

Embedding employability within Higher Education for the profession of policing

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Abstract

Purpose: The longitudinal research evaluated impact of an employability module, the College of Policing Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP), on students' career aspirations, their confidence and wish to join the police along with the appropriateness of the module. This will inform the implementation of employability as part of the College of Policing managed Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF).

Design/methodology: A three-year longitudinal research study used mixed methods across four points in time to evaluate the impact on students studying the employability module.

Findings: The research suggests that the employability focused CKP was useful as an introduction to policing, it developed interest in the police and enhanced the confidence of learners applying to join. Lessons learnt from the CKP should be considered during the implementation of the PEQF.

Research limitations/implications: The ability to generalise findings across different groups is limited as other influences may impact on a learner's confidence and employability. However the implications for the PEQF curriculum are worthy of consideration.

Practical implications: As the police service moves towards standardised higher educational provision and evolution of policing as a profession, lessons can be learnt from the CKP with regards to the future employability of graduates.

Originality/value: Enhancing the employability evidence base, focusing on policing, the research identified aspects which may impact on graduates completing a degree mapped to the PEQF. The research is therefore of value to Higher Education and the Professional Body for Policing.

Paper type: Research paper

Keywords: Employability, Police Higher Education, PEQF, CKP

Introduction

The notion of embedding employability within a curriculum is primarily focused on the teaching, and the associated student learning, across a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to support both the graduate's initial employment and their future career development (Pegg et al., 2012). The skills required by a police officer are many and varied and include good communication, leadership, teamwork, the ability to make decisions, work using their own initiative etc. Many of these skills are embedded with a higher education degree, for example, the Quality Assurance Agency (2014) detail how a graduate with an honours degree should be able to evaluate evidence from a range of sources, make decisions in complex situations and communicate these effectively, whilst taking responsibility for their work. Christopher (2015) argues that higher education can play a vital role in educating new police officers to deal with such dynamic demands and complexities of modern policing. Although Tibby (2012) reports how research measuring the long-term impact of strategies addressing the support provided for student employability is limited.

Reflecting on the introduction of the pre-employment Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) launched in 2013, with its eventual withdrawal as a qualification at the end of 2019, the professionalisation of the police service has now been intrinsically mapped by the College of Policing to a framework embedded within higher education (Brown et al., 2018). The resulting Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) intends to steer the development of the knowledge and skills of employability required by new police officers across England and Wales.

Methodology

A three-year longitudinal mixed methods research study focused on 28 students at a University who elected to study the employability focused Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) as an option module on a BSc (Hons) Crime and Investigation degree programme. The CKP curriculum content is prescribed by the National Professional Body for Policing, The College of Policing. The module is taught within the University over 26 weeks and consists of a minimum of 200 hours of student learning, which includes 78 hours of lecturing. The aim of the research was to evaluate the impact of this employability focused module on the students' career aspirations, particularly if it affected their confidence and desire to apply to join the police service as an officer along with the appropriateness of the higher educational module in terms of short and medium term benefits for the students as graduates. This in turn may impact upon the implementation of future employability focused modules designed as part of the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF).

There were four stages to the research, all of which were optional to the participants. The first stage was the completion by all 28 participants of an

