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DEVELOPMENT OF LAW ENFORCERS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE USA

Abstract. *Based on the study of the experience of training law enforcement officers in the United States, there has been stressed in the article on the need to improve the police training considering development of communicative and interpersonal skills. These skills as well as creative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills are among the most needed for the professional efficiency of every law enforcement officer. The author considers that a new law enforcement agency serving the social needs and protecting the rights of citizens requires modern approaches to the police training. So, as the community-oriented policing is an important aspect of law enforcement work, police training academies should train their officers to interact effectively with public. Coming from the USA research outcomes, the core interpersonal competencies for law enforcement officers are identified as following: ability to use good judgment and to problem solve; capacity for empathy and compassion; capacity for multi-tasking; ability to demonstrate courage and to take responsibility; ability to be resourceful and show initiative; demonstrating assertiveness; possess and demonstrate integrity; capacity for engaging in teamwork and ability to collaborate. The contemporary methodologies like problem-based learning, communications-based instructions, and practical scenario training providing development of law enforcers' communicative and interpersonal skills are analyzed in the article. Within training programs these methods integrate many of the educational results such as: thinking critically with the ability to analyze complex problems; locate, assess, and utilize significant educational resources; display outstanding skills related to written and oral communications; and develop into life-long learners by using their intellectual and content knowledge. The author says that the experience of the USA police training according to the mentioned sphere can be crucially useful for the police reform process in Ukraine.*

Key words: *communication skills; interpersonal skills; law enforcers; police training; the USA.*

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РОЗВИТОК КОМУНІКАТИВНИХ НАВИЧОК ПРАВООХОРОНЦІВ У США

Анотація. Стаття присвячена вивченню досвіду професійної підготовки працівників правоохоронних органів в США, зокрема щодо розвитку їх комунікативних навичок і навичок міжособистісного спілкування. Ці навички разом з формуванням творчого мислення, навичками вирішення проблем і прийняття рішень вважаються одними з найбільш необхідних для професійної ефективності кожного співробітника правоохоронних органів. Автор вважає, що реформування правоохоронних органів, які служать захисту суспільних потреб та прав громадян, вимагає сучасних підходів до навчання поліції. Отже, оскільки громадсько-орієнтована діяльність поліції є важливим аспектом роботи правоохоронних органів, навчальні поліцейські академії повинні навчати правоохоронців навичкам ефективної взаємодії з громадськістю. Виходячи з результатів досліджень США, основні компетенції міжособистісного спілкування правоохоронців визначаються як: здатність приймати розумні рішення та вирішувати проблеми; здатність до емпатії та співчуття; здатність до багатозадачної діяльності; вміння виявляти сміливість і брати на себе відповідальність; вміння проявляти винахідливість та ініціативу; чесність; здатність долучатися до командної роботи і співпрацювати тощо. У статті проаналізовано сучасні методи навчання (проблемне, комунікативне, навчання на основі практичних сценаріїв та ін.), використання яких сприятиме розвитку комунікативних та навичок міжособистісного спілкування правоохоронців. В межах навчальних програм ці методи інтегрують численні освітні результати, такі як: критичне мислення зі здатністю аналізувати складні проблеми; визначати, оцінювати та використовувати значущі освітні ресурси; проявляти навички, пов'язані з письмовою та усною комунікацією; вміння розвиватися протягом усього життя, використовуючи інтелектуальні та змістові знання. Автор зазначає, що досвід підготовки поліцейських у США щодо комунікативних навичок і компетенцій міжособистісного спілкування може бути корисним для процесу реформування правоохоронних органів в Україні.

Ключові слова: комунікативні навички; навички міжособистісного спілкування; правоохоронці; підготовка поліції; США.

Problem statement and its rationale. Rule of law and a strong justice sector are fundamental and crucial to a well-functioning modern democracy. Efficient policing, which serves the people rather than just the state, is therefore central to preventing conflicts and preserving social stability. A new generation of police officers in Ukraine should form a modern law enforcement agency with the aim of serving the needs and protecting the rights of citizens. A new law on the National Police that came into force in 2015 and enabled the further development

of the police started a significant change in the functions and duties of the police officers working in close contact with the public. However, the police reform process in Ukraine and the modern police development strategy are continued to be discussed with the participation of the public, national and international experts. The current stages in reform involve deepening the changes to the National Police, restructuring the work of the crime bloc, developing police computerization; and among others are changes to the system for police education and training.

