observations taken from feedback forms submitted by

former students on another Foundation degree policing programme:

'Academic modules are not necessary and have little relevance'
 'I was asleep through boredom'
 'Belittled by one lecturer for not being literate'
 'They were anti-police and didn't like to teach us'
 'They were anti-police, patronising and unprofessional'
 'Poor teaching methods'
 'They all lacked interest and it showed'
 'Lessons were unbearable'
 'Lack of interaction in class'
 'Academic side was horrendous'
 'Academic staff were arrogant and did not make lectures relevant to role'

It is suggested that if such remarks are representative of police Foundation Degrees across the country, student officers find the content of courses irrelevant to their future role and the attitudes of academic staff uninspiring (Heslop, 2011; White and Heslop, 2012). In this regard, blame cannot be placed entirely at the door of students and academics have to assume a degree of responsibility in failing to engage students. It is reasonable, however, to understand why student officers fail to engage with the academic inputs and isolate themselves within an 'alternative occupational police culture' within the university. The predispositions of students, who merely wish to proceed promptly with their police career, combined with perceived shortcomings in the approach of academics, leads to what Heslop identifies as inevitable 'unintended consequences'—perverse outcomes which may be the opposite of what was intended (Merton, 1936). While there are other contributory dynamics simultaneously playing out (See Macvean (2010) on the relationship between the teaching staff at academic institutions providing police education. She vividly explains the culture and dynamic between practitioner trainers and academics that has created a perceived 'us and them' amongst teachers; a non-collegial unintended consequence that is neither healthy nor conducive to a fertile and productive learning environment for students.), it is submitted

that, for police education to be transformational in ameliorating and tackling the existing police organizational culture, these 'unintended consequences' that tend to recreate the same phenomenon must be avoided.

In closing on the police-academia dynamic, however, the principle rationale of the symbiotic relationship should be recalled—higher education offering the teaching and milieu to be a potential change agent for the service. It would be naïve to think that the police cultural super-tanker can be transformed overnight by the recruitment of figuratively few critically reflective graduates but, over time if the service were to become graduate-entry, there would be an exponential positive influence as their proportion in the service increased. Moreover, graduates should be better equipped to be more resilient and challenging to the enduring and subversive culture. Against this broad utilitarian backcloth, consideration must be given to another cadre of extremely influential police officers (This article focuses on police officer education but this third strand should include those police staff who wish to engage with higher education)—those who have several years of active employment and are academically diverse, non-graduates but consider they need a degree for progression or promotion within the service. These officers are steeped in the occupational culture and represent a pedagogic challenge for higher education in that their delivery and support demands will be entirely different from either pre- or post-entry students. That said, though, this significant tranche offer the best opportunity for grass-root cultural and organizational change if they can be encouraged and supported by the service to take up higher education. If operational demands, austerity, and entrenched views could be resolved, academia has the expertise and experience of designing and delivering work-based, distance learning programmes that can develop knowledge, nurture critical reflection, and instil the features of lifelong learning for such officers.

Virtues of pre-entry schemes

Exposures to knowledge, critical thinking, and higher education scholarship have to be rich, not alienating, experiences of engagement with learning (Mann, 2001; Leathwood and O'Connell, 2002). It has been argued here, and elsewhere, that the learning requirements of contemporary police officers demand a depth and breadth of knowledge that can only be attained through a sustained period of study that allows scope for reflection, assimilation, and consolidation (Home Affairs Committee, 2012b). Consequently, this article argues that the post-entry model is phased out and that collaborations focus upon developing a pre-entry scheme as the sole option for recruitment. This would involve the achievement of a foundation or undergraduate degree alongside the knowledge requirements of the Initial Policing Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) curriculum while attaining independent patrol as a Special Constable. This would allow graduates to be recruited directly into the service with only a short corporate induction programme on entry and both Flanagan (2008) and Neyroud (2011) favour pre-entry schemes. Pre-entry schemes have a number of virtues for all parties:

- Encourages potential police recruits to take responsibility for lifelong learning and their personal and professional development.
- Ensures employment into the service for graduates.
- Reduces the cost of police training to the public purse in times of austerity and financial cutbacks.
- Widens participation when the police service is looking to diversify its work force.
- Actually embeds and exposes students to the variety of the wider university experience.
- Permits an insight and understanding of the complexity and context of post-modern society without exposure to the police culture.