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3 initial questionnaire before they commenced studying the one-year module
4 embedded at level five on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
5 (FHEQ) which formed part of a three-year full-time honours degree. After
6 gaining informed consent, the self-administered questionnaire established
7 what learners expected from the module and their career aspirations.
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10 In the second stage, 26 weeks later on completion of the module, 28 learners
11 completed questionnaires, which included the opportunity to include written
12 responses. These questionnaires explored the student's career aspirations
13 and identified if they had gained knowledge and understanding to assist them
14 gaining their future employment.
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17 In stage three, one year later on their graduation, a short questionnaire was
18 completed by 25 participants, three weren't completed, identifying their career
19 aspirations at that moment and how what they had learnt might help them
20 achieve their ambitions.
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23 In stage four, a year after the students had graduated, telephone interviews
24 were conducted with four participants who had consented to be contacted 12
25 months after graduation in order to ascertain if they were employed by the
26 police service and if the CKP had assisted them in gaining their chosen
27 career. This was followed up by short semi-structured interviews with three
28 serving special constables from across North East Police Forces establishing
29 their perceived value of a taught, employability focused CKP to policing.
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31
32 This three-year longitudinal research project collected data at set points in
33 time from a convenience sample of students, graduates and special
34 constables (university graduates from a separate cohort, who had different
35 experiences of the CKP, in addition to experience of the workplace as a
36 volunteer). The internal validity of the research is good. However, the external
37 validity enabling the findings to be reproduced and generalised more widely
38 across different sample groups is limited due to different educational
39 programmes taught at different levels across universities, colleges and private
40 providers.
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42
43 The researchers are very aware of bias, for example through the selection of
44 certain participants across a range of stages, design of the questionnaire and
45 leading questions during the interviews. The researchers have endeavoured
46 to minimise such effects by, for example, enabling all 28 students studying the
47 CKP at the university to self-select at each point whether or not to take part in
48 subsequent stages of the research, piloting the questionnaire, using
49 impartiality whilst following a script of questions when conducting the
50 interviews, in order to establish a professional distance and to restrict the
51 possibility of researcher bias (Blaikie, 2007).
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54 An issue with low response rates in terms of stage four, is that there is a
55 greater likelihood of non-response bias, in terms of estimates of outcomes, as
56 there is a lower representation of the original sample group. However, this
57 does not necessarily mean the sample itself would be biased (Gilbert and
58 Stoneman, 2016).
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5 The findings from the research are informative to the wider community.
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8 **The present** 9

