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A ‘new police studies’ for a ‘new professional police service’: changes and challenges from a UK perspective

Paper presented at the Police Learning: Professionalisation and Partnerships Conference. The University of Northampton 6-7 September 2011.

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the field of police studies, (see, for example, Hoover 2005, Manning 2005, Marenin 2005). In particular, discussions around academic – police collaborations have become something of a ‘sub-field’ of the discipline (Murji 2010), with the journals, *Policing* (2010) and *Police Practice & Research* (forthcoming), devoting special issues to the topic, (as well as conferences such as this). Whilst the ‘mutual misunderstandings’ between police officers and academics have been well documented (Bradley & Nixon 2009), there is also an assumption that increased collaboration between the police service and the academy will help to ‘professionalise’ policing, particularly through training and education (Neyroud 2011). Indeed, there is an extensive research literature on the supposed link between higher education and police behaviour (see Patterson 2011), which has its origins in efforts as far back as the early 1900s to ‘professionalize the American police’ (Rydberg & Terrill 2010).

Unsurprisingly, most of this literature takes the police to be the subjects and focuses on relationships between higher education and some form of theory or aspect of professional policing. In contrast, those who seek to educate the police have largely escaped the researchers gaze and there have been few published accounts which have explored police studies from this perspective (though see Wood & Tong 2009). Yet if as envisaged in the Neyroud Review (2011) of police training in the UK, universities are to become increasingly involved in the education and training of the police at all levels, there is a need to understand the part that lecturers play in the construction of professional curricula.

Whilst it is tempting to think of an academic discipline as a kind of independent, stand-alone entity, based on a body of knowledge which has an objective relationship with the ‘real’ world, the sociology of knowledge tells us this is not the case (Foucault 1980, Mannheim 1993). Knowledge, rather, is a cultural and contested product shaped by social context and history and an academic discipline such as police studies is no different. As Manning (2005:23-24) reminds us, ‘police studies, like policing itself, is based on material, political and cultural interests that pattern the production and distribution of knowledge’.

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In this paper we seek to explore some of these disciplinary dynamics and we draw on our empirical research into university lecturers to show how a professional learning curriculum is produced within competing academic and professional interests. More theoretically, we employ Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'field' to model the institutional interplay of academy and professional interests and the concept of 'habitus' to understand lecturers' participation within it. We then focus on the project to construct a 'new professional police service' (Neyroud 2011) and speculate on how, if successful, this may lead to some changes in the police – academic landscape. The paper concludes with a paradox: that whilst Neyroud seemingly proposes conceding a greater role for higher and further education providers within police training and education, a resurgent 'professionalised' police service will most likely end up exerting greater influence on a vocational police studies curriculum. This influence will not only be wielded at an institutional (field) level, but also exerted through the habitus of a new cadre of 'practitioner lecturers'.

Police studies

Police studies have been analysed from a number of different perspectives including, its historical development (Hoover, 2005), its purpose, disciplinary connections and 'network of key players' (Manning 2005), as well as its global dimensions (Marenin 2005). Despite this growing body of literature, however, few studies to date have explored the part that those involved in *teaching* the discipline play in its construction, and the implications that this has for professional policing. Whilst such research may not have been as important for the sort of 'detached' and 'critical' police studies described below, the subject matter becomes especially relevant to a vocationally based police studies enterprise, particularly when so much emphasis and faith is placed on the academy to help shape a new professional policing (Neyroud 2011).

In their article, *Ending the 'dialogue of the deaf',* Bradley and Nixon (2009) document and critique two research traditions which have dominated the police studies landscape over the last 30 years. The first they term the 'critical police research' tradition, which 'prides itself on detachment from the police', and is conducted by researchers and scholars who study the police at a distance, without any formal obligation to meet any of their occupational or educational needs (p. 426). In contrast, the 'policy research' tradition, was founded to provide the theories, ideas and evidence to improve policing and is carried out by researchers who are committed to a much closer engagement with the public police.

Bradley and Nixon's typology also resonates with the long established distinction within police studies between 'sociology *of* the police' and 'sociology *for* the police' (see Manning 2005), that can be traced back to the seminal work of Banton (1964).

