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**Educating the Recruited and Recruiting the Educated: Can the new Police Education Qualifications Framework in England and Wales succeed where others have faltered.**

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# **Educating the Recruited and Recruiting the Educated: Can the new Police Education Qualifications Framework in England and Wales succeed where others have faltered.**

## **Abstract**

Discussion around the complex and changing nature of policing and police work have become firmly embedded in police studies discourse, and reflected in ongoing discussion about contemporary police training and education programmes. While much public policy debate on the desirability and necessity of higher education qualifications for police officers in England and Wales has intensified of late, programmes themselves have consistently stalled when faced with challenge. This paper provides some historical backdrop to initial police training in England and Wales and reflects on the College of Policing's announcement of the new Police Education Qualification Framework and accompanying entry routes into policing. The paper presents a case for grounding initial police training within a University context, but with several key caveats identified towards the end of the paper.

**Keywords: Police Training; England; Wales; Higher Education; PEQF**

## **Introduction**

The start of the new millennium witnessed Policing in England and Wales undergo a wave of reform and modernisation. Community policing transitioned

into the neighbourhood policing model (Millie and Herrington, 2006); greater focus has been placed upon Intelligence Led Policing (Ratcliffe, 2016); leadership and management (Neyroud, 2011); evidence based policing (Goode and Lumsden, 2018); and embedding ethical codes within all areas of operational practice (Miller and Blackler, 2017). The complexity of modern policing is defined not just by the importance of the local, but also global challenges that have become enduring themes of contemporary society. Challenges that include responding to new and mutating crime markets, policing cyberspace, and the growing significance of protecting the online community (Wall and Williams, 2013).

The pressing need for police to 'upskill' and adopt new policies and practices to meet contemporary policing challenges has not gone unnoticed (APCC and NPCC, 2018). Dealing with an expanding and competing occupational mandate encompassing reassurance, community engagement, crime control (Savage, 2007), and the extreme pressures of terrorism (Spalek, 2010), has been compounded by the pains of austerity (Innes, 2010). The global economic downturn and resultant fiscal constraints have necessitated a rethinking of policing and police work (Millie, 2013) and the most recent wave of reform and modernisation has been inextricably driven by political discourse around professionalisation (Helsop, 2011a).

While debate around police professionalisation has a long history (Vollmer, 1922), contemporary views differ between academics, practitioners, policy makers and politicians alike, rendering the term somewhat equivocal (Norman and Williams, 2017). Holdaway (2017) suggests the police themselves have long professed their professional standing, and uses the term re-professionalisation to articulate and explore the current social and political context underpinning a renewed emphasis upon modernisation, reform, and professional status. Holdaway cites the Neyroud Review of Police Leadership and Training (2011: 11) as the catalyst underpinning the current 're-professionalisation' agenda which called for a fundamental shift in the police service away from one that 'acts professionally' to one that has become a 'professional service'.

As opposed to police practitioner notions of professionalism expressed in common-sense approaches to policing (Norman and Williams, 2017), Neyroud's (2011) proposition was grounded in the characteristics and traits of a profession including codes of ethics, accredited qualifications, evidence based practice. His recommendation for the creation of a professional body led to the introduction of the College of Policing (CoP) in 2012. Enjoying a great deal of autonomy as the professional body for all those working in the police service, CoP has constitutional responsibility for setting standards across key areas in policing (Holdaway, 2017), including the launch of a Police Qualifications Framework (PEQF) which embeds Evidence Based Policing (EBP) throughout (Brown et al, 2018).

The current professionalisation programme and accompanying calls to revisit recruitment, education, and training (Neyroud, 2011, APCC and NPCC, 2018) need be understood against the backdrop of a similar attempt some fourteen years previous. Policing transitioned into the twenty first century amidst a growing awareness that the changing nature of crime would require new methods of working and the training provided to newly recruited police officers must reflect and support these challenges (Peace, 2006). The first decade of the new millennium brought unprecedented change in so far that all police forces in England and Wales had to assume responsibility for the localised delivery of the training provided to their probationary police officers through the phased introduction of the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) 2004 - 2006.

