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COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING IN GERMANY – TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Abstract

Presents data from two surveys and arguments in favour of a restructuring of the police service in general and police training in particular. Its main contestation is that to keep up with an ever-changing world, the police has to become more versatile itself, without losing sight of its core functions: protection and **security provision**. These objectives can only be achieved by a police force that cooperates intensively with the people, i.e. relies on a community oriented approach to policing, and one whose members have been provided throughout their training with **problem- solving skills** and techniques and have developed a high degree of **self- motivation**. The article suggests that in the current social and economic climate there is an urgent need for such **reforms** and that they can best be achieved through **international cooperation.**

In a world of rapid social change no important actor can escape the need for reform, least of all institutions like the police which are in constant interaction with society. It therefore seems logical that any reform should take the direction of opening the police towards the community and enable it to react more flexibly to future change.

Community Policing is a relatively young strategy that is used to tackle the manifold new problems that today's police forces are faced with. To consider the validity of this new approach to policing it is important at first to assess the evolution of postmodern society, the changing nature of crime in this society and to what extent current police structures are limited in their reaction to this crime. It is then possible to evaluate consequences for police management structures and develop a new model for police training and even police philosophy. The aim of this essay is to show the relevance of the idea of community policing and its implications for the training of police officers.

The Police

Community oriented policing and community oriented (decentralized) government services seem to be a promising strategy to address the rapidly shifting needs of contemporary societies where traditional forms of police work increasingly fail to live up to their task. This is true not only for Germany, but for all democratic countries. Over the last few years a radical reappraisal of *policing philosophy* and the role of the police has therefore taken place in these countries. Drives for greater efficiency, ideas like New Public Management and *changes in workplace philosophy* forced the police to revise the old-fashioned militaristic approach to policing. A community oriented strategy broadens the definition of the police as an agency and of its functions. This approach includes order maintenance, conflict resolution, problem solving and provision of services as well as other activities. The police does not, indeed cannot effectively control crime or criminal structures and situations. Prevention through repression is rather ineffective. As a result, forces have begun to devise plans to *evaluate police performance* through local crime surveys and through police activity surveys with the view of improving quality of policing at local level. Decentralized budgeting

and new workplace philosophies in public administration turned the spotlight onto two of the most severe problems the police has: MONEY AND MEMBERS.

Money is never enough, and *members* (i.e.police officers) are getting more and more frustrated, frequently experience harassment by their peers and/or superiors and in consequence retire early. However, it is the employees that are at the core of any service- based institution: they produce, perform and communicate with customers, and hence can make or break a "company's" image. Furthermore, members and money are inextricably intertwined: an institution, which uses about 70% of its budget for salaries and employs public servants, i.e. people who cannot be fired except in very rare cases, is inflexible and unable to survive under the pressures of a modern economy. This is the current situation in Germany as well as in virtually all other European countries.