A 'new' police studies

More recently in the UK, however, there has emerged a 'third' approach to police studies which whilst drawing heavily on the other traditions is decidedly *vocational* in its outlook and aims. Although several universities in the UK (i.e. Cardiff, Leicester and Portsmouth) have a heritage in delivering higher level or specialist vocationally relevant

policing/criminology programmes, this is an important addition to the field of police studies, as well as a significant change for the way that *initial* police training has been practiced historically in the UK. [2]

For most of the period since the Second World War police officers received their initial training at Home Office managed Police Training Centres (PTCs), under a syllabus which comprised predominantly of criminal law, police-policy and procedures. In 2005, however, the Home Office ceased to administer initial training to all forces in the UK apart from the Metropolitan Police. Individual police forces were given more autonomy in designing police training under a broad framework called the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme or IPLDP. The IPLDP aimed to 'modernise' and 'professionalise' police training (Home Office 2004) and some police forces began for the first time to work in partnership with universities to enable their recruits to complete qualifications such as a foundation degree in police studies as part of their initial training/education.

Foundation degrees were introduced into the United Kingdom awards system by the Government in 2001 as part of a strategy to enhance the development of vocational awards at higher education level. Until recently, the majority of these programmes operated under a *post-employment* training model, in other words police recruits become 'sworn officers' immediately they become a member of the service and undergo a two year training period funded by their police force.

Previous research conducted by one of us (Heslop 2011a) into a post-employment police studies degree found 'unintended consequences' in relation to aspects of the programme. This was characterised by an 'us and them' environment between lecturers and student officers and one in which the police were not perceived to be a professional body by the academic staff. Moreover, many recruits failed to see the relevance of the course to their role as police officers. However, this study was predominantly based on a student officer perspective on the programme and this provided part of the motivation for us to conduct further research involving lecturers.

The research and methodology

The aim of our research was to explore the part that lecturers play in the construction of a professional curriculum and we conducted interviews with ten university lecturers teaching in the fields' of initial police, nurse and teacher education. Whilst this is a relatively small research sample, our qualitative methodological approach was chosen to provide depth, and the ability to make comparisons across professional training/education disciplines.

We chose to compare policing with nursing and teaching for a number of reasons. First and most obviously, all three are vocational disciplines. Second, nursing, in particular, tends to be held up as the 'gold standard' for educating public service professionals (White & Heslop 2011) and in debates around 'professionalising policing'

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[2] It is also recognised that in some countries such as Australia and the USA, universities and colleges have for several years been involved in the training and education of police recruits.

comparisons are often made with nursing (Heslop & White 2011). Finally, all three disciplines are relative newcomers to higher education (HE).

Our participants were from a number of different HE locations and data were collected using unstructured, qualitative interviews. All the interviews were digitally recorded and decisions were made collaboratively between the two researchers as to suitable and relevant themes under which to analyse the comparative findings of the research.

Theoretical frames

Our interest in how professional curricula are constructed leads us to make use of theoretical tools derived from the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu was interested in examining the complex interplay between individuals and society and his signature concepts of habitus and field have long attracted interest among sociologists of education and, more recently, policing researchers writing about 'occupational culture' (Chan 1997, Heslop 2011a), 'socialisation' (Paes-Machado & Albuquerque 2006) and police learning (Chan et al. 2003, Heslop 2011b).

The notion of habitus is for Bourdieu (1977) the main 'thinking tool' that makes it possible to explore the interdependence of social determination and individual agency. The habitus, most concisely defined as 'socialised subjectivity' (Swingewood 2000) designates a set of generative and durable 'dispositions' (lasting, acquired schemes of perception, thought and action) acquired through socialisation.

Bourdieu sees the social context where the habitus operates as a multidimensional space differentiated into distinct (but overlapping) fields. Individuals and institutions based on their habitus are positioned and position themselves in a field. There are many different ways in which fields in a society may be defined or constructed for analysis, e.g. the field of higher education, the field of policing or the field of police studies. Fields are often characterised as sites of *struggle* between individuals or institutions competing for capital, and in the context of our research we see a parallel between field and a professional curriculum.

We take curriculum to be a wider concept than syllabus; the latter being limited to course content and the former, the course content plus the values communicated by the whole learning context (White 2006).

Applying these concepts to the analysis of professional education, we argue that a professional curriculum is the product of the specific relationship between the profession and the academy and that the lecturers' own positioning (habitus) in and between these fields also influence the educational provision.

Our empirical research was predominantly focussed on exploring with lecturers the nature of their habitus, although in the following sections we also examine and compare differences/similarities in the institutional fields.