This innovative approach to probationer training was short lived, stalling in its formative years largely as a result of wider socio economic factors and the impact of the global economic recession. The tangible effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010 were evident in dwindling police officer numbers, and as a consequence of the temporary national suspension of police recruitment, the delivery of IPLDP faltered. Fourteen years after IPLDP was initially piloted, a substantially revised and updated approach to the recruitment and training of those joining the police service at constable level was launched in 2018. Embedded within the PEQF, developed by the CoP, is a new

standardised national framework that sets minimum qualification levels by rank or level of practice for all police officers and staff (CoP, 2018). PEQF incorporates three new national entry routes into policing; a Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA); an undergraduate degree in professional policing; and a two-year conversion programme for those whose first degree is not the aligned professional policing degree.

The requirements embodied within the PEQF elevate the status of policing as a profession (Bryant et al, 2014) and signal a departure from previous reform and modernisation attempts. In light of this the paper begins with a discussion of the recent history and development of police training in England and Wales before exploring the introduction of IPLDP over a decade ago. On the basis of this evidence, the paper considers the implications for the new routes into policing presented within the PEQF. The paper advocates a position that situates the development of newly recruited police officers in an education rather than training environment in order to produce officers equipped to challenge the complexity of modern criminality, and be leaders in a period of heightened risk and uncertainty. It concludes by arguing for the need to strengthen evidence based research partnerships between police organisations and academic institutions. In particular, is the need to promote and foster research agendas that will enable policing and academia to learn from previous experience and inform the eagerly anticipated education and training programmes aimed at newly recruited police officers, and those wishing to enter the police service.

## **A Recent History of Initial Police Training in England and Wales**

The earliest models of police training were grounded in a style synonymous with military preparation, dependent upon the memorising of police powers and procedures, supplemented with 'on the job' shadowing of existing officers (Wood and Tong, 2009). Academics and police practitioners alike had long called for the upgrading of what was perceived to be an outdated and inadequate system of training (Punch, 1979). National initiatives such as the short lived Trenchard scheme of the 1930s, and specialist courses delivered at the Police Staff College and Bramshill, evidence a tentative interchange between training and education. Yet such provision was largely directed towards higher officer ranks or accelerated promotion schemes (Lee and Punch, 2004), despite sporadic attempts over the previous half a century to raise the training and educational standards of police constables (Mawby and Wright, 2003). Notwithstanding ad hoc change from the 1950s onwards, a 1972 training needs analysis recommended increasing emphasis upon the development of relations with the public, rather than the militaristic components of initial police training (Povey, 2002), and from the 1970s these programmes incorporated humanistic and social scientific elements (Rowe and Garland, 2003).

Progressive curriculum development was welcomed as a positive step forward, yet sceptic critics were hesitant to accept that such change amounted to fundamental reform (Punch, 1979). It was the thematic inspection of initial police

training in 2002 by HMIC 'Training Matters', the only comprehensive review ever to be conducted into this aspect of police training (Peace, 2006), that paved the way for radical change. Training Matters (Povey, 2002) raised concern over a curriculum that had remained relatively unchanged for two decades and included elements of drill, lifesaving, and physical education; the role of trainers, tutors and supervisors; consistency of training and quality assurance standards; and the relatively short period officers spent participating in formal classroom based training before undertaking operational policing duties. The most radical change was the recommendation for localised delivery of IPLDP away from National Police Training Centres. Relinquishing the residential component inherent in previous training schemes was aimed at widening participation in the police service, reaching out to groups who would have been disadvantaged by the remote residential element of previous programmes (Povey, 2002: 92).

