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STANDARDS IN THE SELECTION OF POLICE INSTRUCTORS

Fred J. Cogshall

Fred J. Cogshall is an Instructor in the Institute of Criminal Law Administration and assistant Director of Safety, Indiana University. In 1938 after his graduation from Indiana University's Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology he was appointed to the Indiana State Police from which he resigned in 1946 to accept private employment. During the recent war he served in the Provost Marshal's Department of the Army rising to the rank of Major. His wartime assignments were varied and included field duty and training at the Provost Marshal General's School.—EDITOR.

To evaluate Police Training and the qualifications of police instructors intelligently necessitates first a brief review of our general educational progress in this country. Thirty or forty years ago the young man who had a high school diploma was regarded as an extremely well educated person. Today, a similar educational standard would require that person to hold an AB or BS degree from some institution of higher learning. Thirty or forty years ago policemen could be classed as only semi-literate by our present standards. This condition was through no fault of their own but was only a product of environment and the prevailing social system. Many are the names of outstanding police officers of great native intelligence who sought each in his own way to make the job of policing a professional calling but whose methods and training we would consider inadequate today.

As the general educational level of the country has risen, the educational level of the members of the police service has ascended. Obviously then, we must examine the qualifications of our police instructors with the view not only of raising our training standards but of completing the professionalization of the service. As the working conditions, pay, and tenure are improved higher educational standards for personnel are adopted. As politics is gradually eliminated in the selection of policemen and standards of performance are raised above the level of political consideration, so develops the educational need.

The old method of instruction by assigning recruit patrolmen with an experienced officer has considerable merit but also has many defects—"the sins of the parent shall be visited upon the children even unto the fourth generation." It is well established that the bad habits of an officer may be thus passed on as a social heritage to the novice. However, if the newcomer is first trained in classrooms under a man of experience and knowledge and then assigned with carefully selected older men, the results will be a great source of satisfaction to the department and the profession.

It is generally agreed that police schools and training are vital to the ultimate professionalization of policing, and as the educational techniques become more solidified the examination of instructional standards becomes imperative.

To keep pace with the increasing educational level of police service in general it is vital that the police instructor be more scholastically endowed, particularly in modern teaching methods. The type of instructor who knows only what he has learned by actual experience may be an excellent potential teacher, but he is lacking in technical knowledge of police science. This places him at a great disadvantage. His students will respect his experience but certainly will deride his lack of knowledge and education. Such deficiency will make any teacher impotent before his class and will result only in a poorly conducted and uninformative session. The educational level of the instructors must be raised, not only in proportion to the increase of learning of the students but to a much higher level in order that he will be greatly superior to any of his pupils. To be a successful police officer as well as a valuable instructor of potential policemen the instructor must be versatile in many fields and a master of the policeman's art. He must have a great fund of general knowledge and experience and a practical knowledge of all phases of police service in addition to his formal education.

Primarily, a police instructor's formal education should include a college degree, either an A.B. or a B.S., with a major, preferably, in psychology, because the study of psychology and its practical application is of paramount importance in police work. A thorough understanding of this subject will make the training of officer candidates more complete than a major in any other subject. As to minor subjects, it is the author's opinion that they should be divided among chemistry, physics, and sociology with as much pre-medical work as could be allowed under the normal curriculum. In the choice of electives much diversity should be encouraged because the knowledge of many subjects, however meager, is of benefit to the police officer as well as to the instructor. Criminal law and procedure, engineering, book-keeping, art work or drafting, report writing experience, government, and many other subjects will find useful niches in the work of the police instructor.

Specialized training should be obtained by the instructors following graduation from college if such training is not available at the first educational institution. This specialized training should include such subjects as identification by means of finger print classification and filing systems, chemical tests for intoxi-

cation, and deception tests to the extent that the instructor is qualified as an expert. In addition to the foregoing, the instructor should have a thorough working knowledge of general laboratory procedure, both in the field of medicine and physics, as well as the more frequently used chemical laboratory procedures. In addition, the instructor should be familiar with the forensic application of chemistry and physics as is practiced in the modern police laboratory.

The police instructor should have a number of years of practical experience before he attempts to teach. This experience can be divided roughly into three phases.

First: Field work, which includes the performance of the duties of a patrolman and of supervising officers. Practical experience has been credited with varying amounts of importance, but it is certain that practical knowledge is of greatest importance to the instructor in order that he may have the confidence of his students and the whole-hearted support of the members of his department. It is a source of irritation to many policemen to have a man of meager experience elevated to the position of instructor without regard to his practical qualifications. Lacking experience, the instructor fails to gain the immediate or permanent confidence of his students.