10 As austerity impacted on the police, the service as a whole across the 43
11 police forces in England and Wales, has questioned the opportunities for cost
12 savings by enabling elements of the complex policing curriculum to be taught
13 within the higher education, further education and training environments prior
14 to an application for employment as a police officer. Although estimations vary,
15 Nottinghamshire Police (2012) suggest that the average costs of recruiting
16 and training a new police officer is just under £13,000, with additional annual
17 all in salary costs of just over £30,000. Durham Constabulary (2015) propose
18 that a special constable costs slightly over £1357 to train based on specific
19 class sizes. Even with varying estimations, a reduction in the training time
20 required before a new police officer, or for that matter a special constable,
21 becomes a deployable resource, could result in significant cost savings.
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24 The College of Policing, reviewed the police services initial training
25 curriculum, identifying subject matter which could be taught prior to
26 employment. As a result of the review, in 2013 The College of Policing
27 introduced the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP). This qualification
28 was designed to provide students with both knowledge and understanding of
29 a number of core policing themes including public safety, protecting the
30 vulnerable and supporting victims, crime reduction, gathering information and
31 intelligence, ethics, evidence based policing etc., (College of Policing,
32 2017^(a)). The CKP was designed as a level 3 award on the Regulated
33 Qualifications Framework (RQF) requiring both taught and independent study
34 (ibid.). Both the delivery and assessments being regulated through the
35 College of Policing's approved provider scheme for educational
36 establishments. The College of Policing (2017^(b)) suggest that successful
37 completion of the CKP has a number of cost benefits to the police service as
38 whole including a reduction of up to 10 weeks on initial officer training for
39 those recruited, which as a result provides an operational policing resource for
40 the service much quicker. There is however no guarantee that those students
41 who successfully complete the award will gain employment within the police
42 service.
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46 The development of employability is becoming a central function of
47 universities driven by a number of external factors including those that are
48 both political and economic (McCowan, 2015). Pegg et al., (2012) emphasise
49 how important it is for higher education providers to develop the skills of
50 employability within their graduates. **In light of this it can be seen the inclusion
51 of the CKP was an appropriate way** to embed employability within an
52 academic curriculum focusing on policing.
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54 The CKP is currently being taught within a number of higher education
55 institutions utilising the FHEQ. The CKP qualification has been mapped at
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3 levels four or five of the FHEQ, so that students gain both the employability
4 focused CKP award and academic credits towards their degree level study.
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6 As the CKP was being introduced, Stevens (2013) Independent Police
7 Commission report endorsed the ideas of Winsor (2012) to establish the
8 police as a profession, whilst also recommending some quite controversial
9 changes such as the professional recognition of police officers who should
10 work, and be held accountable to, a set of recognised standards. Brown et al.,
11 (2018) rightly suggests that in order to support the notion of a profession,
12 modern officers not only require an understanding of academic underpinning
13 theories but also the context of practice, linked to expected standards of
14 policing and an ethical code. Although, Becher (1990) suggests that it is
15 always difficult to link both theory and practice together within programmes for
16 professionals in a way which complement each other. Stevens (2013) also
17 proposes the raising of the qualifications required to enter the policing
18 profession and requiring the College of Policing to both review and ensure the
19 enhancement of police training.
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22 With a focus on establishing the police service as a profession, during 2016
23 the College of Policing completed a wide consultation in relation to the
24 development of a qualifications framework for the police which would operate
25 in partnership with higher education. The consultation also included the
26 opportunities for the recognition of existing police staff expertise along with
27 the development of initial entry routes to the police service through student
28 funded undergraduate programmes, degree apprenticeships and graduate
29 conversion courses for existing graduates. Paterson (2011) identifies how
30 police professionalism and the associated organisational reform, can be
31 enhanced by establishing effective collaborations between the police service
32 and higher education. Christopher (2015) highlights how the police service
33 should have confidence that higher education can meet the needs of training
34 and educating future police officers.
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37 The National Police Chiefs Council (2018) recognises that the wide range of
38 approaches and inconsistency of practice relating to police education and
39 training across England and Wales is negatively affecting the professionalism
40 of the service as a whole. As a result, the PEQF, launched in late 2016,
41 directly links to the higher education sector aiming to further develop the ethos
42 of policing as a profession. The PEQF, although initially focused on police
43 officers as the largest number of the police workforce, will then be extended
44 to include police staff and other roles such as special constables. It is hoped
45 that those completing study linked to the PEQF will be equipped to think
46 differently by utilising an evidence based approach to policing practice. As
47 Sherman (2013) highlights, an evidence based approach enables police
48 officers to make decisions not based on theory but actually from good
49 research of what works in practice. Also graduates will possess the ability to
50 utilise some of the core academic skills such as research, critical thinking,
51 enquiry, innovation, communication, collaboration and decision making. This
52 in turn will link directly to the College of Policing (2017 (c)) core competencies
53 as required across the service. As Bittner (1980) suggested some time ago,
54 police officers who have studied within higher education will be better
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3 equipped to deal with the sometimes complex and sophisticated needs of
4 policing. This is supported by Christopher (2015) who argues that
5 contemporary policing continues to be both complex and demanding, with
6 partnerships between the police service and higher education enabling the
7 development of reflective policing professionals.
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10 Findings

