PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS
OF THE POLICE PERSONNEL EDUCATION SYSTEM:
SIGHT FROM ORGANIZATION'S
AND EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

One of the most visible statutory organizations in society is police organization, specifics of activity of which requires for a unique system of personnel education (directions, methods of education, special legal regulation and exceptional personal characteristics, motivations of the person who decided to become an officer). The reform of Lithuanian police underway, negative responses of police institutions leaders about knowledge and skills of the students having practice in police institutions raise issues of review – constant update of police personnel education system. Development of the existing system of police personnel education requires for constant identification of existing problems, search for their solutions. The paper discusses determined current problematic issues of police officers' education, presents the possibilities of their solutions. The goal of the paper is to examine a prevailing system of police officers' education in Lithuania; to identify problematic areas and reveal officers' attitude towards personnel education in their organization.

Keywords: organization, statutory organization, police officers, education.

Classification JEL: M12 – Personnel Management.

1. Introduction

Having recreated independence and turning towards democracy in the end of XX century, in Lithuania, in many areas new tendencies of social, cultural, technical and other character, which are coming from Western countries, become to emerge. This was accelerated by accessing the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other international organizations, and by globalization. Changes did not spared police as well. The former militarized organization oriented towards criminal prosecution turned towards the way of social service provider. Of course, the institution that was forming during decades can't be changed in a day. It has to face the employees with conservative thinking, negatively responding to all changes, which stops the process of police role change. There are the employees who think that new generation of officers trained according to western education model will solve all problems. However, formation of personnel as well as organizational policy is a long and complicated process.

In the police serving the officers of different age, education, professional experience, generations, which requires not instant but rather gradual implementation of changes highlighting *new police role*. According to Smalskys *(2008),* Lithuanian police cannot be only a service provider yet, because our "post-communistic society isn't ready enough to acknowledge the forms of activity of the policemen trained in western style". First, community, sociality of citizens have to be developed. Meantime, "in the process of police education it is necessary to uphold a certain normative traditions transferred during education ... that permanently would transform into more democratic provisions". We must realize that "in police work there always will remain ... methods of repressive activity without which it is impossible to supplant social pathologies of society's life. We need to strive that criminal prosecution would be kept as less as possible and to orient permanently towards qualifications and competencies based on social service to citizens".

Summarizing an issue of police role, we conclude that our law enforcement at the moment takes an intermediary role between a body of criminal prosecution and a provider of social services (performs dualistic function). Most important that a future direction is clear – a striving to get rid of image of repressive body and to become an organization activity of which is based on principles of new public management.

Changes in social environment affect the law enforcement that orients it activity towards it. Therefore, we can to parallelize new role of police organization and development of police higher education because the new role requires preparation of universal officer able to provide wide spectrum of social services, and possession and adapting of these knowledge in practice realizes new role of police organization.

One of the goals of the police reform under performance in the Republic is to create universal policeman able to work both with administrative and criminal enforcement. This issue is widely discussed in police community and gets a lot of skepticism of practitioners.

2.   Police personnel training and competences

Concept of employee training and competences in scientific literature is analyzed wide enough despite it has not very deep tradition. Pioneers of this problem research are considered Boyatzis *(1982),* Spencer & Spencer *(1993),* Good *(1997),* Collin *(1997),* Ackerman *(1998).* Its concept describes a combination of knowledge and skills and ability to adapt them in particular circumstances. In Lithuania different aspects of competence were analyzed by Jovaiša *(1995),* Laužackas *(1999)* and Lepaitė *(2000).* Meanwhile problem of competence education in systemic point of view is not researched enough neither in scientific nor practical aspects. Competence is not being acquired as traditional qualification by getting diploma; it has to be educated constantly. Therefore organizations in striving to correspond to constantly changing requirements have to be oriented towards employees' strategic competencies, to create teaching systems which would be consistently oriented towards education of employees' competencies.

