



THEORY OF OPERATIVE POLICE COGNITION IN THE SYSTEM OF POLICE SCIENCES



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Abstract: The personnel of the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava (the highest police educational institution in Slovakia) are systematically and purposefully involved in the constitution process of police sciences. The Criminal Police Department, with its theory of operative police cognition, tries to fulfil the gap that police theory and police practice continuously bring. Theory of operative police cognition comes from identified needs that were verified through applied research (carried out in 2011 and 2012). The results of research were published in the final report ⁽¹⁾ and scientific monograph ⁽²⁾. The authors of this contribution suggest that attention should be paid to the police processes that are permanently conducted in a police reality, where each spheres of this reality have their own typical processes as a main distinguish feature.

Keywords: police sciences, operative police cognition, scientific cognition, police theory.

Aims of the study

- To create a theory of police cognition (a new branch of theory)
 - To spread qualitative new dimension of knowledge (object and scope of theory, basic conceptual apparatus, methodology, system, relationship with police sciences, police theory and police practice)
 - To share information about situation related to constitution of police sciences in Slovakia
 - To enhance international police cooperation in this field.
- Comparative analysis (situation related to police sciences in Slovakia and in certain surrounding states, e. g. in the Czech Republic)
 - Identification analysis (the needs of police theory and police praxis, police processes and significant domain of police reality, etc.) in parallel with:
 - (a) guided, semi-structured interview with police experts;
 - (b) semi-standardised questionnaire (addressed to external students of the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava).

Methodology

- Content analysis (books, monographs, studies, papers, archive data, investigation

⁽¹⁾ Lisoň, M. & Korgo, D. (2012), *Possibilities of development of operative police work: final report from applied research*, Bratislava, Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.

⁽²⁾ Lisoň, M. (2012), *Theory of Operative Cognition*, Bratislava, Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava.



1. THE ROLE AND SCOPE OF POLICE SCIENCES

The staff of the Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava (particularly from profiling departments) pays special attention to the development of police sciences⁽³⁾ as well as the relationship between theory and practice. The activity follows from the needs of the police practice which are to be identified and met by the applied research of the theory.

The role of scientific cognition of the police practice is to serve the police practice itself. While fulfilling this task, the scientific cognition must resolutely eliminate all features of dogmatism or practicism that are still obvious in verbal displays of some police 'experts'⁽⁴⁾. The presence of these facts was verified through interviews with police experts. About 75 % of interviewed police experts have confirmed that scientific cognition in police practice is not appreciated, whilst only 53 % of them suggest that it would be necessary to change this situation. This means that communication problems still exist between practitioners and theoreticians, and probably in the exposure and advertisement of knowledge that was obtained through applied research.

One frequently discussed question in a theoretical environment of the Academy of the Police Force (that has reference to constitution and development of police sciences) is: 'How can we define an object of cognition?' It is clear that it epitomises a difficult theoretical and practical problem. According to the results of our applied research, we are persuaded that the reason is hidden somewhere within the 'disagreement' of the experts on the identity of theoretical and practical needs⁽⁵⁾. To summarise the discussion up to now, we can define police sciences as the 'arising system of scientific knowledge about police reality'.

- Police reality is each objectively occurred reality in a human society in which all specific processes (that refer to police activity) are conducted.

- The processes have their own logistic, mode of existence and consist of situations in which methods and means are used with a purpose to solve these situations.
- The logistic is predominantly composed of generalised scientific knowledge and it has the following forms: legislation, methodology, system of work-management and professional training.

Although not strictly expressed anywhere, the role of police sciences is not only a methodical support of police praxis, but also a deep cognition and explanation of police reality that is usable during the projection of the activity.

Police sciences are practical (applied) sciences, meaning that they are sciences about human activity. They give us a clue, an instruction on how to act purposefully and how to prepare for fulfilling this task. Police sciences should represent the system of knowledge developing in coherence with identified social needs. Through interviews with police experts, the majority of respondents (87 %) are persuaded that they are unable to reach consensus on the identity of theoretical and practical needs and only 10 % of interviewed people claimed that the most important needs of police practice are:

- basic functions and tasks of particular police services (the need to implement community policing);
- management and self-management of police officers in police processes (the need to change the organisational structure of the police force);
- evaluation process (the need of non-formal concept of career progress);
- participation of citizens in crime control (the need of development in professional communication, i.e. in police–citizen relationship).

