Police education and training in China — the case of Zhejiang Police College

Tao Xu
Haiyan Fu
China

Abstract:
This article starts with a brief introduction to the police education and training system in China. Then it points out the challenges facing police education and training from a general viewpoint. The article mainly focuses on how Zhejiang Police College is coping with the challenges through an initiative mechanism of cooperation between colleges and police organisations and through fruitful international cooperation in training and education. Lastly it looks deeper into the possibilities and prospects of further international cooperation to improve the quality of police training and education.

Keywords: police training and education; partnership; international cooperation; China–EU programme; Interpol.

Education plays a key role in cultivating the best qualities of police officers. However, different countries differ greatly in their police education systems. As a key form of support for policing work, a relatively complete police education and training system with its formed experience and methods has been developed in China since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. This essay intends to probe the changes that have taken place in the police education system in China and discuss the prospects of police education by focusing on the current practices of Zhejiang Police College.

1. A brief introduction to the police education system in China

In China, the institutions responsible for police education and training fall into two categories: police universities or colleges providing a degree education; and police training schools or centres for in-service officers. According to the official document released jointly by six ministries, including the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Human Resource and Social Security of China in December 2015, degree education in police colleges and universities plays a fundamental and decisive role in building up a qualified police force. Not only is degree education the very first step in cultivating qualified future police officers, it also constitutes a very important part of policing affairs in China (Teng Yinhou, Peng Zhengdong, 2016).

Accordingly, this article mainly concentrates on police education and training in police colleges and universities. Similar to the dual system in the Netherlands, Chinese police colleges and universities provide both degree education for enrolled high school graduates and training for in-service police officers. There are now 25 police colleges and universities nationwide (Teng Yinhou, Peng Zhengdong, 2016), the differences among which are as follows.

Among all 25 police colleges and universities there are only five that are under the direct control of the Ministry of Public Security (Teng Yinhou, Peng Zhengdong, 2016). The other 20 are under the control of local provincial governments. In almost every province in China there is one police college at provincial level.
As stated above, all colleges and universities provide both degree education and in-service training. The difference is that the five police colleges and universities under the direct control of the Ministry of Public Security offer a bachelor’s degree, master's degree or doctoral degree. But only a few police colleges at provincial level are qualified to offer a master's degree or higher. What is more, students graduating from provincial police colleges and universities will usually be sent back to their hometown police bureau to start their career at the local police station, the lowest level of the police structure.

As for in-service training, most professional training sessions for high-ranking police officers in service are provided by police colleges and universities under the direct control of the Ministry of Public Security. Provincial colleges and universities, on the other hand, provide all kinds of short-term, in-service training to officers of different ranks, including police supervisors and senior police officers.

2. Challenges facing practitioners in police education

Great changes have taken place in relation to police education under the police reform guidelines in China. Not only has the number of police officers increased, but also their qualifications have been improving. Currently in China there are about 1.8 million police officers in service (1), many of whom graduated from police colleges or universities. However, there are a number of key issues under heated discussion, one of which is the question of whether police education or police training is more important.

Before 2004 in China there was much more emphasis on police education than on police training. However, the problems were quite obvious from two major perspectives. On the one hand, graduates from police colleges and universities were in desperate need of practice and experience. On the other hand, in-service police officers were not provided with sufficient chances to pursue further study and training in police colleges and universities (Yang Hede, 2007). However, for a long period of time since 2004, the importance of police training has been overemphasised. Around 2010 there was a huge debate about whether the police colleges and universities should be changed to police training schools, which is the opposite to a shift from police training to education in the United States (Craig Paterson, 2011). It was not until recent years that scholars agreed that both police education for degrees and police training are indispensable components in building up qualified and capable police officers. However, how police education and police training can be integrated, motivating each other and contributing to a more comprehensive police education system remain to be explored.

3. A case analysis based on Zhejiang Police College

3.1. A brief introduction to Zhejiang Police College

Zhejiang Police College is located in Hangzhou, which is renowned for the beauty of the West Lake and the hills around it. The predecessor of Zhejiang Police College is the Training Class for Hangzhou Public Security Staff, which was established on 26 May 1949. In January 1950, Zhejiang Provincial School for Public Security Cadres was founded. In 1985, with the approval of the provincial government, it was renamed the Zhejiang Public Security Vocational School and started its associate degree education. In March 2007 the Ministry of Education permission for the college to be upgraded to a college of undergraduate education and named Zhejiang Police College. It has outstanding facilities in its two campuses at Binjiang and Lin’an. Zhejiang Police College now has around 500 faculty members, and has 4,000 cadets and trains about 8,000 on-the-job police officers per year. Zhejiang Police College offers 11 undergraduate major subjects for cadets, such as criminal investigation, forensic science, public order management, traffic control, law, computer science and technology, investigation of economic crimes, international police cooperation, police command and tactics, law enforcement on internet security, etc. Zhejiang Police College is also a national training base for new police chiefs at the county level, a police field-training base of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), a sci-tech and information technology training base of the MPS and an organiser of China–EU Police Training Programme of the MPS (ZJPC, 2016).

