

# Training Analysis and Monitoring in Italian State Police Schools



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**A***BSTRACT:* The Italian Ministry of the Interior has carried out, in collaboration with the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan, a survey on the quality of the training provided in the Italian State Police schools. The topic of the survey was not only the quality of training, but also and above all an analysis of the final product of training itself: a person with a solid professional and personal identity able to face different and changing situations, firmly anchored to personal, social and institutional values, with a strong sense of responsibility towards the country and civil society. The survey had two main aims:

1. *To analyse the level of training achieved by the agents and deputy inspector students in different moments of the training courses;*
2. *To analyse the training courses in their complexity, in order to identify conclusive factors and those needing improvement, or even to consider adapting the current models.*

## Methodology of the Research

1. *First Step:* Enquiry into the relationship between State Police values and practical behaviour in order to verify the main values and professional conduct that policemen and women associate with them.

Method: Questionnaire sent to a significant sample of 2 000–3 000 police agents.

2. *Second Step:* Creation of a professional conduct handbook to be used in State Police schools.

Method: A draft of the text would be elaborated by a workgroup, made up of school managers. The draft would be discussed with the school managers and police trainers working as instructors in the basic courses.

3. *Third Step:* Redefinition of the formative and professional profile expected at the end of the courses; possible changes and improvements to be introduced in the training processes.

Method: Definition of an integrated professional profile to be shared both by the trainers and the users.

4. *Fourth Step:* Analysis of the best practices in the different Italian police schools, especially with reference to good management.

5. *Fifth and Sixth Steps* (to be developed in the second half of next year): Control and assessment of the training activity in Italian State Police schools.

## Description of the Research

The research, carried in phases, was realised between January and July 2006. From January to February 2006, semi-structured interviews were held with individuals and small groups of school managers and police officers, in order to gather information and opinions both from the 'trainers' and the 'users' of the training product. The following main issues were submitted to the police school officers:

- Educational mission of schools;
- Assessment of training both during the course and after;
- Training values;
- Quality required of good police officers.

The following main topics of discussion were proposed to the so-called 'users':

- Quality of training provided by schools and experience on the ground;
- Appropriate and possible changes in training courses;
- Assessment of training camps;
- Quality required of good police officers.

The information gathered was processed in terms of perceptions, opinions and attitudes about the training and, more generally, about the reasons for the professional choice and the personal beliefs regarding the professional profile. In March 2006 the investigation continued with a semi-structured questionnaire, whose objectives were outlined to the students, guaranteeing their anonymity.

The survey concerned a sample of 604 persons:

- 270 agent students in the School of Trieste;
- 128 agent students in the School of Campobasso;
- 206 deputy inspector students in the inspectors Institute of Nettuno.

The questionnaire was divided into the following five main sections:

1. Identification data such as sex, age, status, educational qualifications;
2. Reasons and professional goals;
3. Ability for the proper exercise of the profession;
4. Training and development of values;
5. Feelings of belonging to the State Police.

For a correct interpretation of the collected data, in May 2006 a phase of qualitative comparison was carried out using the methodology of focus groups to discuss the results of the questionnaire and formulate new hypotheses.

Finally, in July 2006, in order to compose an interpretative framework and to assess the possible development of the educational system, a critical reflection was made by a group of experts from the institutes of education and State Police operational offices.

From the collected data, training in police schools was judged to be adequate to develop technical and professional skills but less effective in

influencing personal beliefs and attitudes in order to target and govern everyday professional life.

This general assumption is also supported by some empirical evidence: training in schools seems to have a weak influence on the students' personality whose references and ethical values are little affected by the training experience.

## Conclusion

Investment in the quality of human resources could be implemented by redefining the training courses and by several innovations. In particular, more active and participatory teaching is to be proposed, as well as integration between theory and practice as complementary factors for developing professional skills as well as setting up an appropriate professional identity.

In addition, courses on ethics could be adjusted, inserting them into specific activities, in order to make the students able to understand the reasons that established rules and requirements exist (analysis of problematic cases, guided comparison with testimony service, strategy of role play, etc.).

The use of professional cases, introduced in the curricula of training courses, could promote not only technical skills but also reference values. Job witnesses could bring their personal experiences into the classroom, in order to help participants to reinforce and implement their ethic principles and behaviour.

Obviously the task of building the police officers' professional identity cannot be delegated only to basic training, but it must become permanently integrated and consolidated, from the moment the individuals arrive at their operational departments. Particularly important are the first six to nine months, during which students, unless accompanied, risk finding a gap between what they learned during training and what is actually required on the job. In this perspective, different forms of tutoring could be tried, if defined in the context of a shared project.

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