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12 On commencing their studies, of the 28 participants (21 female, 7 male), just
13 over 40% (10 female, 2 male) aspired to be police officers, with a slightly
14 higher percentage (9 female, 5 male) unsure of their future career within
15 policing (Pepper and McGrath, 2015). After completing the CKP, 64% of those
16 studying the CKP (13 female, 5 male) returned the questionnaire, with just
17 over 44% of participants (6 female, 2 male) aspiring to be police officers, with
18 just over 38% (5 female, 2 male) still unsure of their future career within
19 policing (ibid.,). Nearly 90% of respondents participants (11 female, 5 male)
20 report an increase in confidence in applying for the police service, with slightly
21 over 10% (2 female) being unsure if completing the CKP increased their
22 confidence (Pepper and McGrath, 2015).
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26 One year later graduating following a three-year BSc (Hons) Crime and
27 Investigation degree (including the CKP in their second year), of the 28 initial
28 participants who studied the CKP, 25 participants (18 female, 7 male) once
29 again completed a questionnaire. At this time, just over 58% (8 female, 6
30 male) of participants aspired to be police officers, with slightly under 33% (8
31 female) still undecided and unsure of a future policing career. Interestingly, of
32 those responding slightly fewer than 50% (9 female, 3 male) reported applying
33 to join the police service at the time of the data collection. One question
34 specifically asked about alternate careers considered by participants at the
35 point of graduation. Participants reported the military police, crime scene
36 investigation, HM revenue and customs and the prison service. When asked
37 about outcomes of the CKP, 100% of participants (18 female, 7 male)
38 reported an increase in personal confidence in the event of applying to join
39 the police service. Interestingly, when asked the main benefit of completing
40 the CKP only 60% (5 male, 10 female) reported an increase in subject
41 knowledge.
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44 At this time all participants were asked to indicate their willingness to
45 participate in a further follow-up interview twelve months later.
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47 A year after graduating four of the original participants who consented to be
48 contacted were interviewed. Attempts had been made to follow up all those
49 who had earlier indicated willingness for further involvement, the sample size
50 being reduced by some participants withdrawing from further engagement,
51 others having changed contact details thus preventing further communication.
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54 Whilst acknowledging the somewhat reduced sample size, the interviews
55 revealed that one of the participants had applied and been accepted by the
56 police service with a start date in the near future, a second was in the initial
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3 stages of the recruitment process, a third had applied and been unsuccessful
4 and the fourth had decided on an alternate career away from policing. All four
5 interviewees found some aspects of the CKP useful in applying for either the
6 police service or an alternate job, with one commenting that it gave them a
7 good knowledge base for interview and a second recommending others
8 should definitely study the CKP. One respondent did comment how they didn't
9 enjoy studying the volume of course work taught within the CKP.
10

11 The three special constables questioned with regards to their thoughts on the
12 CKP **and its usefulness** to them as a volunteer, were also graduates.
13 Interviewee 1 (male) hadn't studied the CKP within their course, interviewee 2
14 (male) studied the CKP at university and interviewee 3 (female) studied the
15 CKP with **both a private provider as part of their initial specials training (not**
16 **accredited by higher education) and also within their university course.** The
17 interviewees commented:
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20 Interviewee 1

21 "If that [the CKP] was available when I was taking option modules, it would
22 definitely have been a choice that I would have looked into carefully, because
23 you can see its beneficial with the role you wanna go into".
24

25
26 Interviewee 2

27 "With things like the CKP, you tend to just spend, just one or two lectures on
28 it, obviously when you are with the police **[undergoing specials training]**
29 you do a whole weekend or two weekends covering a subject"
30 "It [the CKP] sort of makes you realise what you need to know, the important
31 parts you need to revise and which bits, that I am not going to say put by the
32 wayside, but you are going to use less commonly"
33

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35 Interviewee 3

36 "They **[the two versions of CKP course studied]** were totally different, it was a
37 totally different experience altogether"
38 "The initial one that I done with being a special was a four hour webinar once
39 a week"
40 "What we had at University was a taught session, but then a knowledge check
41 ... what they normally do in training"
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44 **Insert figure 1.**
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49 **Discussion and the future of police education**

50
51 The small scale longitudinal research project suggests that completion of the
52 CKP embedded within a higher education degree may have had influence on
53 learners by increasing their confidence to make applications to join the police
54 service at that moment in time. However, with the confidence of learners
55 continuing to increase as they completed their degrees, it becomes unclear if
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3 the increased confidence can be fully attributed to the CKP or other external
4 factors such as their continued **skills development as part of their career-**
5 **related** studies.