Police officers frequently experience dissatisfaction with their work, which they perceive as not very effective or efficient, highly wasteful and bureaucratic (Loveday, 1999). This feeling is often shared by politicians, resulting in mistrust and a steady call for more and closer regulation of the police. The reason for this is not so much fear of abuse of police powers as lack of knowledge about police activities. By contrast, the general public actually has a much better opinion of the police than the police itself assumes.
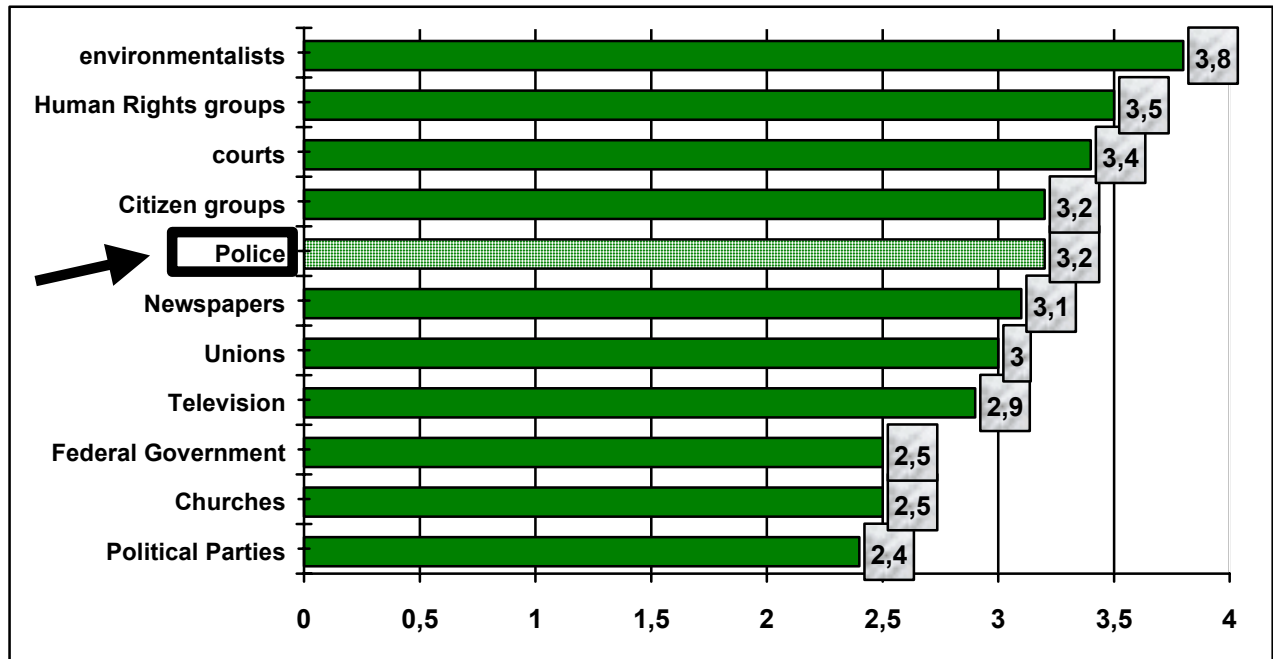
In Germany, the police regularly comes out on top of public rankings. Thus a survey conducted by EMNID and the magazine "Der Spiegel" in late 1997 found that more than 50% of respondents regarded the police (rather than schools, politicians, the church or the family) as bearer of values. Surveys about this topic usually reveal a high degree of satisfaction with the police service. Another example of this is the Shell Report (Germany) from 1997, which examined young people's attitudes towards authorities. The police came in joint 4th out of 11, a ranking that places it ahead of political parties and the church, and behind only those institutions that are traditionally popular with young people, such as environmental, Human Rights and other pressure groups.

Figure 1: Who should teach values in our society (Germany)? (EMNID 1997)
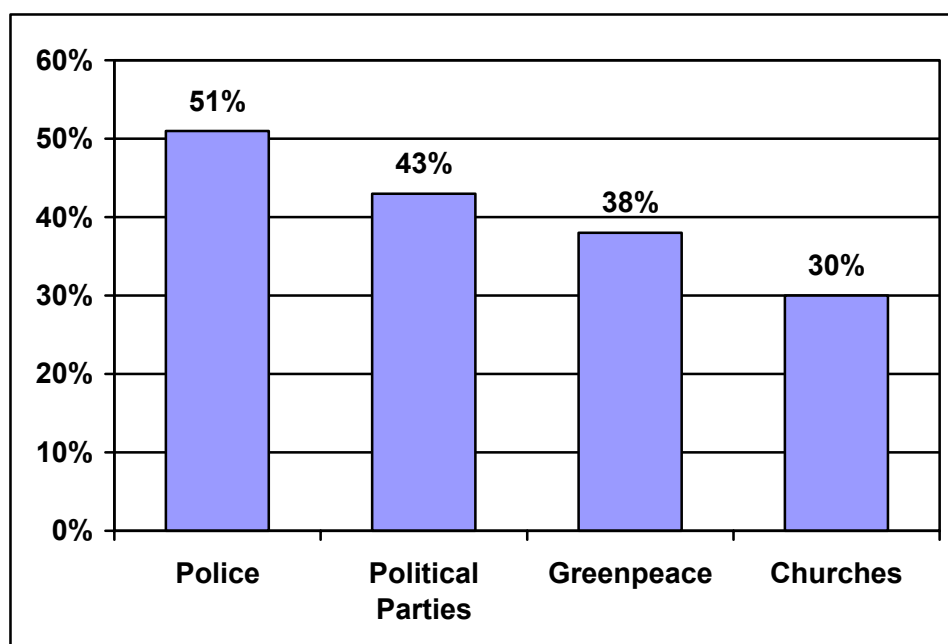
Figure 2: Trust into Organizations by Juveniles: Shell-Study 1997 (Germany)

