Theorising Police Professionalisation and Academic Education

Katja Hallenberg
Canterbury Christ Church University
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Police investigative skills training

Increasing co-operation between academia and police training

Academisation of police training as an indication of police professionalisation
Police as a Profession?

- Professionalisation as a process
- Expert services: market monopoly and service orientation
- Legitimation and regulation of power: accountability, responsibility and ethics
- Professional-client relationship: structured situations, entrenched positions of power and dependence, maintenance of social order
- Governance and independent socio-cultural authority
HE as the ‘Missing Ingredient’?

- Expert knowledge
- Systematic body of theory
- Instructional abstraction

“Abstraction enables survival in the competitive system of professions.”

(Abbott, 1988: 9)
Symbolic and Practical Benefits of Instructional Abstraction

- A ritualistic exercise? (Collins, 1979 & 1988)
- Meeting expectations (Jaschke and Neidhardt, 2007)
- Social status (Elliott, 1972; Schwirian, 1998)
- Preparing for duties, anticipating and justifying decisions and actions, accounting for outcomes, presenting findings and methods (Sciulli, 2009)
- Maintaining institutional jurisdiction and cognitive hegemony, redefinition and defence of problems and tasks, securing of new tasks (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997)
Redefining and Relegitimising Policing?

- Deliberate occupational upgrading?
- Regaining identity, market monopoly, status, privileges
- Body of professionals defined in terms of their monopoly of tools, control over production, training and licensing → social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1987)
- → edge in ‘conflicts over competence’ and ‘permanent symbolic struggle of the discipline’ (Bourdieu, 1987)
- Relegitimising (expanding?) exercise of power (Ericson, 1993)
- Legitimising the police knowledge claim (from experience to expertise)
- External recognition: public, other professions, state
Social Change

Professionalisation

Higher Education

(after Jarausch, 1983)
Final Word

- Ontological shift? Changing cultural truisms and new structured situations (Sciulli, 2009)

- Interaction of structure and agency

- A shift in the police organisational discourse to that of professionalism and a building of a new narrative of the police profession, both at organisational and individual level