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## The importance of the quality of training in the professional improvement of police officers

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Zarządzanie. Teoria i Praktyka nr 4 (22), 35-41

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2017

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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Zarządzanie. Teoria i Praktyka 22 (4) 2018

ISSN 2081-1586

e-ISSN 2449-9730

str. 35-41

# The importance of the quality of training in the professional improvement of police officers / ZNACZENIE JAKOŚCI SZKOLEŃ W DOSKONALENIU ZAWODOWYM FUNKCJONARIUSZY POLICJI

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**STRESZCZENIE**

Jakość jako wieloaspektowe, interdyscyplinarne zjawisko, proces determinujące kreowanie nowych wartości. Dużym znaczeniem w jej rozwoju odgrywa identyfikacja determinant ją kształtujących. W opracowaniu skupiono się na przedstawieniu znaczenia jakości w specjalistycznych szkoleniach zawodowych funkcjonariuszy policji. Celem prezentowanych badań (przeprowadzonych w 2016 roku, w formie ankiety, 18 pytań, na grupie 184 respondentów) była ocena jakości szkoleń funkcjonariuszy, które pozwalały na doskonalenie zawodowe policjantów. Jakość wyszkolonych funkcjonariuszy policji bezpośrednio wpływa na ich efektywność i skuteczność oraz poczucie bezpieczeństwa przez społeczeństwo. Prezentowane wyniki wskazują, iż jakość przeprowadzanych szkoleń jest na wysokim poziomie, jednakże z punktu kompleksowości oferty szkoleniowej występują obszary wymagające doskonalenia. Dążenie do doskonałości powinno być strategicznym działań kompleksowej oferty oferowanych usług szkoleniowych a także obszarem wieloaspektowych jakościowych badań w przyszłości.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** JAKOŚĆ; DOSKONALENIE;  
BEZPIECZEŃSTWO; EFEKTYWNOŚĆ SZKOLENIA;  
ZARZĄDZANIE ZASOBAMI LUDZKIMI (ZZL).

JEL CLASSIFICATION: I24, M12, O15, J24

**ABSTRACT**

Quality is understood as a multi-faceted, interdisciplinary phenomenon and process that determines the creation of new values. The proper identification of its determinants plays a major role in its development. The paper focuses on the importance of quality in professional training of police officers. The objective of this study (carried out in 2016, in the form of a questionnaire, 18 questions on a group of 184 respondents) was to evaluate the training quality of the officers, which enables to improve their professional skills. The quality of trained police officers directly affects both their effectiveness and efficiency as well as provides a sense of security for the general public. The presented results indicate that the quality of the training is high, however, from the point of comprehensive training offer, there are areas for improvement. Striving for excellence should be a strategic activity of a comprehensive offer of training services offered, as well as an area of multi-aspect qualitative research in the future.

**KEY WORDS:** QUALITY; IMPROVEMENT; SECURITY; EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING; HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The police are centralised, armed and uniformly dressed formation. The safety of people and the maintenance of public order is supervised by almost one hundred thousand police officers supported by almost twenty five thousand civilian employees. The command structure of the police, as a specific organization, is quite transparent, which enables effective management, shaping a high level of organisational quality, creating positive image and guaranteeing wide-understood security (Act on the Police, 1990). At the top of the police is the Chief Commandant, who is subordinate to the Commandant of the Metropolitan Police and sixteen Commandant of the Voivodship Police, who supervise the Municipal and Poviats Commandants. They are responsible for the work of police officers at the police stations. More and more educated, ambitious people with professional aspirations and conviction that service in the police might be dangerous but is also a vocation, are joining the police force.

Under the legislation, policemen, when on duty, are entitled to a number of rights, e.g. check a person's identity, to detain a person, conduct a body search, use direct coercive measures and to carry firearms. The skilful handling of these activities requires knowledge, skills and experience gained from the training and practice of adequate quality (Olkiewicz, 2013b: 261-268).