Second: Intra-divisional experience; that is, experience gained in the various divisions of a department or police force. This experience is essential in order that he may attain a thorough knowledge of the functions and responsibilities of the various divisions of his department, including staff as well as field operations. An instructor who is lacking in knowledge of his own department is indeed a weak instructor.

Third: He should have, if practicable, some inter-departmental experience. In the absence of practical experience a general knowledge of the broad aspects of Police Science can best be gained by attending schools offered by other departments even though they are only basic training sessions. Training schools conducted by police departments, by national organizations, by universities, or by institutes each offer an opportunity for the police instructor to increase his fund of knowledge both by reason of the subject matter and by association with policemen from various departments and geographical locations. In addition, attendance at such schools will improve the instructor's ability by reason of his observation of the teaching techniques of other police instructors.

The instructor should have the ability to lecture, to speak, and to conduct discussions with varied groups. He should have a

ready command of English and the ability to express his ideas and thoughts clearly. All of the knowledge that he may have gained through his years of experience will be of little value if he is unable to impart that knowledge clearly and concisely to those who study with him.

He must be able to demonstrate since the technique of demonstration is one of the clearest methods known to impress the important points of a subject upon a group. The instructor must be able to *show* the class, rather than be content merely to describe. Whether it be taking finger prints, hand cuffing a prisoner, driving a car, or filling out an accident report, the instructor must be able to demonstrate correctly. The instructor must appreciate that proper supervision of class work, particularly class participation, is an important factor in modern teaching method.

He needs the ability to organize course material. In practically every other field of study there are many well written text books. The text books of law, medicine, economics, history, chemistry, physics, and many other fields have been written and re-written. In the field of professional policing our material tends to the dramatic rather than the factual, with all too often the inference of destructive criticism rather than constructive criticism. Text-books on policing as such are extremely limited and almost non-existent. It is true that many books about cases and the functions of various police departments have been written, but these have been prepared more in the light of specialized treatment of specific subjects. Quite often a police instructor must, of necessity, find his own course material and organize it into lectures, demonstration problems, and class participation exercises. At the present time, the struggle to consolidate methods, techniques, source material, tests, and curricula is going on all over the country. Success in meeting academic standards has not been spectacular. It is realized by the author that this is only the natural result of the greatly increased interest in police training in the last few years. In view of this difficulty and the handicaps to be overcome the instructor must have the ability and interest in the research of police problems not only from the point of historical data alone, but also in taking these histories, analyzing them, and applying them to the routines and practices of a police department. He must be interested in research for the purpose of improving the department and solving departmental problems. He must also work with the view of unifying police training to an acceptable academic standard.

He should be particularly interested in traffic problems and in

traffic planning and should have more than a casual background in traffic engineering, in order that his traffic teaching may be of value both to the student officers from the enforcement angle and to his police department from the longer range solution of engineering problems.

Traffic situations probably provide more opportunity for study and research today than any other single problem of police work. Traffic is a constantly changing scene that demands the utmost of an instructor in initiative and resourcefulness. In traffic work lies the bulk of the retraining problems confronting an instructor. Good enforcement procedures and investigative techniques taught and practiced in the traffic division will stand any officer in good stead when confronted by investigations of other types.

The instructor should have a pleasing personality—not that he must be particularly handsome or attract the feminine element as do some of the stage and radio stars, but he should have the personality that will make men eager to learn with him and believe in him. A class of officer candidates will very naturally turn to the instructor in regard to their problems, both personal and official.

Personality is not a single quantity as it is apt to be regarded, but it is composed of many parts that must be in balance and harmony with each other. This balanced personality of the instructor will impart to his students the feeling that he has a responsibility for them from the day they enter training as recruit policemen—through their training period, years of work, and retraining schools—until the day they stand their last roll call.

The true instructor feels this responsibility and welcomes it as an opportunity to be of further service to those whom he has instructed rather than seeking to evade it by awarding a diploma. If his personality is such that his students feel free to come to him with their questions and difficulties regardless of time and status, he will have gained immeasurably in the production of good police officers and the elevation of his department's standards. And if the new and old officers constantly turn to the instructor for advice and guidance, he may rest assured that he is truly a teacher of the policeman's art.