Key comparisons

Although there is a long-standing and by no means settled debate about what constitutes a profession, the concept is often argued to combine a service ethos and autonomy with specialist knowledge at degree level (see, for example, Kleinig 1996).

Whilst both teaching and nursing were not one of the ‘historic professions’, (such as law or medicine - as practiced by physicians), it now seems widely accepted that both have become ‘modern professions’.

Both teacher and nurse education are funded through the professions (Teacher Development Agency; Nursing and Midwifery Council) and both operate pre-registration and pre-employment models. Teaching was a *de facto* graduate profession long before this became mandatory (Willis 2004) and a ten-year strategy initiated by Project 2000 [3] will see nursing become a full graduate-entry profession from 2013.

Nurse education

Focusing first on the nurse-educators, it was clear that their own habitus was very much in the nursing profession. Indeed the lecturers were required to be registered practitioners themselves and consequently they had strong practitioner identities. They regard the lecturer role as an extension of their nurse identity and their discipline as the *practice* of nursing rather than nurse or health *studies.*

The idea that there is a distinction between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ is a common way of thinking about professional training. How often has a police recruit been told, ‘forget everything you’ve learnt at the police training academy (or university), this is where you learn the job for real’? Nursing like policing has traditionally been regarded as a ‘hands-on’ practical activity and the principle of ‘caring’ continues to have canonical status within the profession. For the nurse educators, however, there was a strong ‘theory into practice’ principle which underpinned their approach to teaching, which had to be relevant to the practical task of nursing. As one of our participants put it, ‘it’s application all the time because nursing is a practical discipline … we’re only as good as our student nurses can be in practice’.

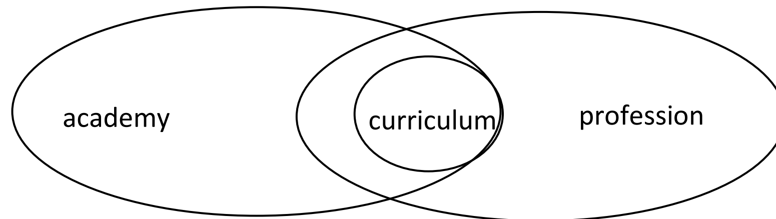
We were also struck by the extent that nursing and nurse professionalism were at the centre of everything they did. Although professionalism is not part of the syllabus per se, it was an important part of the ‘hidden curriculum’.[4] This curriculum was driven by the need to produce professional nurses and was characterised, for example, by the nurse educators ‘role modelling professionalism’ for their students.

Although this might seem to be an ideal model for professional education, our participants also noted how in some ways their work was both geographically and metaphorically on the periphery of the campus. As another of our interviewees explained, “we are part of the academy but we are segregated over the road”. We represent in diagrammatic form the nurse education ‘field’.

[3] After the adoption of Project 2000 in 1986, nurse education moved into universities while continuing to have a close relationship with nursing practice, largely in the National Health Service (NHS).

[4] See White (2006) for a more thorough discussion of the concept of ‘hidden curriculum’ as applied to police training.

Figure 1:
Nurse education model



Nurse educators are positioned centrally within their profession but more peripherally to the academy. The nurse education curriculum is strongly ideologically controlled from within the profession itself and is primarily focussed on producing professional nurses. Yet this leaves less space for engagement with the academy in more traditional ways (i.e. research).

Teacher education

The teaching profession has been regulated by a registration process which has been in place since the early 20th century and the General Teaching Council for England currently maintains all registrations, as well as awarding Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). As indicated above, initial teacher education (ITE) is funded by the Teacher Development Agency (TDA), a body which also owns the teacher professional standards which trainees are assessed against during their work placements in schools. The university ITE provision is also subject to OFSTED regulation without which the QTS element of the degree could not be offered. However, despite these regulatory bodies universities have a relatively free hand in how they design and deliver a teacher training curriculum.