This is important because, in addition to the statutory tasks for counteracting and preventing crime, disclosure and prosecution of perpetrators of offenses, the police officers carry out the objectives (determined by the executive), which are also treated as priorities. They are often designed to enhance both public safety and community awareness of the need to enforce law and to improve the positive image of the police itself. The primary objectives, as part of the assigned tasks, include:

- the increase of safety on roads,
- the increase of safety on mass events,
- improving the safety of the citizen through a quick and effective response to the event,
- protection of citizens', entrepreneurs' and the Treasury's interests through a more effective fight against financial crime,
- improving police work by introducing and by using modern teleinformatic and financial solutions.

Responsible management of the officers in each police station requires continuous monitoring of the needs concerning the development of skills of the officers, but also training centres. All training organisations (Ordinance of the Minister, 2007) should carry out quality-oriented activities, e.g. by improving the training workshop, adjusting it to the expectations and requirements of stakeholders and the market. The rapidly emerging threats (from the technological development, the information as well as the human development) and their influence, coerce training institutions to constantly modify their courses and to improve the qualifications of the educators. Setting the development directions of the training quality of police officers is also dependent on cooperation with representatives of local government institutions and social organisations, which are also responsible for maintaining security and public order.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Management of an organisation and in particular a specific subject such as the police (Municipal, Provincial, Police Station, etc.), requires appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skills. The specific nature of the operation of such body (public entities) requires an appropriate management mode, related to the performance of official duties under orders, but also in the invention of activity. This means that an organisation, in addition to the vision of development, the strategy of action, must address the development of human resources (Olkiewicz, 2013: 57-72). One of the elements of development is improving skills, knowledge of the officers in training, etc., directly influencing their work efficiency and increasing their chances of promotion. Professional development (Kunasz: 2008: 129-141) of the officers will also shape the quality of work, the satisfaction of the stakeholders and minimise the costs of police prevention.

In the case of police officers, the ability to improve (Mažgon, Kovač-Šebart & Štefanc, 2015: 157-164) professional qualifications (Chankseliani, Rely & Laczik, 2016: 582-599) on the one hand results from the requirements of the law and on the other influences the shaping of the positive image of the police, the effectiveness of the work, the guarantee of safety, etc. (Majchrowicz, 2014: 6-18). Forms, methods and techniques of improvement are selected for existing needs and provided within the framework of internal or external services (Andrzejczak, 2010: 181-186). This means that raising the professional qualifications of the staff (police officers) must be carried out within a deliberate, systematic approach to quality and effectiveness (Gawroński, Hryszkiewicz & Truchan,

2015: 9). As part of the process of complementing the knowledge necessary to maintain the skills required in military service and improving behaviour, they promote the development of the personality of the officers. It should be stressed, however, that every training (Buś-Bidas, 2016: 37-54) in the process approach is preceded by an assessment of the existing and forecasted needs at three levels (KGP, 2017):

- a) organisational,
- b) at the level of respective departments, teams,
- c) individual.

The level of needs results mainly from: the adopted management of human resources as well as descriptions of workstations, technological changes, periodic employee evaluations, etc. It is important to evaluate the value of specific criteria determining the need for professional training courses (Olivos et.al., 2016: 25-32). The most commonly used criteria are: compliance with needs, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Modern, contemporary and effective police in Poland, as a “network organisation”, consists of the following types of services: criminal, investigative, preventive and supportive - in organisational, logistic and technical terms. It is also worth mentioning that the police also include: Police Academy, Police Training Centres and Police Schools; separate prevention units, anti-terrorist units and research institutes.

Professional training for police officers is conducted in the stationary system in the form of basic vocational training and in the form of specialist courses. Police training is organised as a central training – by Police Schools and Police Academy in Szczytno. It should be stressed that the uniformed services, including the police, benefit from a limited number of outside training (based on outsourcing) resulting from the lack of appropriate training instruments (ECDVT, 2017), thereby limiting the costs of HR development. Training is based on the annual training plan of the training centre, hereinafter referred to as “a training plan” (Băeşu, 2016: 99-105). The training plan, in consultation with the Head of the organizational Centre competent for the training of the Police Headquarters, is prepared by: Commandant-Rector of the Police Academy in Szczytno, Commandant of the Police School and Commandant of the Voivodship Police. When preparing the training plan, training needs and the capacity of the training unit to organise and conduct training, provided by the Head of the organisational unit responsible for the training of the Police Headquarters, are taken under account.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS

Quality in specialised vocational training plays a vital role for sustainable development of the organisation (achievement of goals, performance, minimisation of costs, etc.), participants (officers) and the society, which is directly affected by it. Research on quality of the ongoing training is one of many directions for evaluating factors influencing the development of police officers. Therefore, the following research questions were addressed:

- Q1 - Are there any determinants shaping and identifying the quality of training?
- Q2 - Can the quality of the training offer determine the effectiveness of the training of police officers, as it is a specific „professional group” that guarantees the safety of the public?

General public opinion survey in a form of a questionnaire (including 18 questions and specifications) was used in the research in February 2016 on a group of 184 people – prevention officers in a Training Centre located in the Central Pomerania region in Poland.

The goal of the study was to assess the quality of the training and its complexity both in terms of organisation and implementation.

The obtained data might be used to establish potential directions for improving the quality of the offered training services and in conducting multifaceted research in the future.

### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Work-service in the police, which is an armed and uniformed formation, involves a continuous training (Ordinance of the Minister, 2007) that enhances the knowledge, skills and professional experience of the officers. Existing and growing threats and dangers resulting from the turbulent environment make police training institutions one of the most important components of internal security of the country. The effectiveness of this element is determined by the level of competence of the officer, and it, in turn, determines the quality of tasks in the area of public order.

The police in order to ensure the highest standards of service and to accomplish entrusted tasks, cares about raising professional qualifications of officers and employees. Training courses take place all year round, with the goal of updating knowledge, improving procedures and exchanging experiences. A well-trained

policeman guarantees fast and effective action when the situation requires it. However, it is important to remember that a police officer is in the process of training prior to active service after a successful selection process. Therefore, the first training (basic) is carried out in 127 days (996 training hours), in which the participant acquires the knowledge and skills of:

- establishing the circumstances and securing the place of an event (150 hours),
- ensuring public safety and order in the place of service and carrying out intervention (338 hours),
- searching for persons and things and the disclosure of perpetrators of crimes in the course of operational-exploratory and administration and procedural activities (90 hours),
- serving in convoys and detention facilities (21 hours),
- taking actions against road users (64 hours),
- taking actions in cases of misconduct (45 hours),
- tackling criminogenic phenomena (14 hours),
- participating in activities related to the restoration of collective public order (44 hours),
- shooting (98 hours),
- tactics and intervention techniques (132 hours).

Further training, in different hourly schedule, concerns professional development (enhancement of quality and effectiveness of work and improvement of professional competence) of individual units or groups of police officers. It should be also noted that assessment of the effects of the training allows to verify whether goals were achieved and the training method was appropriate.

In the case of police officers, the effectiveness of the training should also be evaluated through the ratio between the effects achieved and the expenditure incurred. It is thus apparent that the quality of the training process is the most important factor, which can be verified in three areas: response, teaching, behaviour and results. The later areas (behaviour and results) are, however, only verifiable after the participant returns to the service. In the case of assessment of the level of behaviour, degrees of modification of behaviours at the workplace are analysed, whereas results are evaluated by the achieved performance indicators determined in the parameterisation of the work activities.

*Assessment of the response level* is a subjective impression, opinions and evaluation of the level of satisfaction of participants in training regarding the content, methods, organisation of the training, conditions, etc. Data analysis presented in Table 1 indicate that educators conducting training presented the subject matter of the course in full and the didactic materials in a comprehensible and adequate manner to the audience. Most of the respondents also pointed out that the courses met their expectations and requirements (83.33%) and that specialised knowledge (up to 94.44%) was presented and explained with practical examples.