Further criticism of the residential phase was that the learning experience training schools provided was dual edged, combining formal learning conducted within the classroom with the 'informal' gleaned from "corridor conversation" a process that Foster (2003: 203) suggested nurtured the transmission of police occupational culture. The exposure of newly recruited officers to the negative aspects of police culture through the experience of the traditional training school had long been recognised (Fielding, 1988). The police training academy had also been identified as a problematic site where early training experiences can recreate, reinforce, and perpetuate, gender inequalities through exposure to the

'informal hidden curriculum', professional socialisation, and police culture (Prokos and Padavic, 2002). Localised delivery was anticipated to reduce and interrupt the opportunity for transference of undesirable aspects of police occupational culture (Wimshurst and Ransley, 2007, Blakemore and Simpson, 2010).

### **A Changing Landscape: From IPLDP to PEQF**

The introduction of the IPLDP represented the most comprehensive overhaul of initial police training that had been witnessed to date. Successful completion resulted in the award of a nationally recognised qualification; collaborative provision between forces and higher education establishments were encouraged, and new and innovative partnerships developed. The emerging pattern was one of diversity as delivery in differing contexts resulted in a wide range of accreditation schemes (Tong and Wood, 2011). IPLDP produced a polarised approach to initial police training which created a disparity in the training provision offered between forces. Some developed NVQ 'in house' training, whilst others forged partnerships with local education providers and opted for a Foundation Degree qualification (Blakemore and Simpson, 2010). In-house delivery prioritised training, suggesting training rather than education was the basic requirement for police officers to carry out their role. In reality, rather than a radical overhaul the result was a diluted and complicated map of police training provision.

Evidence of a sea change in thinking around probationer training came in the publication of the Flanagan Review of Policing (2008). Flannagan provided the clearest indication to date that to equip police officers with the essential skills and attributes for 21<sup>st</sup> century policing, the police service required a shift from training to education. He also recommended some individual responsibility should be assumed for undertaking pre-employment degree programs at the time and expense of the individual. Further support came from the Neyroud Review (2011) whose recommendations for professionalisation included partnerships with higher education, what is to be the short lived implementation of the accredited Certificate in Knowledge of Policing<sup>1</sup>, and the subsequent introduction of the PEQF.

Three new entry routes embedded within the PEQF solidify policing's status as a profession underpinned by an evidence base of specialist knowledge requiring degree level entry to equip new recruits with knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour deemed necessary to meet the increasingly complex demands of contemporary policing. A professional entry programme, the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), means new recruits need to be prepared for the academic rigour of a three-year undergraduate programme of study accompanying the applied practice components. A pre-join professional degree in policing, and conversion programme for those with an undergraduate

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<sup>1</sup> The Certificate in Knowledge of Policing was introduced as one of a number of pathways into the police service at constable level. It will remain in place until 21<sup>st</sup> December 2019 when it will be superseded by the new entry routes into policing documented in this paper.

qualification from aligned discipline, will ensure prospective new recruits are educated to degree level and hold relevant and accredited entry qualifications into policing. Whereas IPLDP gave rise to a diverse range of initial police training programmes with an emphasis very much upon 'educating the recruited', the entry route programmes embedded within the PEQF in contrast adopt models of 'educating the recruited' and 'recruiting the educated' simultaneously.

### **Learning Lessons from New Directions in Entry Routes and Qualifications**

The emerging situation in England and Wales shares similarities with long standing United States (US) approaches to educating and training police officers. In the US post recruitment partnership working between higher education and law enforcement complement the academic delivery of theoretical components of programmes with police practitioner delivery of practical skill requirements (Birzer, 2002). The critical integrated pedagogy model embedding theory into vocational preparation can enhance the cognitive and intellectual ability of the practitioner (Birzer, 2002: 152-3), and produce practitioners who embrace critical thinking (Lee and Punch, 2004).