To prepare police officers for their societal roles in the 21st century, training and education are at the forefront for their success and survival. Law enforcers need high level professional skills and they have to be sensitized to the day-to-day challenges they will have to tackle from the communities they serve, if they are to be effective. So, there is an urgent need to improve preparing law enforcers of new generation, just in sphere of developing their communication and interpersonal skills. If the profession of law enforcement is to continue to advance, new methods of accommodating change must be developed and implemented. A recent philosophy being pursued by many police agencies throughout the United States and other countries today is *community oriented policing* which causes a change in fundamental methods of delivery of police services and therefore in police training. And the experience of the USA police training according to this sphere can be crucially useful for reform process in Ukraine.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The problem of law enforcement officers training is traditionally raised in many scientific articles and publications. Thus, foreign authors A. Chappel, M. Charles, G. Gordner, W. McCamey, A. Gammage, M. Haberfield, G. Kelling, M. Moore, Q. Thurman and others have investigated preparing competent college graduates, contemporary police training methods, curriculum reform in police training, educational Communications and Technology for training law enforcers etc. Many Ukrainian researches such as O. Bandurka, S. Slyvka, V. Syniov, V. Tiurina, G. Yavorska, O. Ligotskii and others have highlighted peculiarities, methodology, principles and learning techniques of police officers preparing. However, there are not sufficient publications, which summarize the USA police training experience in communication skills development that is to be beneficial to implement in Ukraine.

Thus, **the aim of this publication** is to analyze the sense of communication and interpersonal skills of law enforcement officers in the context of peculiarities of their professional activity, duties and functions in society; to consider methodology of forming these skills on the example of the USA police academies training.

Presentation of the basic material. Effective policing occurs when officers and members of the public partner to create safe and crime-free communities. This partnership requires that officers display not only strong technical capabilities but also interpersonal skills. Together, technical and interpersonal skills form the basis of all police work (Miller, 1983).

In the USA the majority of initial law enforcement training police trainee can go through at the local community college or academy is classroom based, supplemented by practical exercises and scenarios. There is no standard national

curriculum, but the state may guide agencies in developing training programs. The Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training or similar entity establishes minimum selection standards for law enforcement officers, sets minimum education and training standards, and serves as the certification or licensing authority for sworn personnel.

In 2015, The United States Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services Office and the Police Executive Research Forum collaborated to pilot an innovative police training strategy. This problem based learning strategy, titled the Police Training Officer Program, institutionalized adult learning theory and problem solving tools into a process that encouraged new officers to think using a proactive mindset, enabling the identification of and solution to problems within their communities (Rushing, 2015).

The USA Department of Justice-funded research project identified the following as *core competencies* for law enforcement officers: ability to use good judgment and to problem solve; capacity for empathy and compassion; capacity for multi-tasking; ability to demonstrate courage and to take responsibility; ability to be resourceful and show initiative; demonstrating assertiveness; possess and demonstrate integrity; capacity for engaging in teamwork and ability to collaborate (Police Officer Academy Training, 2015).

As experts P. McDermott and D. Hulse have considered, fundamentally, most police activities involve one of two actions: police officers talk to people and they touch people. The «touch factor» in police training, driven by concern for officer safety, encompasses instruction in firearms, motor vehicle stops, self-defense, arrest and control, and responses to crimes in progress (McDermott, Hulse, 2012).

The «talk factor» in police training focuses on verbal interactions during criminal investigations, traffic stops, interviews, and interrogations. Yet, in the USA the Police Officers Standards and Training Council and the Law Enforcement Training Center both support this view and maintain that effective interpersonal skills are essential to virtually every aspect of police operations. Law enforcement officers cannot avoid interactions with the public because they occur so frequently in three very common areas of police work: motor vehicle stops, criminal investigations, and domestic violence and conflicts. Officers cannot predict the exact behaviors they will encounter during every day police service, and, thus, they need strong interpersonal skills to minimize hostility and misunderstandings in these situations (McDermott, Hulse, 2012).

Teaching communication skills also applies to the officers' ability to communicate with other officers, other first responders, and the public. With other officers and public safety professionals, proper communication skills are critical in disseminating necessary information. When dealing with the public, officers need to know when to be commanding and when to be friendly and reassuring.