- Provides teaching in critical reflection to foster ethical and effective professional practice.
- Offers time and space, not present on busy post-entry programmes, to develop critical reflection in interpreting, negotiating, and resisting the negative aspects of the police occupational culture.
- Introduces research scholarship vital to accessing and understanding the application of evidence-based policing.
- Allows wider employability options for students who decide that the police service is not a career they wish to follow.
- Avoids the 'unintended' consequences of post-entry programmes which so undermine the engagement between higher education and policing.
- Strengthens the collaboration between the police service and higher education.

The Australian State Police in New South Wales recruits only after qualification on a programme run for the force by Charles Stuart University. Students fund themselves through the programme with the availability of bursaries from the force for those with difficulty in accessing education or for those from disadvantaged or under-represented groups in the organization. Successful completion on the programme provides a promise of employment by the force (Neyroud, 2011).

The adoption of such a model in the UK would align policing with the other social welfare services such as nursing, social work, child care, education, and others; importantly, as well, it would facilitate the agenda for a professional body (Tweddell, 2008; Neyroud, 2011). Policing has yet to become a formal professional body with registration as with other social welfare disciplines and the suggestion of a graduate service has been, and it is anticipated will continue to be, met with stiff resistance, notably from the Police Federation (2011), for example, who eloquently outline several reasons for maintaining the status quo of academic diversity.

There is a difficulty here in that academic diversity in recruitment, with direct entry for non-graduates, has greater potential to perpetuate the detrimental characteristics that have contributed to the catastrophically impactful historic events that continue to plague the service. That is not to say officers with degrees did not contribute to those events or future graduate recruits will not possess negative and corrosive values, traits, and qualities. It is merely that a graduate education broadens the mind, identifies contentious issues, promotes critical reflection, and prepares students to ameliorate any problematic cultural tendencies that may arise in the workplace. The notion of introducing graduate programmes at the turn of the millennium to address these mordant issues and transform the police occupational is theoretically sound—it has been the model of programme that has proved problematic and the service has to be conscious of persisting with an academic-diverse recruitment policy. It is suggested that, even worse, it is a combination of graduate and non-graduate recruitment schemes, which would rapidly lead eventually to a two-tier ‘them and us’ workforce. To date, however, the College of Policing appear to be treading the political tightrope and have been reticent in explicitly favouring a graduate-entry service, albeit they advocate a far closer relationship with academia (Pearce, 2013). To become a professional body, the police service needs to become a graduate-entry organization (Neyroud, 2011) and this article argues that, as a significant voice in the debate, the College of Policing should strongly advocate this policy.

In proposing that universities assume responsibility for educating recruits, this article goes a step further in proposing that the teaching of students is undertaken specifically by academic staff. This is not to be critical of police trainers but recognition that the programme curriculum is largely focussed around critical reflection and understanding of the context in which the police operate rather than the application of law enforcement. Academics are

more than capable of delivering the amount of knowledge required to meet the curriculum demands of the IPLDP leaving police trainers to teach the outstanding police skills such as the use of IT systems, personal safety training, fast roads training, and first aid. This would facilitate a predominantly pedagogic student experience, delivered to a broader academic rather than focussed practitioner agenda, allow critical reflective resilience, and delay exposure to the occupational workplace and culture. With academics having sole responsibility for the delivery of the programme, it has the advantage of limiting the influence of police culture on novice recruits while further reducing the training costs for the service (HMIC, 2002b; Home Office, 2002; Flanagan, 2008; Neyroud, 2011).