The pre-join policing degree parallels the situation in the US where the transfer of police training from academy to educational provider was partly fuelled by economic reasons as the financial cost is borne by the student who goes in pursuit of a career in policing post-graduation (Cordner and Shain, 2011). If new programmes are driven by cost-benefit analysis any resultant streamlining of

learning provision could lead to more efficient programmes that are stripped of unnecessary training elements (Cordner and Shain, 2011). Tong and Wood (2011) see structural benefits of pre-employment programmes. Recruiting graduates upon successful completion of relevant pre-join degrees overcome problems associated with in-the-job education and training succumbing to operational pressures and utilising partially trained probationary officers as resources.

New entry routes embedded within the PEQF build upon some of the motivations underpinning the IPLDP, yet similar to their predecessor they will not be a panacea to eradicate problems within policing. They can, however, be seen as a major step in the right direction in line with enhancing the professionalisation of policing and the provision of a police service that is responsive to a changing and developing society. As such, while the PEQF is evidence of much needed progress it is necessary to learn from past experiences if this, the latest re-embodiment of initial training and education, is to succeed.

IPLDP thrust new recruits, some of whom had no prior experience of higher education, into a learning environment where they were at a disadvantage compared to peers with higher level qualifications. Some reported their experience as one where they had to work harder and were left feeling under great pressure in order to succeed (Macvean and Cox, 2012). More recently there has been an increase in officers holding graduate qualifications (Bryant et

al, 2014) which may reflect the growth in police-university partnerships and degree programmes in policing (Hallenberg and Cockcroft, 2017). It could also be indicative of broader trends in education and skill sectors towards employer led provision, embedding employability skills in curriculum and programme design (Cole and Tibby, 2013), and the introduction of degree apprenticeships developing technical and professional skills (Universities UK, 2016). In a PEQF context, prior experience at higher education level is a moot point for pre-join and conversion programmes, yet the situation pertaining to the PCDA could potentially continue. Understanding the relationship between national police constable entry requirements, the prior educational achievements of prospective recruits, and graduate routes into policing, is an area we suggest would benefit from scholarly exploration.

Ongoing research and evaluation would also be particularly salient in relation to the embedding of EBP and research methods as golden threads feeding into taught components of all new entry programmes. Current debates alluded to by Brown et al (2018) between crime science and experimental criminology contesting what constitutes 'best evidence' in a policing context are beyond the scope of this paper. We do agree however with the authors call to 'extend the reach' (Brown et al, 2018: 45) of EBP and encompass qualitative and quantitative methods to capture issues crucial to policing that extend beyond crime and offending, and are reflected in the core curriculum of new entry programmes. This is important if new programmes are to reflect what appear to be a

fundamental shift in the formation of police officer identities. The post new public management era saw new recruits' occupational experiences dominated by the 'what gets counted gets done' quantitative performance culture (Heslop, 2011a). Recent work suggests contemporary identities are shaped, in part, by direct experience of the changing role of police in society, and the reality of what that role entails (Charman, 2018).

This fundamental shift is captured in Charman's (2018) longitudinal study where she observes a disparity between longstanding rhetoric of the police as crime fighters and the present-day reality of the police role. New recruits' construct police officer identities that reflect their lived experiences of police work and policing and in doing so prioritise public protection, reassurance, and safeguarding the vulnerable. Describing what she terms a #newbreed of police officer, Charman (2018a) suggests their views of core police work, the role of the police, and ethical standards, sit in contrast to those of longer serving peers. Recognising a probable gap in police training and skill development, she calls for learning to adapt and reflect ongoing change and the current reality of the police officer role (Chapman, 2018). In the context of this paper, Charman's fresh perspective resonates on two levels. Firstly, it elevates the significance of broadening the scope of EBP to encompass issues including victimology, public protection and vulnerability, legitimacy, ethics, integrity, and procedural justice, as suggested by Brown et al (2018). Secondly, it reinforces the importance of ongoing evaluation of new entry route programmes to ensure there is no

mismatch between core curriculum content and the learning, skills, and competencies police constables need to undertake their role in practice.

