

RETHINKING POLICE EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS USING THE HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

Oleh

Narayanan a/l Srinivasan
No Matrik AFD9316

Disertasi Bagi Memenuhi
Syarat-Syarat Untuk Doktor Falsafah

Jabatan Pentadbiran dan Keadilan Sosial
Fakulti Sastera dan Sains Sosial
Universiti Malaya
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by
SRINIVASAN NARAYANAN

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ABSTRACT

Police Education and Training is an important issue especially given that the function of policing is continually changing. Today police are expected to take on many other functions in addition to their core functions.

There has been no attempt in the past to compare police education and training across jurisdictions and trying to understand what are police officers perceptions of training and educational needs. This research attempts to bridge this gap and provides a comparative analysis on methods and processes as well as curriculum development in police education and training.

The study using critical hermeneutical methodology analyses the perception of needs that officers have for content and design of police education and training programmes. The research outlines content and methods that officers feel should be used to enhance police education and training. All participants agreed on a basic set of principles that should be applied when educating and training police officers that will lead to the professionalisation of the force.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan dan latihan polis adalah isu yang penting dalam dunia kepolisan kerana kerja dan tanggungjawab pegawai polis memerlukan berbagai kemahiran. Pegawai polis hari ini harus memenuhi kedua-dua peranan kepolisan dan kerja-kerja komuniti.

Sehingga kini belum terdapat kajian akademik secara perbandingan yang meneliti pengalaman pendidikan dan latihan polis. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan komparatif, tesis ini cuba menambah kefahaman mengenai metodologi, proses dan kurikulum pendidikan dan polis di tiga buah negara, iaitu Kanada, Hong Kong dan Singapore, dan melihat impikasinya terhadap pendidikan dan latihan polis di Malaysia.

Kajian ini menganalisis pengalaman anggota polis di ketiga-tiga buah negara berkenaan dengan menggunakan kaedah 'critical hermeneutics.' Tesis ini jug memperkenalkan ide kandungan dan kaedah yang ditentukan oleh pegawai polis sendiri sebagai satu pendekatan dalam pendidikan dan latihan polis. Didapati bahawa semua pegawai polis yang mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini menekankan bahawa untuk mencapai profesionalisme dalam kepolisan, pendidikan dan latihan polis hendaklah mematuhi prinsip-prinsip tertentu.

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OVERVIEW

One topic that has been explored extensively by both academics and criminal justice personnel is that of police education and training (Sherman, 1985, 1987, 1988; Carter, Sapp, & Stephens, 1989; Froyland, 1991). The debate has centred around a variety of issues, such as, what is more appropriate, skills oriented training or an education aimed at developing critical thinkers? What is the best venue for the education or training: a university or police academy? What should or should not be included as part of the education or training? What is the minimum level of education required to produce an effective criminal justice personnel (Sherman, 1988; Carver, 1989).

Despite some scepticism regarding whether increased education does in practice result in improved police performance (Worden, 1991), more police are studying at university. In 1967, the average educational level for police in the United States was 12.4 years, barely more than a high school diploma, and by the end of the 1980s, the average educational level of police had risen to nearly 14 years (Carter, Sapp and Stephens; 1989). Whether higher levels of education among officers benefits

society and police more, or even whether their education can or ever will change their attitudes is difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless, as the police service moves towards a process of *professionalisation*, responsibility grows to develop a system of education which is oriented towards meeting the complex set of needs and tasks with which they are faced, at the individual, organisational, national and international levels.

From this perspective, therefore, the focus of this study is to identify critical issues that can be incorporated into the development of a model for designing police education and training programmes. The study involves a comparative analysis of the educational/training programmes for criminal justice personnel in three countries, namely Hong Kong, Singapore, and Canada. The study will then provide implications for the Royal Malaysian Police Force based on the findings from these countries. One of the reasons for choosing these three countries is that their policing models all originated from that of the British Police Service, and hence a clear comparison could be drawn between their early training and education methodologies. To a large extent they have been modelled on the British system and many constabularies from the British Police Force have played a direct role in

the training process. Moreover, many of the officers at senior management levels have gained their training in Britain and movement between countries is also common, with for example, British police personnel taking up appointments in Hong Kong and Hong Kong police personnel working in Singapore and vice versa. Also strong links have been established between the countries in terms of police research and development, ie. the Hong Kong Police Force are working closely with Singapore in this field.

The legal environments in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Canada are also similar, as too are the police powers in all these jurisdictions. As such educational/ training models which are "adapted" to any of these countries could easily be "disseminated" to most Commonwealth jurisdictions and vice versa. Given this, a major part of this thesis involves an attempt to review the relative importance of the different factors emerging from the comparative study. The final part of this thesis turns its attention to the development of a model or system for designing police training/education which incorporates the experiences obtained from the analysis of the three countries studied in this thesis. It is in this part that the major implications for the Royal Malaysian Police Force will be analysed.

PART I:

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF POLICE
EDUCATION