**Table 1.** Assessment of the response level – execution of training

Implementation of the course	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
The lecturers presented the subject and objectives of the course	-	-	-	-	100%
The training programme was completed in full	-	-	-	5,56%	94,44%
The course met the expectations of improving knowledge and skills	-	-	-	16,67%	83,33%

**Source:** own study

What seems also important in the study of this parameter (response level) is the quality of training materials. Their level of quality affects the knowledge that will directly have an impact on the performance of tasks and the way of planning or verifying the achieved results. The study shows, as confirmed in Table 2, that the method of preparation and use of the materials was good, even very good, which confirms the high expectations and quality requirements of the stakeholders.

**Table 2.** Assessment of the response level

Teaching material	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
Used during training	-	-	-	-	100%
Legible	-	-	-	11,11%	88,89%
Adequate for the course	-	-	-	-	100%

**Source:** own study

It should be stressed that quality is shaped at all stages of the comprehensive training offered by the police training bodies. Not only teaching materials and the implementation of the training programme are important, but also the accompanying services. As indicated in Table 3, in this case, actions need to be taken in order to increase satisfaction with the quality of food or accommodation. Lack of investment in the development of accommodation infrastructure, including catering, results in lower standards compared to the competitive „external” market, and thus lowering overall assessment of the parameter.

**Table 3.** Assessment of the response level

Organisation of training	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Accommodation	-	-	5,56%	16,67%	77,78%
Catering	11,11%	16,67%	27,78%	33,33%	11,11%
Preparation of training room (facility)	-	-	-	55,56%	44,44%

Source: own study

Another important parameter identifying quality is the *assessment of the teaching level*. In specialised direct training, a way of transferring knowledge and experience is also essential. Verbal communication, personal culture, methods and techniques of transferring knowledge and “creative” activation of participants often results from the trainee’s predispositions as well as his experience and skills. The way in which knowledge is transferred directly relates to the degree in which it is going to be acquired by the learners. Therefore, the diversification of the training instruments enables to adjust the communication channel to each individual participant in the training, as well as stimulate creative thinking to use certain techniques in their professional work.

As indicated in Tables 4 and 5 both the qualification of the trainer and the content-oriented preparation of the training were of a high standard, which is likely to be time-effective and allow the participants to obtain required and expected knowledge. Especially if this knowledge concerns defence issues and subjects related to the standardisation of police operational demands.

**Table 4.** Assessment of the teaching level – assessment of the trainer’s qualifications

Trainer conducting classes	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Good content-related preparation to conduct classes	-	-	-	5,56%	94,44%
Classes conducted smoothly	-	-	-	-	100%
Able to make contact with the participants	-	-	-	5,56%	94,44%
Presented the proper level of personal culture	-	-	-	-	100%
Able to engage the group to cooperate	-	-	-	5,56%	94,44%

Source: own study

**Table 5.** Assessment of the teaching level – assessment of the content-related quality

The level of realisation of content-related issues	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
Legal regulations on defence preparations	-	-	-	-	100%
Procedures for increasing and decreasing defence preparedness and tasks regarding militarisation of the Police	-	-	-	5,56%	94,44%
Operational tasks for the armed forces and civil defence	-	-	-	-	100%
Preparation and conducting special protection of facilities administered by national defence entities and from the scope of preparation of police operating positions	-	-	-	11,11%	88,89%
Education regarding the defence issues	-	-	-	-	100%

Source: own study

It is required from the trainer, who provides highly qualified courses, to continuously improve his qualifications both in the field of training methods and techniques and in the area of knowledge transfer. Therefore, instances occur where training is carried out by external companies that most often have adequate knowledge or research equipment lacking in internal police training organisations. The amount of investment in order to acquire such potentials is too high in relation to the amount of training courses conducted and therefore, lowering the efficiency index. It should be noted that refresher training is a time-consuming, capital-intensive process, but in the face of potential gains (stakeholder security), spending is worthwhile.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The training bodies (within the police structure) responsible for improving the potential of police officers in both basic and specialist training, require appropriate financial resources to shape the quality of the educational process. Diversity of training, among others, for district officers, disciplinary officers, police inspectors and detectives, police shooting instructors, commanding officers for police contingent, and so on, require a dedicated team of trainers with a lot of charisma, knowledge, experience and skills in direct contact with the student. These individuals must have great personal culture and professional ethics, as proximity to other officers from various formations can lead to all kinds of abuse. The study shows that trainers should have adequate work tools i.e. a teaching room, equipment (allowing for the use of the latest technology e.g. IT) and a collection of teaching materials. As respondents underline, the quality of the materials must include the right amount of content-oriented, up-to-date, legible knowledge, which through presentation and discussion becomes a source of inspiration for making changes in the future. As can be seen in Table 3, accompanying services, in this case food and accommodation, are also an important aspect of introduced training offer, to which very often training bodies do not pay much attention.