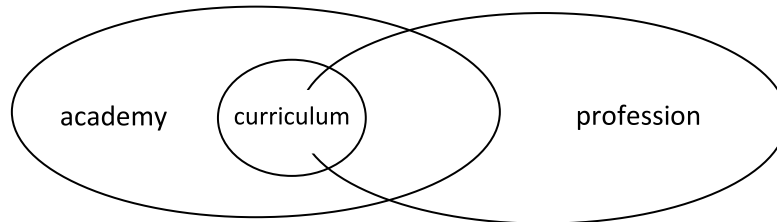
Although the teacher-educators were also required to be former practitioners, our research showed that this freedom allowed the teacher-educators to develop a habitus which was separate from their former teacher identities. Whilst they retain empathy for the teaching profession their identities as university lecturers are 'separate'. Whereas nursing was the nurse-educators discipline, the teacher-educators could distinguish between: discipline content (e.g. mathematics, science, history); subject pedagogy (i.e. the teaching of mathematics etc) and professional studies (practical and 'generic' teaching skills). What might be termed 'home' disciplinary affiliation (usually to their first degree) was important to our participants. Consequently, they self identified as scientists, historians and writers, as well as being teacher-educators. Put differently, whilst nursing was a discipline *per se,* teaching was a collection of disciplines.

In exploring how this impacts on the curriculum it was noted above that the nursing curriculum was driven by the need to produce professional nurses. In comparison, the teachers took a more circumspect view of the curriculum and did not necessarily see themselves as 'producing' new teachers. As one of them explained,

> I have difficulty with this idea that as teachers you produce something… the view of it is too short term … I suppose I would feel I was contributing to their development as teachers, but I wouldn't see myself as part of a machine that produces teachers.

The teacher training curriculum is more strongly influenced by the academy than the profession and the balance of influence between the two creates the field in figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Teacher education model



In teacher training, the lecturers are positioned centrally within the academy. Their discipline is accepted as legitimate and there is a strong research tradition in the practice of teaching. Whilst they qualified as professional teachers, they now identify themselves more as academics. Consequently, the lecturers felt sufficient distance from the profession to take a more critical perspective.

At this stage of our discussion we posit two potential 'trade-offs' within a professional learning field. First, there seems to be a trade-off between profession and academy – closeness to one implies distance from the other. Second, and in relation to this, distance from the profession (as with the teachers) creates space in the curriculum for critical thinking about the profession which may be unavailable to more professionally oriented courses like nursing. At this point we move on to policing.

Police education

Police education in the UK (like the field of policing more broadly) is currently undergoing significant change. Whilst many aspects of policing are undoubtedly professional by any common understanding of the term (Neyroud 2011), unlike nursing and teaching, policing is not yet regarded as a profession. Policing has few of the 'traits' of a profession. Policing, for example, has no professional body, registration system, code of ethics, or body of specialist knowledge under its own 'control' (Heslop 2010). As will be seen, however, the goal of moving the police service 'from being a service that acts professionally to becoming a professional service' is central to the recommendations proposed by Neyroud (see Neyroud 2011: 11).

Whilst we will only be able to speculate on how Neyroud's vision will impact on policing and police studies, what we can say is that police training and education is currently in a state of flux. There is much uncertainly, for example, over the fate of

national bodies such as the National Police Improvements Agency (NPIA) [5] and aspects of training (i.e. for recruits) which were once ruthlessly standardised, have become 'fragmented' (Heslop 2010).

As signalled earlier, initial police education is a relative newcomer to HE and currently only a handful of universities are training officers. Police studies degrees are negotiated locally between a police force and an HE provider, and although there is no agreed format for HE involvement, the syllabus is expected to be mapped against competence based National Occupational Standards (NOS). [6] Mapping of skills and abilities is not a scientific process so universities currently have a relatively free hand in syllabus design.

Our interviews were conducted in 2010 with university lecturers teaching on a post-employment police studies foundation degree programme. In contrast to the nurse and teacher-educators, the police studies lecturers were not necessarily practitioners themselves. At the risk of over-generalising we found two 'types' of police studies lecturer; the first having similarities to the teacher-educators, and the second similarities to the nurse-educators. The first type might categorised as a 'traditional academic' who like the teacher educators had a relevant disciplinary interest (i.e. criminology, politics), though without a professional background in policing.

The other police studies lecturers we interviewed were non-traditional academics, having been recruited specifically to teach on the foundation degree. Some were retired practitioners and, as such, had backgrounds related to policing comparable to both nurse and teacher educators. This professional history provides an interesting dynamic on the formation of a lecturer habitus. Some of these police-educators are in second careers having put policing behind them, and are not as close to the profession as their nurse-lecturer counterparts. This distance from the profession is reinforced by their syllabus content which is criminology or sociology rather than policing practice. However, in terms of their academic disciplines, rather than fully identifying with a police studies or criminology specialism, we found that their 'home-discipline' was adult education - the subject of their Bachelors and Masters degrees. In comparison to the teacher-educators, the police lecturers called themselves 'generalists'. As one of them explained, "my connection is more to being teacherly than to any particular discipline".