Therefore, law enforcers training agencies must train their officers on how to interact effectively with the public. Any well-established law enforcement academy trains and evaluates all recruits for their technical (e.g., tactical and legal) abilities. For example, in firearms training, recruits must earn a certain score to carry a weapon. Unfortunately, many agencies do not concentrate on training

and evaluating officers' interpersonal skills (e.g., active listening, problem solving, persuasion, and conflict management) even though officers need them to competently execute tactical and legal tasks. But community policing is an important aspect of a law enforcement career. If officers cannot communicate with the public, poor community relations will hinder even the most technically proficient departments.

Developing communication and interpersonal skills comes with experience and exposure. There are some ways to get started. 1) Volunteering with a local police department or with any community service organization can provide trainees with some of the skills abilities needed to be an effective community policing officer. 2) Gaining work experience means that almost any type of work experience can help to develop the skills needed to be an effective community policing officer. 3) Taking related courses. This could be through educational courses focused on communication or critical thinking. Understanding listening strategies and how to communicate with the various populations a police officer will come in contact with is incredibly valuable. Critical thinking takes practice and will help to develop better problem-solving abilities (Police Officer Academy Training, 2015).

To improve officers' performance in common police practices in the USA, training agencies instruct personnel on *basic competencies* that ease communication between the police and the public during motor vehicle stops, criminal investigations, and domestic conflicts. These skills fall into three categories: setting the stage, gathering evidence, and confirming information.

To set the stage for effective communication, officers should practice crucial *verbal* and *nonverbal conversation habits*. These include eye contact, body position, voice tone, facial expressions, gestures, physical distance, and physical contact. Police also should use open invitations to talk, such as encouragers and closed and open-ended questions. When gathering evidence, four communication skills assist officers in collecting pertinent information: *focusing*, *paraphrasing*, *reflecting*, and *confronting*. Focusing helps with reframing and reconstructing problems. When paraphrasing, officers restate someone's thoughts in different words and in a nonjudgmental manner. Reflecting involves feelings as officers articulate an individual's emotions, whether stated or implied. Finally, confronting aids police in identifying discrepancies in a story. To confirm information, officers should use two strategies to pull together relevant data and ensure that they accurately capture an individual's story. *Clarifying* confirms that the officer and the individual agree on the exchanged information, and *summarizing* establishes that all information gathered is accurate (McDermott, Hulse, 2012).

Thus, communication abilities and interpersonal skills are among the most needed for the professional efficiency of every law enforcement officer.

The principal method used for many police academies in the USA resulted in similarities to military basic training or otherwise known as military boot camp. But nowadays this behavioral and military model for academy instruction has changed for *nonmilitary police academy model* because police officers have many more societal constraints on their actions than soldiers in a war (Queen, 2016).

The nonmilitary police academy model is focused on adult learning

strategies where curriculum is directed toward a softer approach within the classroom and aimed to teach critical thinking, decision making, or problem solving. Multiple teaching methods are used to best prepare students to become self-directed police officers who can truly solve problems, analyze issues, learn from their mistakes, and think creatively. If police departments are working within a community policing philosophy, they want or prefer critical thinking, problem solving officers in the field instead of military warriors as their police officers. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of college and university police academies were found to be employing a predominately stress-free educational environment.

Many researchers contend that within both the traditional, militaristic style of police academy training and the non-stressful academic arena, teacher-centered approaches with a lecture format are the primary means of instruction and information sharing. According to C. R. Queen (2016), while traditional law enforcement education programs performed well in developing technical and procedural skills, the adult learning strategies are strongly recommended where academy classes become student-centered and firmly assist in the attainment and application of student knowledge associated with developing non-technical capabilities and skills like problem solving, decision making, and leadership. Perhaps, a change in direction toward the use and development of other learning strategies would be more supportive toward the education of community-oriented police recruits.

Update methodology would improve law enforcement training and make it more effective. An instructional method that initiates students' learning by creating a need to solve an authentic problem has been defined as *problem-based learning (PBL)*. During the problem-solving process, students construct knowledge and develop problem-solving skills while working toward a solution to the problem. Problems provoke thought, stimulate action, and many times demand attention. When problems are considered important and relevant, people expend personal energy and resources to solve them efficiently.