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7 The research also suggests that **studying** the CKP increases the number of
8 individuals aspiring to join the police service, **particularly during** the final year
9 of their studies, so again there may well be external factors affecting the
10 learner's responses. However, after graduating the small sample involved in
11 the research all felt the CKP had been useful to them when applying for jobs.
12 **The comment referring to the high quantity of work within the CKP was also**
13 **reflected upon by a special constable. Of the three special constables**
14 **questioned, one who had studied the CKP thought it was beneficial to them**
15 **and their volunteering whilst highlighting the differences in how a module is**
16 **taught within a university setting compared to police training, one special**
17 **constable, who had not studied the CKP, thought it would have been**
18 **beneficial to have had opportunity to study it as part of their course,** and the
19 third highlighted the great differences in delivery methods between two
20 different CKP providers.
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23 The research suggests that the CKP is useful as an introduction to policing, it
24 develops an interest in the police service and at least start to develop the
25 confidence of learners in their own ability to apply to join the service. There
26 may however be much wider influences which impact on a learner's interest,
27 confidence and employability. The volume of material taught during the CKP
28 and the lack of opportunities for work experience is a concern highlighted.
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31 By implication, a much longer and well-constructed higher educational
32 programme, which goes far beyond the CKP as an 'Introductory module',
33 could do much to develop a pool of future police officers to join the profession
34 of policing. Larson (1990) suggests a profession can be structurally defined as
35 a link between both knowledge and professional practice, set within a
36 hierarchical education and occupational system. Such a definition of a
37 profession would seem to fit this model of police higher education. The
38 research also goes some way to support the National Police Chiefs Council
39 (2018) who suggest that the introduction of the PEQF will provide a formal
40 standard of education, which will assist in building a profession and assurance
41 to the public and the other professionals with whom the police service works
42 on a multi-agency basis.
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45 **The College of Policing will phase out the CKP as a qualification by 2020, by**
46 **which time the PEQF will be established within the police service, offering a**
47 **portfolio of three entry routes for the police constable (College of Policing,**
48 **2018_(a)). None of the routes appear to incorporate opportunity for Recognition**
49 **of Prior Learning (RPL) for those who have studied the CKP, although there is**
50 **potential for recognition of practical skills development by those having also**
51 **undertaken the voluntary role of special constable.**
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54 The first route is a College of Policing approved and licensed, individual
55 student funded undergraduate pre-join knowledge-based programme **the Pre-**
56 **Join Degree in Professional Policing.** The licensed programme would take a
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3 learner three years' full-time study to complete a specifically named honours
4 degree. On completion of the degree, graduates need to apply to join the
5 police service.

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7 The second, a **degree apprenticeship** (called the Police Constable Degree
8 Apprenticeship) leads to a named honours degree. **Degree apprenticeships**
9 are funded by either single or collaborations of police forces who recruit new
10 officers who are then paid to work, complete training and study within higher
11 education over their three years' probation to be confirmed as a police officer.
12 Numbers for this route to employment and a degree are bound to be limited,
13 **but the opportunities and benefits to both the individual learner and the**
14 **partner organisations involved, in this largely workbased learning, are high.**
15 Both of these routes will lead to the learner graduating with a level six honours
16 degree in Professional Policing.
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19 Finally, there is a graduate conversion course, **the Degree Holder Entry**
20 **Programme**, for existing graduates of any academic discipline enabling them
21 to study a set curriculum mapped to the PEQF. **Once recruited to the police**
22 **service**, Graduates will study this curriculum over **a period of two years** to
23 equip them **for their role**.
24

25 **The curriculum for each route is similar in terms of the knowledge elements,**
26 **to ensure a common level of learning is achieved, including the topic of**
27 **Evidence-Based policing.**
28

29
30 The common theme throughout is that new 'qualified' police officers will be
31 graduates and they will have studied a standard curriculum through to level
32 six on the FHEQ. Brown et al (2018) discusses how the PEQF can only be
33 effective to continue to develop the profession of policing, if it can itself evolve
34 as required and be informed by a wide range of research methods
35 underpinned by academic theory.
36