The basic structure of the police sciences system has two parts, i.e. theory and research. One prerequisite for the constitution of police sciences is a mutual connection of theory and research,

⁽³⁾ The authors of the contribution intentionally use a plural verbal construction 'police sciences'. They see the importance of this approach in variety of police reality that will be explained further.

⁽⁴⁾ Val'o, Ján. (2011). *Possibilities of cognition of criminal groups activities: qualification rigorous thesis*, Bratislava: Academy of the Police Force in Bratislava, p. 82.

⁽⁵⁾ Lisoň, M. & Korgo, D., *supra nota* 1, p. 98.



although it is obvious that sometimes this synergy doesn't work. These facts markedly complicate the integration of the police sciences system in a theoretical as well as practical plane⁽⁶⁾. According to the majority of respondents (88 %), the synergy between theory and research is dysfunctional. This state is also determined by theory and practise.

- Police practice is too conservative and unable to consider potential effects of applied research results on police practice.
- Police researchers are unable to identify current police needs.
- Synergy does not work because 'transfer of scientific knowledge into police practice' does not work either.

Just as in other sciences, the personnel of the academy tries to find, reveal and detect diversification, all small differences and disunity in the police reality. This approach has a pragmatic character. This is why people are usually interested in the effectiveness of their activity, and their final results frequently influenced by the quality of their preparation. The more accurate and the deeper the knowledge about the activity (system, purposes, aims, processes, means and methods), the better the preparation of the activity is. All the people interviewed confirmed the importance of systematic, long-term studying, whilst almost 80 % of them admitted that training and education was insufficient. The common opinion was that:

- many teachers and trainers are a bit too conservative;
- presented knowledge is static and out-of-date;
- feedback in evaluating the education process is missing.

Therefore, new challenges are to:

- create a functional system of long-term study;
- adopt an education module, e-learning (computer-based training) d-learning (distance education or distance learning);

- involve police experts for theory and practice (national and international), and other progressive methods.

2. CONSTITUTION OF THE THEORY OF OPERATIVE COGNITION

Criminal activity is a certain reality which either happened or not. It may also refer to behaviour and conduct of people before committing a crime, within minutes of committing it and after committing the crime. We come to know about facts through their reflection in the material world and in our minds, and that means that criminal activity is a cognisable object. All these specifics emphasise the importance of the existence of the theory that can be used by police officers in real criminal cases.

As aforementioned, the elaboration of the theory of operative cognition has an interdisciplinary character. Some theories, approaches and sciences (criminalistics, criminology, law, police sciences, and other related sciences) are frequently used during cognition of criminal activity. We can state that the theory of operative cognition increasingly implements theories and methodology of research from other scientific disciplines. Practically, it is possible to see it as a professional job preparation. Future operative workers should have some knowledge in law, criminalistics, criminology, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, economy, informatics, management, marketing, etc.

Based on the results of our applied research, 84 % of interviewed students are aware of the importance of police sciences, mainly law, criminalistics, criminology and psychology, for upcoming operative workers; 6 % stressed the role of informatics and management in operative police work (apart from the first category of scientific disciplines); 11 % were not convinced about the importance of police sciences beside law and criminalistics; and 28 % agreed that there is a need to create a theory of operative cognition supported by both theoreticians and practitioners.

⁽⁶⁾ Erneker, J. & Porada, V. (2006), *Cognition of needs and transfer of scientific knowledge into police practice*, Praha, Police Academy of the Czech Republic, p. 11.



FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSION

We are certain that the results presented from our applied research prove that we should create and further develop theoretical knowledge in coherence with police practice. Police practice determines the needs of police cognition, although there are still problems with their

identification. It is extremely challenging for theoretical and practical police experts to find a reasonable solution. Our ambition is to reveal and accept these needs during the elaboration of the theory. With our theory, we wish not only to explain specific police activities (operative and searching activities), but also to create convenient conditions for the projection of conducted processes in its system.