Even with the overload of pressure, occupational jeopardy, etc., a career with the police is still quite attractive to the young generation in China. As a result, admis-

(1) The total number of in-service police officers is released in an online government report (http://search.10jqka.com.cn/snapshot/news/6854fc52775371f1.html).

...
Police education and training in China — the case of Zhejiang Police College

3.2. Analysis of police training and education in Zhejiang Police College

In its more than 60-year history Zhejiang Police College has cultivated over 20,000 police officers for Zhejiang Province and Tibet Autonomous Region, and has trained over 100,000 in-service police officers from all over the country. Many of them have become team leaders and directors in the police agency at different levels.

3.2.1. A mechanism of partnership between the police college and police departments

There are 16 police departments in Zhejiang Province that have cooperative partnerships with Zhejiang Police College. Zhejiang Police College has 39 theoretical research offices and 60 internship sites in police units at different levels all over the province. Zhejiang Police College has built up very close partnerships with police units at different levels all over the province. Every year those police units select excellent police officers and commanders to go to Zhejiang Police College as instructors — teaching courses, doing research, etc. Meanwhile, the college sends faculty members and students to practice or do internships at police institutes. This mechanism has turned out to be a successful one that is beneficial for both sides.

3.2.1.1. Inviting experienced police officers to be lecturers

Compared with the police training systems in the United States and the United Kingdom, one of the biggest challenges facing police education in China is that the students are educated and trained in a knowledge-based methodology. In this way the students graduate from the police colleges and universities with a package of know-what rather than know-how or know-why. In order to better equip police cadets with both knowledge and experience, Zhejiang Police College began a programme of inviting in-service police officers to be lecturers on open courses which are aimed at experience sharing and improving problem-solving capacity.

3.2.2. International police training and education of Zhejiang Police College

In response to ongoing policing reform in China, Zhejiang Police College, along with all the other police universities and colleges nationwide, devotes itself entirely to innovation in police education and training. Within that sphere, police education and training on international police cooperation are playing an increasingly large role.

Nowadays, with global integration, all nations in the world not only share interests, but also share safety and risk concerns. Mutual understanding, learning from each other and law enforcement cooperation have inevitably become necessities. What is more, Zhejiang province is very well known as the home of Chinese people overseas. It is the duty of the police to protect the life, legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens at home and abroad. Therefore, the question of how to strengthen international law enforcement cooperation has become a priority issue for Zhejiang Police College.

3.2.2.1. An international school established to promote international police education and training

As a big move towards cultivating future international cooperation among police officers, Zhejiang Police College recently established its international school. This school is a very vigorous and comprehensive institute, which includes several divisions as follows: International Policing Cooperation Department, Foreign Languages Department, Foreign Police Training Department, International Students Office, Foreign Affairs Office, Research Centre for Non-traditional Security Issues and Secretary Office.

Zhejiang Police College is one of the few police universities in China that are qualified to recruit international students for language programmes or studying for a bachelor’s degree in policing and majoring in law. The international students come from Congo, Italy, Laos, South Korea, the United States and other countries.
Furthermore, the college offers all types of training programmes for law enforcement officers from abroad, not only for those from developing countries, but also training programmes and workshops for our counterparts from advanced countries, for example the workshop for the police chief from Texas, United States.

Even though laws, customs and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police should be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries. Therefore, every year the college sends many faculty members and researchers to study abroad, and many leading authorities and experts are invited to deliver speeches, teach courses, make academic exchanges, etc.

3.2.2.2. Implementation of the ‘2+1+1’ plan

In 2004, working with Sam Huston State University in the United States and Soonchunhyang University in South Korea, Zhejiang Police College initiated a programme on a ‘new mode of education for international policing cooperation’, which aims to cultivate excellent cadets for international policing cooperation (Fu Guoliang, 2012). As the most important part of this innovation the college launched a ‘2+1+1’ plan, i.e. the 50 most outstanding cadets are selected for this programme each year. In the first 2 years freshmen and sophomores take courses about law, policing, language and so on. In order to facilitate better cooperation with our counterparts abroad, besides English, students can choose a second foreign language to learn, including Arabic, French, Korean, Russian, Spanish and so on. During their first 2 years of study, Sam Huston State University and Soonchunhyang University send teaching faculty members to Zhejiang Police College to teach courses such as ‘Introduction to criminal justice’, ‘Criminology’, ‘American history’, etc. In the third year those students go to the United States or South Korea to study for 1 year, after passing language exams and undergoing a strict selection process. During their stay at Sam Huston they intern with the local police bureau for 2 weeks, patrolling with American police officers. In the last year they come back to China to study, write papers and intern with the local police bureau. This programme has run well so far. Some graduates find a position at national agencies for international police cooperation, and many work at local police departments or bureaux of international cooperation, foreign affairs, immigrant affairs, etc.