37 It must however be acknowledged that it is very unlikely that all graduates
38 through these educational routes will be recruited, or retained, by the service
39 as new police officers. **Crawford et al (2016) identify that 11% of officers who**
40 **resigned from the police service had less than 2 year's experience, whilst also**
41 **noting that resignations generally were associated with stronger employment**
42 **markets and hence potentially better employment conditions.** As the research
43 into the CKP suggests, whilst studying there is an increased interest in joining
44 the police service as an officer. It is therefore imperative that those entering
45 the programmes of study understand the importance and transferability of
46 their graduate level skills to other non-police officer roles within the police
47 service and beyond.
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50 Although those teaching such higher educational programmes have a great
51 deal of professional knowledge, arguably such a knowledge base helps define
52 the profession, there are obviously differences in the focus of academics and
53 those teaching the practical elements (Becher, 1990). In order to embed the
54 importance of both education and training, Wood and Tong (2009) emphasise
55 the need for effective work-based support in order to maximise the learning
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opportunities. The best way to embed such studies being a merging of both academic and employability focused learning (McCowan, 2015). When researching students studying professionally accredited **Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors** (RICS) courses, Poon and Brownlow (2015) identify the importance of enabling learners to apply their new knowledge and skills in practical situations, these could be real or simulated, such practical applications of learning being particularly important where there is a defined career outcome for the study. Both students and employers also acknowledge the value of work-based experiences as a means of enhancing employability (Tibby, 2012). The College of Policing (2018^(b)) themselves acknowledge the value of learners gaining practical professional experience as special constables whilst studying the three year full-time licenced degree in Professional Policing.

Degree apprenticeships will, by their nature, facilitate such exposure to the workplace. However, this is far more challenging for those students who enroll on the three year full-time honours **pre-join** degree in professional policing. As forces will not be in a position, either in terms of resources or finances, to support large numbers of special constable recruitment. Tibby (2012) reports how in some sectors there are limited opportunities for work experience. As a result alternate options for volunteering within the wider criminal justice community should be explored and acknowledged as assisting in the development of employability appropriate for policing in a multi-agency context. Such work experiences will also assists in the embedding of the new knowledge and skills so many of those involved in the CKP research found of value in building their confidence.

Wood and Tong (2009) also suggest that one of the challenges to educating and training police officers within a university setting, is the ongoing need to abstract learners from the workplace, in the case of the higher degree apprenticeship, the suggestion is that this should be in the region of 20% of the time. However, recruiting new officers from a pool of individuals who have completed a self-funded, College of Policing approved honours degree, removes the need for officer abstraction and should mean that with additional workbased support the individuals should become operational resources much quicker and forces will save money on officer education. It is in this arena that future longitudinal research should be focused when measuring the impact of the PEQF on the police officer workforce.

Conclusion

It is suggested that, although beneficial to those aspiring to join the police service, the CKP was **only** an initial step evolved by the professional body for the police service, The College of Policing, as an educational programme to meet the needs of the service. This **concept** has now evolved much further to encompass a full honours degree in professional policing mapped to the PEQF, a positive step in the evolution of policing as a profession.

The small scale longitudinal research project suggests that employability focused modules, such as the CKP, assist not only in the development of interest in roles within policing but in the development of an individuals confidence in their ability to apply for such a role. The research, although limited, indicates that the knowledge acquired through their studies assists individuals in gaining their employment. Consideration should also be given to providing learners with some experience of the broader criminal justice workplace **in order to provide a context for the learning, and to enhance understanding of workplace opportunities available in this sector.**

There were concerns raised over the volume of work to be covered by learners completing the CKP, hopefully **the anticipated** three-year degree with opportunities for the development of knowledge, understanding and skills for policing will address this concern.

The Quality Assurance Agency (2014) suggest that a honours degree should equip graduates to enable them to complete appropriate professional training. Whilst acknowledging that there are different policing priorities and needs within police forces, it is imperative that the approach to police education and training is standardised across the whole service. Honours degrees mapped to the PEQF appear to be an appropriate way forward.