While it is to be hoped that the PEQF offers real scope for progress, if meaningful change is to be realised the evidence base of knowledge underpinning policing and embedded in the PEQF should be extended and incorporated into the workplace. Hallenberg and Cockcroft (2017) remark upon changing attitudes towards police officers holding educational qualifications noting the normalisation of officers with degree level credentials. Yet Norman and Williams (2017) issue a timely reminder to exercise caution over the extent to which the wider police organisation is ready to embrace newly qualified 'graduate' officers expecting to impart their extended knowledge base of policing in the workplace for the benefit of the organisation. Fleming and Wingrove (2017) also note the presence of internal barriers that impede the efforts of enthusiastic and willing proponents of EBP, to incorporate EBP in practice. If the situated realities and experiences of doing policing do not permit 'graduate' officers to draw upon skills that should be transferable to their workplace, including using evidence to inform their practice, then as Norman and Williams (2017), and Fleming and Wingrove (2017) point out, the wider police organisation may currently lack the culture and infrastructure to support CoP aspirations for professionalisation.

Embedding the PEQF into policy and practice will not be a simplistic representation of what police education and training encompasses, but rather

what it hopes to achieve. If change via PEQF is to move beyond problems identified with IPLDP it is important to learn from the recent past which includes cultural differences between police and higher education organisations. Wood and Tong (2009) note the ambiguous status of student police officers is often cited as a recurring issue in contemporary training and education programmes designed for new recruits. Heslop's (2011) research further demonstrated how officers at university undertaking the IPLDP did not feel they were treated as 'real' students *or* 'real' professionals. Being in a state of 'limbo' suggest problems with cohort identity and status that could unsettle recruits who cannot fully identify with either university or police role. With the introduction of new programmes and entry routes come new opportunities to find common ground and bridge the gap between 'student' and 'officer'.

For example, reflecting upon challenges identified in earlier models of police university partnerships, Stout (2011) discusses the issue of academic misconduct. He alludes to different perspectives and responsibilities evident between the police organisation as 'employer' and the academic institution as 'educator'. Stout posits the potential to embed training on professional police officer ethics, integrity, and honesty, within teaching around academic misconduct. Exploring and explaining professional practice expectations of police officers by combining where possible classroom teaching around police *and* academic standards, mutually reinforces the status of new recruits as both students *and* officers.

Important lessons can also be drawn from Heslop's (2011) study where the identification of a subculture between police students and lecturers who were perceived of as 'anti-police', contributed to the creation of an 'us' and 'them' culture. Sub-cultural divisions evident in Macvean and Cox's (2012) work capture the experiences of hybrid teaching teams and resulting clash of cultures between academia and policing. Their work highlights interrelated tensions between traditional lecturing staff and retired police officers that included; diverging views on the status and importance given to different types of knowledge originating from the police practitioner lecturer imparting police rhetoric and 'storytelling', and the academic lecturer delivering knowledge based on theory and research; related issues included ensuing problems with student engagement; the creation of cultural divisions between practitioner and academic lecturers; and the transference of negative aspects of police occupational culture into university settings.

Given the historical backdrop to police training and education is grounded in anti-intellectualism, it is not surprising to find evidence of organisational resistance from some police quarters to the move away from traditional training methods and engage instead with Higher Education (Wood and Tong, 2009, Tong and Wood, 2011). Problematic and tense relationships between student officers and academic lecturers were also noted as detrimental to the experience of the police recruit (Heslop, 2011). Cultural divisions, friction, and conflict experienced by

academic staff teaching on IPLDP were exposed (Heslop, 2012), and attention was drawn to the incompatibility between academic policies, practices and procedures, and the operational and organisational needs of police forces (Bayley, 2011).