During the last years in scientific literature on human resources management much attention is given to competence management and education. This term is related to evaluation of work places, hiring and selection of employees, internal and external mobility of employees, career management, qualification refreshment and teaching, assessment of employees' activity, salary organization and so on. This also determines two essential aspects of competence topicality. The first is related to position of every employee – competence is an important factor for an individual implementing a successful career. On the other side it is important to organization as well – employees' competence and its education allow to organization implementation of own goals and adapting to changing circumstances.

The issue of police personnel training in Lithuania has been studied in various aspects by Barkauskas *(2004),* Smalskys *(2005),* Bubnys *(2005),* Aukštuolytė *(2011),* Čigrin *(2011),* Navickienė *(2011),* Vitkauskas *(2011),* Skibarka *(2012),* Stepanovienė *(2012),* etc.

Wide competence of police institution determines a twofold structure of personnel. The persons servicing in the police have different legal status: 1) persons working under the employment contracts and 2) statutory civil servants. In striving to go into the process of police officer's education, we are narrowing a volume of personnel concept that should be examined by distinguishing statutory civil servants, i.e. police officers. The article 2 part 6 of the Law on police activity regulates that police officer is "a statutory civil servant accredited to officer's duties according to the order determined in the statute of the Lithuanian Republic internal service ... who executes police functions intended by the laws, which warranty implementation of police tasks and functions, with the authorities of public administration deputed by the law regarding the persons not dependent on themselves and (or) heading police officers". Concept of police officer describes specifics of police activity – the authorities of public administration

deputed to officers in regard to the persons not dependent on themselves, in disobedience of which the officer has the right to use force. We live in a democratic society, where violence as such is an unacceptable phenomenon, however, as wrote Smalskys *(2008),* „in police activity there always will remain ... methods of repressive activity without which it is impossible to supplant social pathologies of social life". This truth supposes a necessity for special education of police officers.

Adamonienė *(2015)* distinguishes following possibilities of police officers' competence acquiring or updating (elements of police personnel education content):

- Higher education;
- Participation in qualification refreshment events;
- Pedagogical activity in areas of police activity whet it is not the main activity of the police officer;
- Adaptation process;
- Tutoring;
- Participation in traineeship.

Officers training at professional education institution and possibility of informal development could be mentioned together with the listed methods of competence acquiring.

The main goal of education process is a refreshment of competencies. The Lithuanian Republic police general commissioner's order No. 5-V-284 'Regarding validation of list of competencies of police officers and other police system's employees' legally regulates competencies of police officers. There are distinguished 3 types of competencies: *professional, special and additional special.* „Professional competencies – knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, other personal characteristics intended for successful general professional activity of officers performing functions of criminal and public police, administrating and officers taking managing positions as well as other police system employees. Special competencies – knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and other personal characteristics intended for successful professional activity in particular activity area of officers performing functions of criminal and public police, administrating and officers taking managing positions as well as other police system employees. Additional special competencies – knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and other personal characteristics intended for successful professional activity of police officers and other police system employees taking managing positions". The officer who wants to perform properly the functions committed to him is also recommended, besides these legally approved competencies, to acquire other competencies discussed earlier (professional, methodical, social, personal, and inter-cultural).

3. Methods

Regardless the fact that police is the organization that performs a dualistic function (providing of administrative services and criminal prosecution) , in Lithuania "the principles of preparation of universal policeman are prevailing, that are based on provisions of police as institution providing social services to citizens and requirements of preventive and administrative work competencies. Training of criminal police is not distinguished from a total context of police education", which possibly aggravates investigation of criminal acts. Statistics that reveals that only little more than half of committed criminal acts are being investigated during the recent years calls into question the competencies of the officers. "Crime requires from the personnel of criminal police ... additional competencies (in additions to that acquired by public police officers) in the areas of organized crime control, criminal law and process, operative activity and other". Then the question arises whether having turned the opposite direction, i.e. moving to model of universal policeman, will not increase the number of uninvestigated crimes?