These proposals place responsibility for equipping students to be ready for operational practice in the hands of academics—a transition that requires a significant leap of faith by the police service if the innovation is to be successful. To take that bold step, police forces must have confidence and be comfortable that higher education can deliver what they require. There is evidence that academia is capable of this—they have long-standing experience in preparing students for many other professions, disciplines, and practice. Also, the police service and higher education have been building partnerships slowly and steadily across the country for the past decade or so. While there have been teething problems there are shining examples of excellent collaboration across the country and there is clear support to indicate that the foundations have been built for the future. It is submitted that it is not necessarily the relationship that has foundered but that the programmes have been neither suitable nor effective; it is a case of fine-tuning and finessing rather than abandoning the project. This article argues that police forces must nurture trust and build confidence in their local academic partners to deliver quality assured programmes that produce ‘fit for purpose’

graduates and become comfortable with the quality and standard of teaching achieved prior to entry (Neyroud, 2011).

In short, the devolution of police training witnessed a variety of police–higher education collaborations and academic programmes across the country resulting in a considerable element of diversity. Critical evaluation of this gestation period leads to the conclusion that a semblance of standardization is now required to instil reassurance around quality and it is argued that the national police education agenda actively moves towards pre-employment programmes as a minimum standard for joining the service. The quality assurance and benchmarking introduced by the basic Certificate of Knowledge in Policing and IPLDP is to be applauded (Notwithstanding the ongoing debate around the merits, validity, and shortcomings of this qualification—see Home Affairs Committee (2012b, paras 3, 5)) and all pre-entry programmes should be mapped across the revised HEA benchmarks for criminology that have recently been published (Quality Assurance Agency, 2014). The College of Policing has a vital role in developing the ‘intimate relationship and interaction’ (Pearce, 2013) between police and academia and driving the national police education agenda. Standardization and quality reassurance can be achieved by mandatory pre-entry programmes for officer recruitment and the College of Policing should actively engage with forces to explain their virtue and subtly influence the approach of forces. In this fashion, the College of Policing can become a true agent of change (Home Affairs Committee, 2012a,b).

The Leicestershire partnership scheme

Leicestershire Police and De Montfort University have been collaborating for over a decade in mutually beneficial partnership that provided education to recruit officers either through a pre- or post-

entry foundation degree delivered by a mixture of academics and trainer practitioners. However, there was a recognition that neither scheme was the correct model for the reasons discussed above and so a bold decision was made for academics to become responsible for the provision of graduate recruits through a pre-entry scheme that entails students reading for a degree in policing alongside the necessary legislation and policy required to pass the IPLDP. It can be said to be a bold decision because Leicestershire Police, in a unique but daring innovation, are placing their faith in the academics of De Montfort University to produce their future police officers—academics will be responsible for delivering the IPLDP curriculum to students with the exception of police skills such as personal safety that will be taught by police trainers. During the course, students will pass the Certificate of Knowledge in Policing (National Police Improvement Agency, 2012). It is a franchised product of the College of Policing that brings benchmarking to the academic enterprise and merits being offered to students if only for its professional recognition that facilitates transferability upon graduation), achieve independent status as Special Constables, and experience a 10-week period of in-company patrol with a tutor so that when they graduate they are qualified and competent to immediately fulfil the role of a police officer. Leicestershire Police and De Montfort University are actualizing the vision of Flanagan (2008) and Neyroud (2011).

While close attention is paid to delivering the IPLDP, the prevailing ethos of the programme is to contextualize policing in contemporary society and nurture critical reflective practitioners. The programme focuses upon providing students an understanding of their future place as responsible citizens in a diverse, civil society and, as well as attachments with the police, there are community and international placements. There is no escaping that the programme is challenging and the university look to recruit students who understand that they will need to become critical reflective

practitioners, take personal responsibility for their personal and professional development, and understand they have to consistently demonstrate proficiency in their role (Neyroud, 2011). To reflect the ethos and aspirations of the programme, a decision was made to set the entry requirement at 260 UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) points which is high for policing programmes across the UK. It is acknowledged that many will say this is discriminatory and contrary to the academic diversity that has been a tradition of the police service but for Leicestershire Police and De Montfort University it is a statement of the calibre of student required to police modern society.