Within the problem-based learning, H. S. Barrows argued that six basic or core components must be present. First, learning must be student-centered. In this environment and under the direction of a facilitator, students are allowed to determine what information is important and have the responsibility for their own education. The second component involves learning taking place within small group settings. Students are assigned randomly to small groups of 5-8 members where they must socialize and negotiate with other students in order to come to a consensus on the best problem resolutions. The third element is where teachers must become tutors or facilitators. The instructor, now turned facilitator, must assume that role to guide students to pursue answers to the questions that they should discover themselves. The hope is that the students eventually challenge each other with the proper queries to determine the best solutions to the problems. The fourth PBL component relates to problems being the primary focus and stimulus for learning. Problems should represent the challenges that the students will face when in the field and must be relevant in order to provide student motivation for learning. The fifth element of PBL declares that problems are the means for developing problem-solving abilities. The format for the

problems must be related to real world applications where students are placed in an experiential environment and allowed to work their way through various explorations depending upon the discipline. The sixth and final criterion contends that new information is transferred to students when self-directed learning is applied. Students in PBL courses are expected to work together and learn by encouraging teamwork, discussion, and continuous comparative analysis much like experts within the discipline (Barrows, 1996).

Within training programs, PBL integrates many of the sought-after educational outcomes such as: thinking critically with the ability to analyze complex problems; locate, assess, and utilize significant educational resources; display outstanding skills related to written and oral communications; and develop into life-long learners by using their intellectual and content knowledge.

Some law enforcement training programs, used in the USA, already provide *communications-based instruction* for recruits. Many training programs explain learning objectives as that instructors not simply describe these skills in class, but, what is more important, model them, and evaluate recruits. Students not only observe the instructor, but they practice, demonstrate, and master these skills. In this case police recruits truly master the competencies in a communications training curriculum (Young, 2009).

In police academies, interpersonal skills should be taught and mastered independently so that recruits can use these abilities to supplement technical training. *Six steps* comprise a common procedure in such education courses that exemplifies how law enforcement academies can teach their own recruits:

- 1) The instructor presents, defines, and demonstrates a specific capability to the class.

- 2) The students practice the skill, often in groups of three. One student takes on the role of the police officer, another plays the client, and the third observes. Group members take a turn in each role.

- 3) Class members discuss their challenges with each task, and they continue to practice.

- 4) Each student performs in front of the class and instructor, who evaluates each class member on all of the assigned skills.

- 5) The class repeats steps 1 through 4 until all techniques are introduced, modeled, practiced, demonstrated, and evaluated.

- 6) At the end of the course, students demonstrate all of the competencies that they learned in the course during a 10- to 15-minute mock session. The instructor videotapes each session and evaluates the students' command of all the skills (Young, 2009).

The experts on police training say that *practical scenario training* with live subjects is extremely effective. The scenario should play out to the end and be completed, with backup arriving; suspects handcuffed, searched, and readied for transport; emergency medical called; and the other actions that would be taken in a real incident. Adding more scenario training will be helpful in law enforcer training. Officers can watch videos, read case studies, study chunks of information online, and perform practical drills. When properly structured and supervised, scenario training requires officers to use multiple skills and combine them to

achieve a goal. And that can be a very memorable experience.

So, the law enforcement officers' academy training builds an essential foundation for new officers because they need to master communication skills before they execute professional tactical and legal tasks. In law enforcement, all new officers must master verbal and nonverbal communication and interpersonal skills regardless of their job function, title, or location.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Police reform is crucial for the country's stability, so that people see police officers doing their job honestly and effectively, and this is what will help improve public trust in law enforcement bodies. Now Ukraine's police force is working to win over public trust and therefore raise public respect for law and order. There is an urgent need to reform police training in Ukraine considering positive the USA experience. In order to be successful, police officers training must be focused on development of skills that are related to needs such as communication, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and interpersonal skills. Contemporary methodology like problem-based learning, communications-based instructions, practical scenario training would improve developing mentioned skills and abilities and law enforcement training, and make them more effective.

Then, when recruits leave the academy, they will have the interpersonal capabilities to enhance their legal and tactical skills. Entering the work force with this solid foundation enables officers to remove some of the barriers between the police and the public, be competent and confident. This ensures that they will communicate civilly and respectfully with others, which ultimately leads to better public partnerships and safer communities.

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