The more as scientist are talking about the reverse process *(Smalskys, 2005; Bubnys, 2005; Raipa, 2006; etc.)*. So far, we can only discuss whether institute of universal officer under implementation will satisfy expectations of police organization leaders and entire society and future will allow to assess the fairness of the decision taken.

3.1. Characteristics of survey

The survey goal was defined in this way: to analyze police officers' opinion on topic of police personnel education system existing in the Republic. To reach the goals of the survey, in the website *Apklausa.lt* there was created a *questionnaire* consisting of short presentation, listing of the main research goal, information that the survey is anonymous, indication that respondents should be statutory civil servants and the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 91 question. Types of the questions: closed with the only possible answer, closed with few possible answers, open, and combined. The questionnaire was divided into 6 parts. The first part overview general questions: gender, age, service time, place of service, region. The other parts tried to find out attitude of police officers towards acquired education, attitude of police institution towards education of officers, the conditions created for education of officers, required competencies and other issues related to officers training.

Participants of the survey consisted of police officers of all Lithuanian territorial institutions (statutory civil servants). During the research there were interviewed 115 officers. According to gender, the ratio of respondents was: 73% men and 27% women, most respondents were men aged 36–45 years. The survey was most participated by officers aged 36–40 (29.6% of respondents), slightly slipped by the civil servants aged 41–45 (22.6%). 28.7% are serving in the system of Internal Affairs for more than 20 years. 20.9% work longer than 15 years. 40% of the questioned persons are working as senior investigators or investigators, 24% are working as superiors, 19% as patrols. Most respondents (67%) represent the region of Higher Lithuania; 56.5% of the questioned officers serve in the cities inhabited by more than 20 thousand citizens.

From the viewpoint of procedure, the research was performed since March 3, 2017 to March 28, 2017. Electronic link of the research was sent to personnel departments of all Lithuanian territorial police offices in March 3. The research was stopped at March 28. Empirical data was treated by conventional methods of mathematical statistics (using SPSS 12).

3.2. Results

Results of the survey reveal officers' attitude towards personnel development in their organization. The most of the respondents (74.8%) think that education of police officers should be a striving for balance between theory and practice. 24.3% of respondents consider that in the process of officers' education practical training of policemen has to be highlighted. When asked „if right after graduation of police education institution and having started the service available competences were enough?", only 12.2% of the questioned see that they acquired required competencies, 68.7% of the respondents answer 'partially', and 19.1% indicated that competencies were not enough.

The officers were asked whether there exists a system of personnel education in the institution they are working. Results show that 61.7% of the respondents answered 'yes', 9.6% – 'no', and even 28.7% of the respondents were unable to answer this question. The benefits, according to the respondents, the education of personnel gives to the institution are: personnel education increases personnel motivation (18%), increases productivity (15.8%), raises the organization's internal culture (14.7%), (Figure 1).

In other question, 40% of the respondents consider that their institution gives enough attention to education of employees, 40% think no and 20% indicated that they do not know.

We found out that most respondents (29.6%) don't know who forms strategy of personnel education in the institution they are working. 28.7% of the questioned think that education of police personnel is being formed at the extent of whole police institution and that police institution they are working does not perform separate policy of personnel education. 16.5% of respondents think that the person responsible for formation of personnel education policy is manager or personnel specialists together with a manager.