3.2.2.3. China–EU police training programme

On 19 October 2012 Zhejiang Police College was selected as one of the eight police colleges and universities to conduct a 5-year China–EU police training programme, which is a big move to strengthen international cooperation in police education between China and Europe. Sponsored by the Ministry of Public Security, the China–EU training programme introduces the latest theories and practices relating to police management, law enforcement standardisation, maintaining social order and the fight against transnational organised crime, from which both the students and in-service officers benefit enormously through workshops, seminars and visits abroad. This project played a very important role in enhancing mutual understanding and trust and promoting bilateral law enforcement cooperation (CPD, 2014).

Thanks to the China–EU programme at Zhejiang Police College, the relationship between China and the EU has been developing very fast over the past several decades. In recent years the number of visitors to and from each other has been dramatically increasing, and the practical needs of police cooperation are increasing accordingly. The China–EU police training programme is a significant part of China’s efforts to strengthen international police cooperation and learn from the EU.

4. Vision

Nowadays there are many problems demanding prompt solutions in the face of new conditions relating to the comprehensive deepening of police reform in China, including: lack of relevant laws and regulations on police education and training; lack of implementation of relevant laws and regulations; lack of qualified educators/trainers; lack of qualified personnel, especially for international police cooperation; lack of evidence-based assessment and evaluation for education and training reforms.

As mentioned, Chinese characteristics are important, but this should not stop China from learning from others in a selective and effective manner. Whatever we do with foreign ideas, theories and practices, in the end ideas are ideas, theories are theories and practices
are practices. Wherever they come from they should not be judged by their origin but should be scientifically assessed by their utility, i.e. evidence based. In context, Western theories and practices should be examined in depth to see what is and is not applicable to China, and customised to fit in with Chinese conditions and needs (2).

The Chinese Public Security Authority has been making great efforts to increase coordination with Interpol, marked by the successful extradition from abroad of persons wanted for economic crimes. For example, in 2013 the Shanghai municipal police received a report that Chen Yi, the then controller of Shanghai Fanxin Insurance Agency Co. Ltd, who was suspected of economic crimes, escaped. The Shanghai police filed and investigated the case, and they found that Chen Yi had escaped from the country before the case was reported to the police. The Shanghai police immediately submitted an application to the China NCB, which issued a red notice and requested assistance with the search for the suspect from relevant countries and regions through Interpol. After investigation it was found that Chen Yi had escaped to Fiji. With communication between the law enforcement authority of Fiji and the Chinese MPS through the multilateral channel of Interpol, the suspect was captured and extradited only 60 hours after the red notice was published, which was the fastest extradition in the history of the country. The direct contact with the law enforcement authority of Fiji by the China NCB via I-24/7, and the information shared by publishing the red notice through the multi-channel framework of the Interpol, played a critical role in the clearance of the case (DBW News, 2013).

However, China is facing several challenges in international police cooperation, of which the lack of qualified personnel is one of the biggest. Communication and exchange are key to police cooperation. According to the China–EU 2020 strategic agenda for cooperation, China and the EU will strengthen cooperation on police training (3). What is more, as the Interpol’s supreme governing body, the General Assembly is composed of delegates appointed by each member country, and it meets annually. In 2015 China was selected to host the general assembly in 2017, which was international recognition of the efforts made by China in international police cooperation. China will spare no efforts to organise this session and more enthusiastically pitch itself into the efforts on international police cooperation.

As such, Interpol is a very important platform for capacity building, and is willing to increasingly partner up with other stakeholders and expand its coordinating role.

Through capacity-building and training activities, police officers, border officers and judicial authorities will learn more about Interpol’s tools and services. So far China and the EU have cooperated in the organisation of training projects on the use of I-24/7, different notices and databases, giving a better understanding of the global police communication system and building cooperation between them within the framework of the Interpol to a higher level. In the future it will be worthwhile to discuss issues relating to sharing knowledge of the latest cutting-edge forensic technologies, and joint development of and research into investigative methods.

(2) I would like to thank K. C. Wong for his useful comments in this regard.

(3) http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t1101804.shtml
References