The dearth of studies into the culture of an academic department where police practitioner lecturers are integral to academic teaching teams, can and should be a focus for future research. The cultural tensions that were found to arise during the IPLDP phase from uneasy police-academic and academic-police partnerships (Heslop, 2011, 2011a, Macvean and Cox, 2012) must be eliminated or substantially alleviated and point to the need for committed and enthusiastic academic and training staff. Bayley's (2011) comparison of police and academic institutions alludes to the uncompromising and often inflexible organisational practices of the latter, reinforcing the need to adopt a realist approach to police-academic collaborations in terms of what can be achieved. Over a decade ago Wilmhurst and Ransley (2007) noted the changing relationship between university and policing sectors. Drawing from US and Australian studies they reiterate the need to exercise caution over the extent to which police engagement with education is instrumental in terms of achieving cultural reform, enhanced accountability, and greater professionalism.

Police studies as an academic discipline has yet to achieve independent status and recognition. While the new Higher Education Classification of subjects

introduces specialist codes for policing programmes the new PEQF entry programmes will be aligned to QAA Criminology benchmarks. The requirement to embed academic staff with appropriate qualifications in key discipline areas including criminology and law are clearly stipulated by CoP. Hence there is much to be gained from future research agendas giving due attention to the coalescing of two different organisational and occupational cultures to capture the lived experiences of those involved (both learners and providers) in order to learn from transitional and transformational partnerships.

The intention for ongoing scrutiny and evaluation of IPLDP programmes proposed by policing's then key stakeholders didn't materialise (Blakemore and Simpson, 2010). Hence the significance of Holdaway's (2017) timely reminder for research agendas to pay due attention to strategies and tactics the police use to promote its professional status. That the CoP will retain regulatory oversight of the qualifications framework it introduced, including curriculums and competency requirements, suggests much scope to explore, analyse, and theorise the relationship between the CoP and key stakeholder organisations involved in programme delivery, including their respective, and interdependent, roles, functions, policies and practices.

Evidence of strengthened relations between the two sectors can be found in the realisation of the mutual benefits for both organisations from research collaborations and knowledge transfer activities (Goode and Lumsden, 2018).

This is not to say however, that the reality of police and academia working together is without issue. Fleming (2010) offers a reality check on what can be a tricky relationship requiring both sides to develop realistic expectations of what working together entails. While partnerships between police and academic organisations can indeed be gratifying and fruitful, they require continuous communication, negotiation, and a mutual respect and understanding of the very real pressures both are under to meet externally driven sector specific demands (Fleming, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

Echoing the point made by Styles (1987) over thirty years ago, adopting a “*strict taxonomic approach*” Neyroud (2003: 586) debated the extent to which contemporary policing can be considered a profession, suggesting that one area in which policing is found wanting was the absence of higher educational qualifications and lack of commitment to lifelong learning strategies. The PEQF was developed to respond to exactly this challenge. The authors advocate enhancing the current position through the additional benefits associated with embedding officers in academia; and developing a mode of working that is underpinned by co-production and co-delivery of the learning material and learning environment. We argue that involving academic staff with discipline specific knowledge in the delivery of these programmes is vital in providing an appreciation of social scientific understandings and explorations of, not only crime and criminality, but of the contemporary issues dominating the everyday

work of the police officer. Enthusiastic and impassioned lecturing staff, together with the delivery of practical police training elements by dedicated police trainers, will provide student officers with the holistic preparation necessary for undertaking their role in an ever increasingly demanding and complex society.

The desire to raise the professional status of policing within England and Wales should recognise how integrating higher education, research and learning, into the delivery of PEQF programmes, can bring many positive features to the development of newly recruited police officers, who will become the experienced officers of the future. We would include in this the need to widen the evidence base around policing to reflect the very real and current challenges facing operational officers. And for greater encouragement and support from collaborative police and academia partnerships to enable forces to adopt a more systemic approach to embedding EBP in practice. The central caveat here is that unless ongoing research and evaluation of these programmes, including the transitional phase from new recruit to operational police officer, is embedded in this process from the outset, supported by a culture of mutual respect for learning (not training), PEQF could be susceptible to the problems inherent on previous failed initiatives.

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