Figure 1. Benefit of officers' education to the institution where they are serving (own study)

In next question, officers were asked this question: *"What possibilities of development are created for police officers?"* 30.9% of respondents indicated the possibility to participate qualification refreshment courses, 20.9% indicated a possibility to learn from colleagues, and 18.8% indicated a possibility to participate lectures/seminars of different profile (Figure 2).
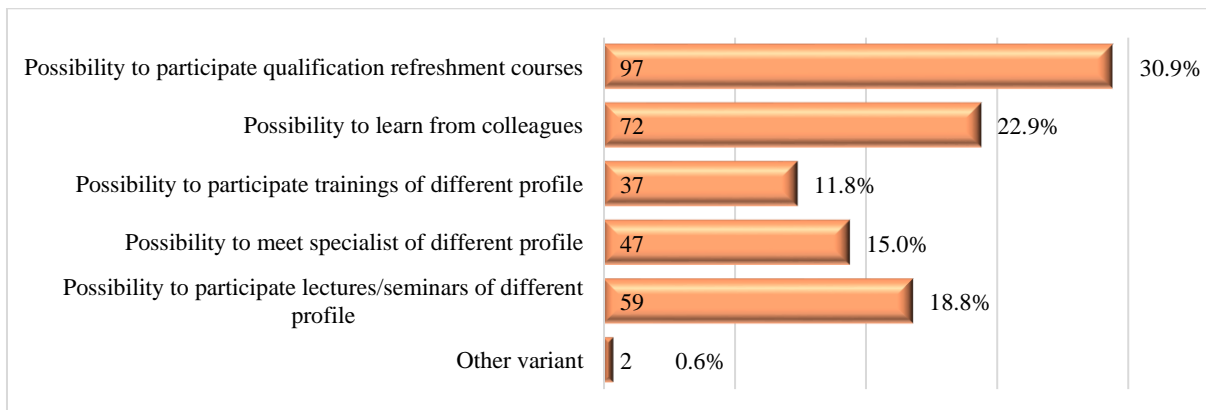

Figure 2. Frequency of possibilities created for officers to refresh qualification in special courses (own study)

36.5% of respondents revealed they have such possibility twice a year, 17.4% − twice a half year, 13.9% − once a year. When asked whether they willingly participate the courses, 41.7% of respondents answer positively, 58.3% answered that it depends on the direction of the course. The fact that no respondent selected the answer 'no' indicates that officers realize the importance of professional development. Most officers *refreshed their qualification*

in following fields: tactics (16.3%), psychology (15.5%), shooting, law, and foreign languages (13.9%), (Figure 3).
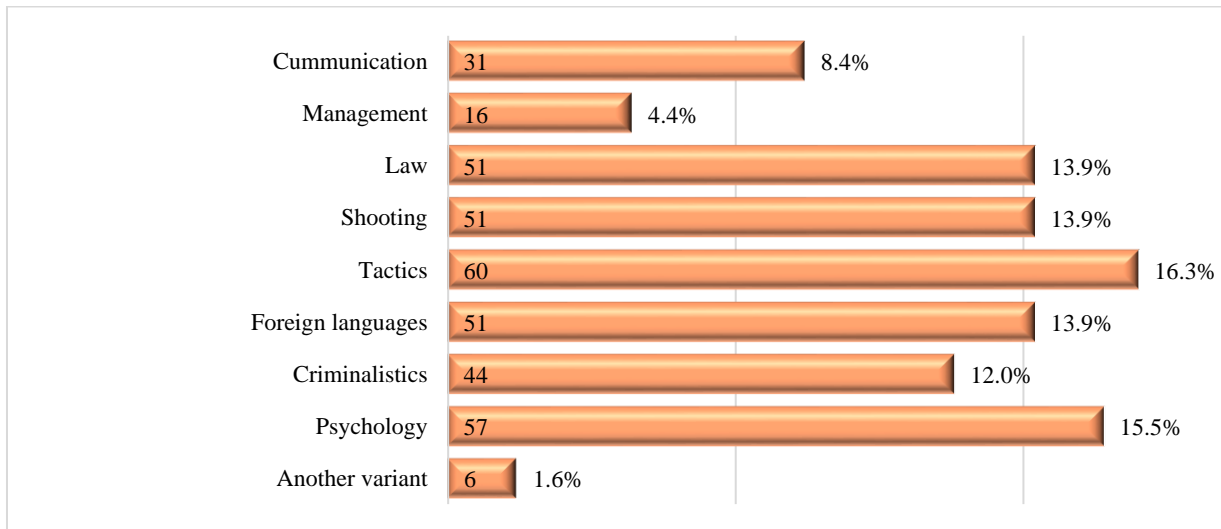