Whilst some of the police-educators argued that their teaching was related to practice, our research did suggest they taught a professional studies degree rather than a professional practice one. Even the language is telling: these lecturers teach a course called police *studies,* but there is no such thing as 'nurse studies' or 'teacher studies'. Looked at more broadly in the context of police officers' two year initial training period, our supposition is that police officers receive both a *training* and an *education.* The training aspect has a strong vocational structure, and is conducted by police trainers and tutor constables in much the same way as it has always been, focusing on the

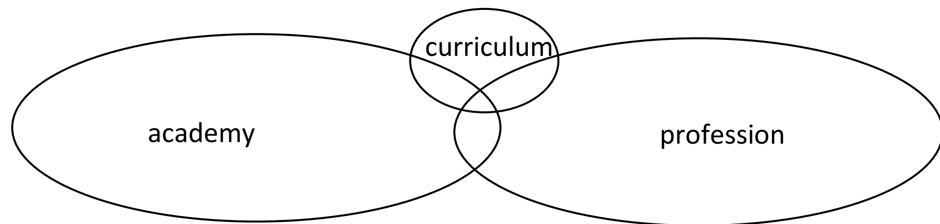
[5] In 2010 the British Government announced the NPIA would be phased out by 2012 see http://www.npia.police.uk/en/16761.htm Accessed September 2011

[6] See Skills for Justice at http://www.skillsforjustice.com/ Accessed September 2011.

practical – knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour. The education with university involvement is the 'theory' element and this may partly explain why previous research has shown that some police students fail to see the relevance of their studies to their occupational roles (Heslop 2011a).

Returning to our field models then, as we are also suggesting that the police education curriculum is more strongly influenced by the academy than the profession, we might expect the diagram to mirror the teacher education field. Yet as we see in figure 3 below, this is not the case:

Figure 3:
Police education model



In police-education the lecturers have distance from the profession which may allow them space to take a more critical approach. However, police studies lecturers are also on the periphery of the academy. This is mainly because initial police education has a lower level of legitimacy than teaching, and unlike the teacher educators they do not have strong disciplinary affiliations. Looked at from one perspective, this model may seem to offer a well balanced approach for professional education. However, the police-educators occupy positions in a sort of 'no-mans-land'; they do not need to be either traditional academics or practitioners. As such, we suggest that there is no strong philosophy emanating from either source which gives direction to their efforts.

In the following sections, however, we focus on the project to construct a new professional police service and speculate on how this may lead to changes in the police learning field.

A new professional police service?

In August 2010 Peter Neyroud was commissioned by the Home Office to conduct a fundamental review of police leadership and training in the UK and his subsequent report was published in April 2011 (Neyroud 2011). Overall, Neyroud's recommendations aim to bring about a new professional police service. Looked at from one perspective, the Neyroud review is merely the latest in a long list of externally driven initiatives aimed at professionalising policing (Heslop forthcoming). However, Peter Neyroud is an influential former Chief Constable and his report contains radical recommendations aimed at professionalising policing. Neyroud, for example, places significant emphasis on new institutional arrangements (i.e. the formation of a chartered 'Police Professional Body,' led by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), together with important changes to the field of police training and education. These changes include:

- Professional registration system for practitioners (similar to nursing and teaching).
- Shift from current post-employment training model to pre-employment approach for recruits.
- New qualifications framework which will include foundation degree level pre-employment qualification.
- The majority of training/education for police employees to be contracted out to further and higher education providers.

As indicated earlier, nurse (and wider medical) education is held up as a 'gold standard' for policing to follow, and as Neyroud argues this will entail radical changes to police training and pedagogy, involving '…the development of an approach that links learning with practice along the lines of a teaching hospital where clinical practitioners provide teaching and link what they learn with their own practice' (ibid 12).

At the time of writing, it is by no means certain if all or indeed any of these ideas will be realised. Leaving aside the question of whether policing should even aim to become a profession, there are still a number of significant challenges to be overcome before Neyroud's vision might be brought about.