In designing the course, thought was given to providing a wide academic knowledge base so there is significant shared learning with criminology modules and inter-professional education is incorporated to provide an insight into multi-disciplinary working. There is also a unique focus upon progressive desk-top, immersive, simulation exercises in the police and investigative modules that are paper feeds which test the critical reflection and decision of the students. There are a series of formative exercises which lead to day or two-day long summative exercise that is formally assessed as part of the course. The thought process for each paper feed has to be thoroughly documented with a rationale for each decision made and these are kept in the portfolio each student has to maintain.

Portfolios are an essential feature of the programme which students are encouraged to complete and regularly update with key incidents and learning. It sets a template and habit for keeping a portfolio to document such items as reflection on critical incidents, thoughts on practice, standard of performance, career aspirations, training courses, and a CV as an indicator of continual professional development while in the police service—a personal statement of the journey through the practice of policing.

In terms of quality assurance, the IPLDP will be taught to the benchmarks of Leicestershire Police and the College of Policing and the remainder of

the programme has been mapped across to the 2014 QAA benchmarks for criminology in a painstaking exercise to ensure validity and authenticity. Governance of the programme is achieved through a series of strategic and tactical management meetings, attended by academics and representatives from Leicestershire Police, that oversee the direction, requirements, and curriculum of the programme.

Conclusion

Policing is unique and the complexities and demands of contemporary society increasingly dictate that an academic underpinning and perspective is required in the education of its recruits. It is conducted in a multi-layered and diverse post-modern society that requires critical reflection to successfully negotiate the constantly changing complexities, ambiguities, and challenges faced. Law and procedure remain comparatively static but the operating environment that has to be constructed and rationalized by police officers, however, is forever dynamic. Policing is moving relentlessly on the journey towards becoming a technocratic profession; a contemporary post-modern profession that demands a more thoughtful, better-educated officer—a critical reflective practitioner—to effectively discharge the demands of the role.

Higher education offers a tradition of experience and expertise in preparing students for critical reflective practice and is capable of providing a similar excellent service for policing. The collaboration between academia and the police service is a relatively recent phenomenon with the devolution of responsibility for training to forces and the past decade has witnessed a miscellany of relationships and academic programmes. While the bedding-in period has not been without its problems, there is no reason to believe that the association cannot be successful and enduring. For the policing-academia nexus to become embedded, pre-entry programmes should be the only method for recruitment to the service and the College of Policing have a significant

role in fostering and co-ordinating this model across the country. The introduction of a graduate-only profession will bring strong adverse comment from parties who perceive that the police should be academically diverse, but the nature of the challenges faced by modern-day officers increasingly dictate otherwise.

The final argument made is that higher education assumes sole responsibility for the training of recruit officers. While having several benefits, this requires a leap of faith by the police service to have trust and confidence in higher education. In a novel collaboration, De Montfort University academics will educate future recruits for Leicestershire Police on a pre-entry scheme where students are prepared for direct entry into the force upon graduation. This is Leicestershire Police saying it requires its recruits to be critical reflective practitioners and it has faith in the university producing its future officers.

At time of great change in the police service, when it is still coming to terms with addressing the demands of post-modern society, there is a need to reassure the public and government that its recruits are adequately equipped to effectively undertake the task. The role of the police service within a modern liberal democratic society is vital and when performed inadequately, unprofessionally, discriminately, corruptly, or without transparency the (unintended) consequences are dire and sometimes far-reaching. Therefore, it is essential that recruits are educated and properly prepared to effectively undertake future practice to the satisfaction of the public and avoid the historic pitfalls that so undermine the service. Higher education has the academic expertise and experience to produce critically reflective practitioners, capable and competent to conduct themselves professionally and meet the challenges of contemporary policing. The service needs the resolve to take the 'quantum leap'.

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