Figure 3. Qualification refreshment courses being organized most often (own study)

From the viewpoint of *concrete form of qualification refreshment,* most of the respondents pointed out case studies – examination of practical situations (19%), training (18.1%) and seminars (14.1%) as the most useful forms of qualification refreshment (Figure 4).
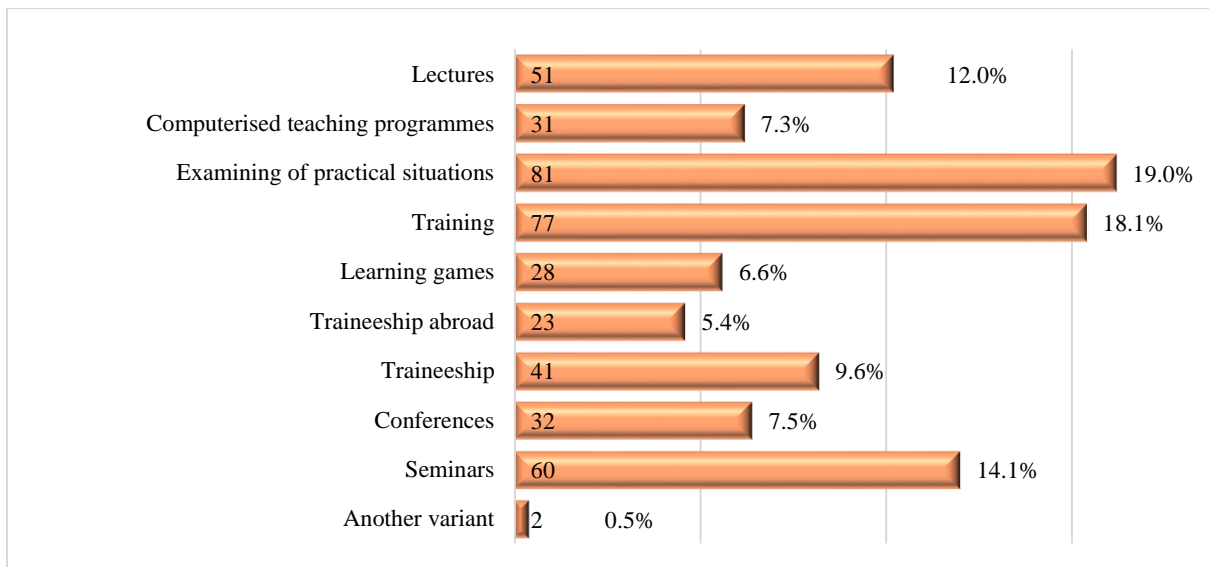

Figure 4. Most acceptable forms of qualification refreshment for officers (own study)

What professional competence is needed in police officers' work? 70.4% of the respondents indicated higher education, 26.1% indicated professional education. Respondents distinguished following methodical competencies needed for polices officers: ability to remain calm in critical situations (15%), ability to plan, organize, analyze work results (13.9%), ability to get and manage information (13.3%), analytical thinking (13.1%). As most required were indicated following social competencies: ability to communicate (13.7), responsibility (12.5%), following of professional ethics (12.2%), mutual understanding, helping co-workers (11.7%).

Distinguished personal competencies: initiative, activity (7.7%), ability to manage emotions (7.4%), optimism, positivity (7.2%), self-confidence (7%), ability to work in team (7%).