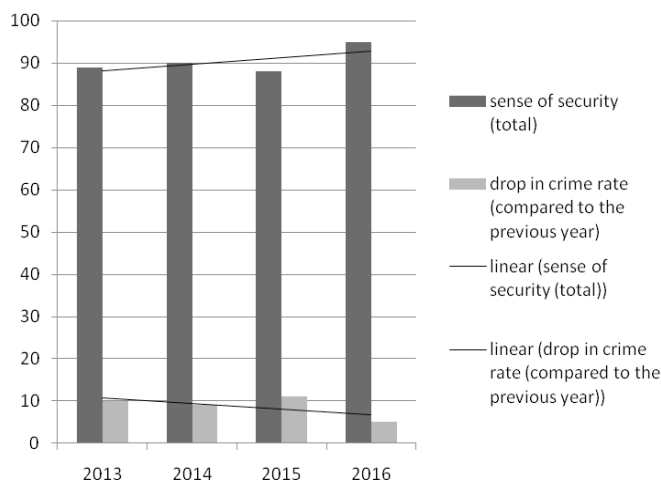
This means that respondents after a day of specialised training would like to choose from high quality catering services that unfortunately training centres are not able to provide. It is therefore worth considering the possibility of using outsourcing as part of improving the quality of the offer, as well as minimising investment costs in the infrastructure and high standardisation offered by the commercial bodies. The author firmly believes

that the quality of hotel services (accommodation) and gastronomy can significantly influence the choice of the training centre in the future.

According to the above data it can be noticed that there seem to be determinants shaping and identifying the quality of training (Q1). However, whether the quality of the training can directly determine the effectiveness of the training of police officers is only verifiable after the officer returns to the service.

**Fig. 1.** Safety assessment in the Central Pomerania region (%)

**Source:** own study by CBOS



It should be stressed that the evaluation is carried out by the police training centres and that the data indicate an increase in efficiency and effectiveness of taken actions – (?) this is confirmed by Figure 1. Every year the police investigate (Polish Public Opinion Centre CBOS) the level of public safety across the country as well as in each region. More than one thousand respondents (inhabitants of the region) in the Pomeranian region have confirmed the growing number of trained officers who have a direct impact on the drop in the crime rate and increased detection of crime perpetrators. In other words, the quality of the training offer determines the efficiency and effectiveness of police officers (Q2). However, through responsible management, the quality of both the training offer and the training process should be continuously improved, as it affects, among other things, the degree of satisfaction of the participants and the positive image of the training centres. In order to improve quality it would be worth considering implementing a standardised management system (e.g. ISO 9111, 27001), which might facilitate management and the process of quality improvement.

## 6. SUMMARY

Uniformed services, i.e. the police, require a continuous process of professional development. This concerns both legal knowledge (as a result of constant changes in the legal system) organisational (procedures, intervention schemes, reporting, etc.), motivational, etc. Specialist training provided in police training bodies, as an element of shaping desired attitudes (behaviour) in specific situations (including crises), must be of the highest quality, since the effects of education will have an impact on the security of society as well as the country. Therefore, an important element of the professional development of police officers is to identify the determinants that shape the quality of training and the simultaneous implementation of appropriate quality assurance activities, as was confirmed by the research. Training centres and trainers, under the concept of: *High quality*

*of training services means high efficiency of the officers and a sense of security, encourages cooperation with various entities (commercial, non-profit, national and international) to exchange knowledge and experience, which later is taught to police officers. Continuous learning and pro-development activities create “new” quality of training, which is required and expected by police structures.*

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