First, policing like other parts of the public sector is facing severe budgetary pressures and although Neyroud does address some of the economic implications in his report (see chapter 7), it is not entirely clear how some of these changes can be financed. Second, the police service, in the last decade or so, has already been subject to a relentless period of externally driven reform and 'modernization' (Savage 2007) and it is not certain that there is the appetite from key actors within the organisation, such as ACPO for further major change. Third, but in relation to this, the Neyroud report has already received a less than enthusiastic reception from influential bodies such as the Police Federation who seem opposed to much of what is being recommended (Police Federation 2011). Finally, and most importantly for the current paper, Neyroud seems to assume that a nurse education model can be transplanted (to use a medical metaphor) into policing with little regard to the specific historical and cultural influences on those occupations. Yet as our research shows, professional learning fields are culturally and historically determined and an occupation cannot unilaterally declare itself to be a profession (White & Heslop 2011).

That said, the field of policing is not a static entity and it is plausible to assume that in the short to medium term policing in the UK will become 'professionalised' in ways which Neyroud proposes. It is the argument of this paper that changes in the police professional field will lead to changes in the professional learning field and we suggest that these changes will be characterised in a number of different ways.

It was noted above, for example, that policing does 'own' its own body of knowledge in a way that established professions (such as medicine) does. Whilst it is accepted that significant amounts of research are now conducted internally within police organisations (Innes 2010) as well as by individual practitioners undertaking qualifications such as PhD's and professional doctorates (as did both authors), most of the research 'for' the police as well the research 'on' the police is conducted *by*

academics (Ibid). On top of this, quangos such as the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) and Skills for Justice (SFJ) currently 'own' the 'standards' and 'competences' of which most police learning programmes are based.

Yet Neyroud's vision is that these agencies will be superseded by a new 'Chartered Police Professional Body' which will develop and own 'knowledge and evidence in policing for the public good' (Neyroud 2011:48). Whilst again, there may reason to question how an organisation which is at bottom a 'punishment centred bureaucracy' (Waddington 1999) can allow the space for the sort of critical practitioner led enquiry needed for such a transformation, if achieved, this would impact on the professional learning field. It was noted earlier that universities currently delivering initial police education have a largely free hand in syllabus design. This relationship would almost certainly change following the introduction of a Chartered Policing Body which would no doubt exert far more influence at the institutional (or field) level on the syllabus and wider curriculum. As noted earlier, Neyroud also wishes to move police training closer to a medical education model where learning will take place in institutions similar to 'teaching hospitals'. Whilst this, of course, does not rule out a role for academics from a range of related background disciplines such as, criminology or sociology' it clearly requires the development of a cadre of academic-practitioner lecturers' to work in roles similar to the nurse lecturers we interviewed. However, there are cultural and practical challenges to achieving this in the field of policing, as working in training and education tends to be regarded as a 'negative career move' compared with operational policing (HMIC 2002). On top of this, the current pensions arrangements for serving officers works against practitioners who are relatively young or in mid-career leaving to develop an academic career.

Conclusion

Although no academic discipline can be truly detached and objective, there is an established tradition of police studies with has evolved in 'isolation' from the public police without any regard for their occupational or educational needs. However, the purpose of this paper has been to show that this is not an option for a vocationally based professional learning curriculum which is produced within *competing* academic and professional interests. Whilst this dynamic clearly plays out at an institutional level, the lecturers 'on the ground' also exert significant influence on the professional curriculum. Their pedagogic practices are 'regulated' by their own habitus and specifically by their own positioning within the academic and professional fields.

For example, in nurse education the lecturers are all practitioners and the curriculum is strongly ideologically controlled from the profession. In contrast, the teacher training curriculum is more strongly influenced by the academy and the teacher-educators who have developed a habitus which is separate from their former teacher identities. This distance from the professional creates space in the curriculum for critical thinking about the profession. Policing does not yet have the status of a profession and the curriculum of police studies programmes aimed at educating recruits or potential recruits is largely controlled by academies. Moreover, police studies lecturers are not

required to be practitioners and do not seem to have a strong disciplinary affiliation. However, professional learning fields are not static but are subject to change under institutional and individual influences. The Neyroud Review aims to radically change the field of policing. Although there are numerous challenges to some of Neyroud's ideas being realised, it is plausible to assume that there will be changes to police education in the near future. Whilst on the face of it, Neyroud proposes conceding a greater role for higher and further education providers within police training and education, paradoxically it is the 'profession' which may end up exerting far more influence on the police studies curriculum.

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