Police officers themselves, however, have a very different self- conception: they presume that the public distrusts the police and depreciates their performance on the job. Such an evaluation shows an obvious lack of self- confidence among rank- and- file officers. This can lead to a situation where the policemen assume a defensive attitude, making it impossi-

Organization	Value
environmentalists	3,8
Human Rights groups	3,5
courts	3,4
Citizen groups	3,2
Police	3,2
Newspapers	3,1
Unions	3
Television	2,9
Federal Government	2,5
Churches	2,5
Political Parties	2,4

ble for them to react in a proactive, positive and future- oriented way. Only a self- confident police officer is able to deal with criticism and communicate frankly with people, without hiding information from them(in so far as that information could include or engender criticism).

Society

Police and society are interdependent. Developments in the area of one actor cannot but reflect on the other. In Germany the current social situation is problematic particularly in the east, where many people are grappling with frustated hopes that reunification ten years ago evoked but could not fulfill. Instead of flourishing industries there is high unemployment, and social stability seems to have vanished alongside socialism. This difficult situation inevitably needs to be adressed by the police, too. In order to provide security it has to find ways of talking to people and alleviate tensions. Yet Germany is not the only country where recent years brought an increase in social turmoil and a corresponding rising need to adopt effective security measures.

Postmodern society and its institutions are organized along the principles of *fear, risk assessment and the provision of security*. Security in modern society is multi- faceted and includes- as *Richard Ericsson* pointed out- security of territory(e.g. safe streets, secure premises), of the environment(e.g. healthy natural environment, safe products), of living standards(e.g. social security, private insurance) and of identities(e.g. protection of national

and ethnic identities in multi- cultural societies). This focus on security in return creates fear and the need for protection. Postmodern institutions are driven by the production and distribution of knowledge regarding risk assessment and security provision. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that they constitute a "risk society" (Beck, 1992).

This is true for most West European societies and it will most likely become true within the next few years for East European societies also, since the "free market" (i.e. capitalism) is rapidly dismantling and replacing the planned economy (i.e. socialism)- resulting in the dissolution of traditional social bonds and less communication between people. Theft, fraud and other crimes are becoming widespread, a result of which could be a call for the restitution of a powerful state and police. This could pose a great danger to these new democracies: If police are not able to cope with rising crime, then politicians could blame the police for their failure to carry out their duties and the old system and its supporters might try to take advantage of the situation by attempting a counterrevolution.

The "Make Believe Crime War" is also taking place in Western countries, despite the fact that it lacks any empirical support. But it can be used to focus public attention on a "problem" that fits well into moral beliefs and can save politicians the trouble of dealing with other problems and having to give explanations to the public (e.g. regarding unemployment, domestic violence, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency or political scandals like the Dutroux- case in Belgium or the secret account affair surrounding former German Chancellor Kohl). Furthermore, a recent empirical study in the U.S. has shown that criminal justice legislation is related more to *economic conditions* rather than to the actual crime rate (Fowles and Merva, 1996). Economic conditions, and more exactly the level of poverty in turn have a significant positive relationship for all crime categories, and changes in the unemployment rate are reflected in the number of murders, robberies, burglaries, and larceny/thefts (ibid.). In studies conducted in Germany it has however proven difficult to establish a direct causal relationship between unemployment and crime since there are a lot of additional factors(e.g. lack of future perspectives, availability of social security) to be considered. Nevertheless the current state of research suggests that unemployment is an important criminogenic factor.

It is predictable that in the near future policing will face an increase in protests by special interest groups, with a corresponding rise in *civil disobedience and violence.* Hate groups will proliferate in coming decades. The unsolved problems of unemployment, poverty and homelessness will contribute to *social turmoil,* which in turn leads to a rising number of minority-related crimes in both West and East European states. Crime and especially *fear of crime* were the most important issue during the nineteen- nineties in Germany, the eighties by contrast were quite calm in this respect. The demand for help from or intervention by the police has risen since the nineties and is still rising. The upward trend in police- registered criminal offenses is only partly responsible for this, mostly increasing demand for police services is due to the decreasing readiness and/or capability of citizens to settle conflicts by means of peaceful communication. Victims are less equipped to and capable of helping themselves. More and more frequently official authorities are called in to clear and settle conflicts. The rise in registered offenses can be explained by this phenomenon.