Answering the question of *what competences they lack,* most officers distinguished following methodical competencies: ability to stay calm in critical situation (20.2%), physical preparedness (14.2%), knowing of techniques of individual and team work (13.1%). When asked about *social competencies,* officers distinguished knowing of negotiation (24.7%), knowing how to present himself (18.4%), and ability to convince (13.9%). The most lacking personal competencies are optimism, positivity (11.9%), creativity (10.1%), and self-confidence (9.3%).
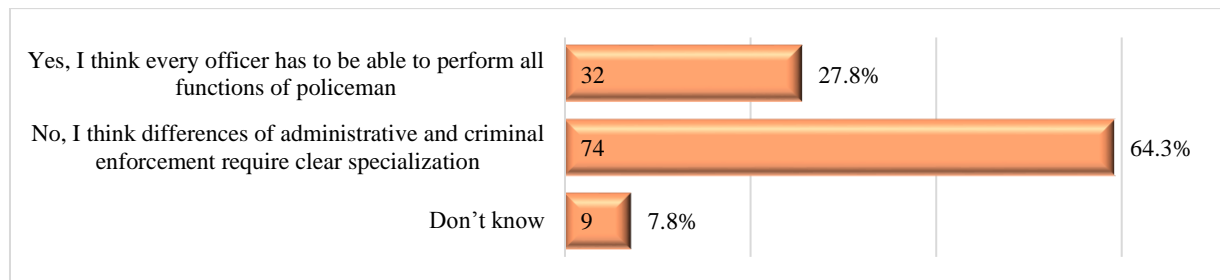

Figure 5. Assessment of transition to universal officer model (own study)

One of the goals of the current police reform is to create a model of universal officer by merging public and criminal police. Since characteristics of activity of these divisions differ, the respondents were asked whether they *support a transition to the model of universal officer*. The majority (64.3%) of the officers responded negatively, in their opinion differences of administrative and criminal enforcement require clear specializations (Figure 5).

4. Conclusions

The study highlighted the lack of available knowledge of police officers on their education issue. The fact that relatively big part of the questioned (28.7%) do not know if there exists personnel education system in their institution and who is responsible for it (29.6%), that only 40% of respondents think that education of officers is given sufficient attention allows to consider about insufficiency communication of police institutions' leaders and officers, officers' indifference and lack of motivation to improve their professional competencies as well as information about possibilities available, implemented novelties, changes.

The comparison of the most required and lacking competencies listed by officers makes it possible to assume that education of these competencies requires the most attention (ability to stay calm in critical situations, physical preparedness, knowing of individual and team work techniques, negotiation, self-presentation skills, ability to convince, optimism, positivity, creativity, self-confidence).

The model of universal officer implemented under current reform splits a police community from inside. The opinion of scientists Smalskys *(2005),* Bubnys *(2005),* Raipa *(2006)* and others, suggesting that the peculiarities of public and criminal police activity require special education contradicts the attitude of the police leadership indicating that the police officer must perform different police actions. The paper shows that most of the questioned officers (64.3%) disagree with the implementation of the universal police model therefore this obliges to start a discussion, to highlight the reasons for the need to make these changes and to explain it to the police community.

Transition of police officers' education to university education determines the dominance of the theory in the process of policemen training. The majority of the respondents (74.8%)

considered the balance of theory and practice as the goal of organizing the educational process. Negative feedback from heads of police institutions about the practical skills of students who are practicing in police institutions and opinion of most of the questioned officers presupposes the need to address the problem of finding optimal balance between theory and practice in police personnel education.

Thereto, based on all previous opinions and empirical result, in the context of changing role of police institution, education of police officers at universities, current police reform, we can complexly generalize and highlight following problems of police personnel education:

- Lack of available knowledge of police officers on their education issue;
- Imbalance of theory and practice;
- Lack of available knowledge and required competencies;
- Disagreement of police community with the implementation of the universal police model.

These problems have to be solved *systematically* and with all attention and seriousness. Police is the most important part of tertiary sector of each country because this one helps the citizens to feel them safe. At present, the feeling of safety is extremely important. Only when the inhabitants of the country will not worry about their homes and lives, they will be able to carry out their work with their full potential, and thereby to contribute to the progress of the economy under consideration.

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