Consequences For Police Management

The key words for police management are *flexibility, shared power, autonomous teams and regional responsibility.* Police officers of the future will be active problem-solving participants, particularly when given the necessary *discretion, encouragement and opportunities* by their supervisors. Small work units, free-flow information, cooperation with private security institutions or even other private enterprises to run "Police Shops" (together e.g. with book stores, supermarkets or gas stations) are some other key words that are currently challenging the former militaristic, bureaucratic structure of police forces and the old conventional thinking of police representatives. Every organization or institute, private or public, sooner or later experiences the need to review its organization and procedures and to check its mission and objectives against the daily realities and socio-economic changes of the society it is supposed to serve. The need to introduce or intensify skills in the police officers' training is conditioned by a number of external and internal factors. These factors have a direct and continuous influence on the professionalism of police activities and training programs, the effectiveness and the efficiency of the agency.

But what do *"efficiency", "effectiveness" and "professionalism"* for the police reallly mean? The patrolman, the lowest man in the hierarchy - and usually the least well trained and educated - is in a key position for exercising the greatest amount of discretion on criminal or possibly criminal activities. She or he is also the most active and most visible partner in interaction with the public and in communication policing. He has "wide discretionary power concerning if, when, why, and how to intervene in private affairs" (Manning, 1995). In order to be able to use these powers effectively and to the advantage of the community the professionalism of police training has to be improved. To view the social reaction against crime as a police monopoly is obviously untrue, as Jock Young pointed out already more than 10 years ago. Public opinion and informal social control play the central role, not only in defining what is crime, but also in maintaining social order (Young, 1987). Yet by providing a modern and professional service for the prevention and control of crime the police can fulfill its role as a major actor in the field of public security. When creating a new curriculum for a modern police training the following external factors will have to be taken into account:

- the *increase* of the police product in volume, gravity and complexity, aggravated by the expanding international dimension requiring new resources, connections and information exchange;
- the development of *new technologies;*
- a *greater mobility* and the *abolition of borders* clearing the way to larger markets with easier escape routes for criminal organizations and making effective communication systems available to them;
- the economic and political situation with *social and political unrest,* economic crunch, massive unemployment, juvenile crime and further migration waves;
- the *budget restrictions* imposed by the government or local authorities cutting down on additional human and material resources.

Police training has to tackle these factors in order to provide police students with first hand information and academic knowledge on the theoretical and practical background of these very same developments.

Consequences For Police Philosophy

Community Crime Prevention and Community Policing are main reforms in crime prevention strategies, developed over the last few years (Skogan 1995, Greene 1988, Sadd/Granc 1996). Both have implications for police management and the philosophy of policing. While the reform itself is targeted at crime and public order, emphasizes police-community relations and local crime analysis and environmental analysis, the background philosophy is based on a distinct set of values within the police force and the understanding that crime prevention is a task for all members of a community.

Community policing is a comprehensive approach suggesting a multi-causal view of crime and a multidimensional approach to crime prevention. Problem oriented policing, team policing, and finally community policing are terms reflecting the change in policing philosophy over the last few years. Although this change might be too slow from an outsider's point of view it is a tremendous challenge for the internal system of the police, because the the structure and form of the organization and its leadership have to be changed. This includes *attitudinal, organizational, and sub-cultural changes*. The keywords are *participation, decentralization and motivation* in working together with the community to solve problems of crime and related social ills.

The policeman's or policewoman's view of his or her role and their *occupational culture* are very influential in determining the nature of policing. As Manning points out, the basic source of police trouble is the inability of the police to define a mandate that will minimize the consistent nature of their self-expectations and the expectations of those they serve (Manning, 1995, p.120).

The development into a more citizen-responsive force and oriented to a closer relationship with the community has to be real rather than superficial and therefore requires a significant *change in philosophy*, a reordering of priorities and potentially massive *restructuring* of police organizations.

There is a need for greater *coordination* of police and other agencies within the criminal-justice system in order to increase the benefits for the client and break down the isolation of the police. An organizational change within the police could lead to the creation of the post of *"Special Generalist",* who would be responsible for all general problems brought to the attention of the police: a coordinator of family health, a source of records and information (for the client, not for the state), a family counselor. This "would begin to bridge the chasm between the police and many hostile segments within the public, a process that could be facilitated by the creation of a community-relations division within police departments" (Manning, 1995, p.123). By re-organizing the police force into a community oriented, de-

centralized and independent organization with participatory management we can get both *satisfied customers* and *satisfied employees*.

Police must engage in community-based processes related to the production and maintenance of local human and social capital. The means by which these goals are to be achieved are through the development of strong relationships with institutions and individuals in the community.

The one and only way to deal with the public concerns is to develop programs tailored to individual areas. In other words, we must not assume that each community has the same problems or that each community should respond similarly to certain problems. An open system of policing will find tailored solutions for a small world (neighborhood) within an institution which acts and behaves like a learning institution.

There have been several attempts to define community policing (Dölling/Feltes 1993, Trojanowicz 1995, Skogan 1995), but it is best described as a *family of reforms* (Rosenbaum, 1994). In defining necessities for Police training it seems to be more fruitful to focus on important characteristics of community policing rather than to attempt a strict definition. The following points are vital for any definition of a community- based approach to police training:

- To solve problems where they appear = *local approach*
- To solve problems by creative means and where necessary with unconventional measures = *creative approach*
- To solve problems by analyzing the structural causes and not sticking to individual explanations. A view of all underlying factors and available means of creating safety, not just those related to traditional police work = *structural approach; problem oriented policing*
- To look at problems from a more general point of view and not only using a crime-fighting and repressive approach. Safety orientation means that creating a safe community is considered more important than mere control of crimes or compliance to norms = *multi-factor approach*
- To solve problems together with others; police must cooperate with all individuals, institutions and groups in a community (private security services included); police should deny responsibilities where others are more competent or have better resources for solving a given problem. A broad strategic co-operation with other authorities, communities and people is needed = *division of labor approach*
- To see police as a part of the community (pars pro toto) = *cooperative approach*
- The police takes the initiative and is not captured by sheer reactive measures after crimes have been committed or calls for service have been received = *proactive approach*
- To decentralize police organization = *decentralized approach*
- To-be-named-characteristics ... = *work-in-progress approach*

Consequences For Police Training

Highly educated officers and better trained staff do not per se guarantee better cooperation and communication, but *training and education is a sine qua non factor* on the way to improving the quality of police work (Dennis 1995). As highly educated police officers could become frustrated in their jobs, grow cynical and look for formal or informal ways out of an unsatisfactory situation, changes must occur not only in the recruitment, selection and training programs, but in the organizational environment as well (Goldstein, 1997). Otherwise new staff will have little chance of surviving in the organization. The pressures for conformity are so strong that new officers are either forced into the police subculture, with the values and orientation of the larger group replacing their own, or their life can be made so unpleasant they may even decide to resign (Sewell, 1985).

Police today are more highly trained than ever before, and the quality of the training has probably never been higher. Though the positive relationship between training and law enforcement seems to be evident, this effect has not been studied in depth. The benefits of specialist training for institutions are generally more assumed rather than empirically demonstrated and often serve as an important legitimating factor for headquarters. Empirical studies have focused on officers' attitudes rather than actual behavior (Mastrofsky, 1990).

A recent study by Mastrofski and Ritti showed that the impact of training depends on organization-level considerations (Mastrofsky and Ritti, 1996). Training has a significant *positive effect* in agencies that provide a *supportive environment*, but fails to have an effect in agencies that are otherwise indifferent or hostile to the purposes the officers are trained for.

The effect of the training therefore depends on the *opportunities* with which the institution affords the individual to apply it, on *superiors* who encourage the trainee and his intention to pursue further studies, and on its relevance to the prospects for *career advancement* (Mastrofsky and Ritti, 1996, pp.296, 304).

The philosophy "Go out there and don´t get into trouble" is not a good one to encourage well trained and educated police officers. Instead superiors themselves should "live"what they expect from their staff and show how they value intended initiatives.

As the complexity of workload is not only increasing, but also changing with time, Police training must constantly evolve. Contents and targets have to be changed and adapted to new circumstances and advantages. Police agencies have to deal not only with a workload that is ever-increasing in volume and complexity, but also with budgetary restrictions imposed by the authorities. As a result senior police staff members at different levels need to master *modern management skills and techniques* to run their organization efficiently.

We have to realize that police agencies are big organizations, sometimes the size of large companies. They have to manage thousands of employees, public finances and an increasing range of sophisticated equipment, with high technology being introduced at an increasing

pace. There is an urgent need for police managers who master the abilities and skills required to assure an effective functioning of the agency and an efficient use of the limited resources. As management is a never ending process, so is the training which has to be regularly up-dated and completed by refresher courses. They are a unique instrument to complement the basic training and adapt to specific local needs for further education. Contents and structures of the training depend very much on the career and career profiles provided by the agency.

There are essentially two different career profiles and two different ways of structuring a police career:

1. The *bottom-up career* in which case the different (usually three) levels of training are accumulated and necessary for promotion; you can become a senior police officer only by starting from the lowest rung of the career ladder.

    The *"advantage"* of this system is that police officers who have to work their way through the ranks are more easy to lead, identify more with the institution, are more adjusted to the formal and informal rules of the police, more adapted to the old conception of police work as the execution of state authority and more dependant from orders and instructions by their superiors.

    The *disadvantage* of this system is that an insider training is provided, which is not controlled by external supervisors and not evaluated by independent institutions. "Success" is an implicit component of this system, since due to their civil servant status unsuccessful police officers can only be fired within the first stage of their training. Another disadvantage is that the system provides no incentive for police officers to look into other training institutions or into other methods of thinking. In other words officers are not really trained to act independently and to take decisions by themselves, although they have to do exactly that in their everyday work.

2. A career with (at least the possibility of) *direct entry at a higher level*. The training is provided not only by police institutions, but by independent institutions such as universities etc., or in joint-venture activities between private and state, police and non-police institutions.

    The *advantages* of this system are that it educates well trained, well motivated, independent and reliable police officers who are able to cope with new situations and challenges and who are eager to learn more and to take their career into their own hands.

Main Objectives of Police Training
Police training should provide students with
- information on the practice of modern management, modern police structures and community oriented police activities;
- enough insight and practical understanding of the *techniques and tools* available to the Police;

- the ability to identify the possible benefits and opportunities of new techniques and to apply these in the accomplishment of their daily tasks;
- the possibility to manage decisions in a structured way, to run *effective and efficient* operations and to serve the public in the best way possible.

In order to achieve its goals, police training has to operate along the following basic principles:

- Topics and contents must be adapted to *the practical daily police work.*
- A consciousness of the importance and the value of the *individual's contribution* to overall reliability of the management process of the agency and the its product is necessary.
- The attitude and behavior of each individual agent is crucial for the image of the whole agency. One negative incident can annihilate all positive experiences a customer had before.
- To see the *public as client* and stress the notion of service.
- Attitude, language and body talk are important aspects that impact on communication in different practical situations.

Conclusion: Targets for Police Training under the C.P.-Philosophy: A holistic approach.

Police training has to be suited to a modern police force that is evolving constantly along with the society it serves. This is not an easy task and one that requires continuous in-service training to keep up to date with developments inside and outside the police. Within the training programmes, *communication and conflict solution* abilities will assume an importance equal to that of law, social sciences and police sciences.

An increasing workload and budgetary restrictions require police staff at different levels to master modern management skills and techniques to run their organisation efficiently. Out of this modernisation process arises the need to review *organisational procedures* and to check mission and objectives against daily realities, routines, and socio-economic changes in the society the institution is supposed to serve.

Many police agencies are mainly *bureaucracies* functioning at the organisational level. Quite a few are essentially static organisations running by structural inertia with little managerial capability. Others suffer from organisational gravity. Police training should provide the students with tools and knowledge to break this circle of bureaucratism. Police agencies are also big organisations, sometimes the size of large companies. They have to manage employees, finances and equipment, with high technology being introduced at an increasing pace. There is an urgent need for police officers to master these problems. *Outsourcing and privatisation* of tasks should also be considered. The *exchange of information and curricula* between police training institutions all over the world might support the transition processes in different police forces. Everybody may learn from everybody. The exchange of students and teachers is both necessary and useful.

Lastly, students should learn to distinguish between the individual culture of the members of the institution, established over time between peers, and the "official" culture of the institution. Since *"Cop Culture"* and *"Police Culture"* are not necessarily the same, changes in

"Police Culture" (like C.P.) are useless if "Cop Culture" stays the same or even contradicts the community oriented C.P.-Culture.

And be aware: A Fool with a Tool is still a Fool! Training which provides just tools without delivering the philosophy and understanding of one´s own role as a police officer as an integral part of the community is not only useless, but dangerous for our society.

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