Poon and Brownlow (2015) identify the importance of the employer being involved in the design of the curriculum as well as their involvement in the whole teaching process including lectures, visits and work based experiences. Andrews and Russell (2012) identify that a recurring theme from their research into employability was the ability to predict the future needs of employers. As such it is imperative that the PEQF continues to be reviewed and updated in partnership between the police service and higher education in order to provide an evidence base ensuring the most appropriate professional education and training to meet the needs of a policing profession.

Recommendations:

Whichever route of higher educational study is chosen; it is imperative that opportunities for exposure to the workplace are embedded within the curriculum in order to provide a context for learning and prepare learners for a role in the police service.

The National Policing Curriculum has been developed by the College of Policing to ensure required knowledge is contained within the course of study (Pre-Join Degree in Professional Policing or Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship). Those involved in its delivery must design learning programmes which ensure a balanced content, avoiding an overload of information, whilst incorporating learning for the real world of policing.

Further research is crucial to the evolution of the PEQF to measure its impact on the development of the police as a profession and the employability of students.

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Embedding employability within Higher Education for the profession of policing

Abstract

Purpose: The longitudinal research evaluated impact of an employability module, the College of Policing Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP), on students' career aspirations, their confidence and wish to join the police along with the appropriateness of the module. This will inform the implementation of employability as part of the College of Policing managed Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF).

Design/methodology: A three-year longitudinal research study used mixed methods across four points in time to evaluate the impact on students studying the employability module.

Findings: The research suggests that the employability focused CKP was useful as an introduction to policing, it developed interest in the police and enhanced the confidence of learners applying to join. Lessons learnt from the CKP should be considered during the implementation of the PEQF.

Research limitations/implications: The ability to generalise findings across different groups is limited as other influences may impact on a learner's confidence and employability. However the implications for the PEQF curriculum are worthy of consideration.

Practical implications: As the police service moves towards standardised higher educational provision and evolution of policing as a profession, lessons can be learnt from the CKP with regards to the future employability of graduates.

Originality/value: Enhancing the employability evidence base, focusing on policing, the research identified aspects which may impact on graduates completing a degree mapped to the PEQF. The research is therefore of value to Higher Education and the Professional Body for Policing.

Paper type: Research paper

Keywords: Employability, Police Higher Education, PEQF, CKP

Introduction

The notion of embedding employability within a curriculum is primarily focused on the teaching, and the associated student learning, across a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to support both the graduate's initial employment and their future career development (Pegg et al., 2012). The skills required by a police officer are many and varied and include good communication, leadership, teamwork, the ability to make decisions, work using their own initiative etc. Many of these skills are embedded with a higher education degree, for example, the Quality Assurance Agency (2014) detail how a graduate with an honours degree should be able to evaluate evidence from a range of sources, make decisions in complex situations and communicate these effectively, whilst taking responsibility for their work. Christopher (2015) argues that higher education can play a vital role in educating new police officers to deal with such dynamic demands and complexities of modern policing. Although Tibby (2012) reports how research measuring the long-term impact of strategies addressing the support provided for student employability is limited.

Reflecting on the introduction of the pre-employment Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) launched in 2013, with its eventual withdrawal as a qualification at the end of 2019, the professionalisation of the police service has now been intrinsically mapped by the College of Policing to a framework embedded within higher education (Brown et al., 2018). The resulting Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) intends to steer the development of the knowledge and skills of employability required by new police officers across England and Wales.

Methodology

A three-year longitudinal mixed methods research study focused on 28 students at a University who elected to study the employability focused Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP) as an option module on a BSc (Hons) Crime and Investigation degree programme. The CKP curriculum content is prescribed by the National Professional Body for Policing, The College of Policing. The module is taught within the University over 26 weeks and consists of a minimum of 200 hours of student learning, which includes 78 hours of lecturing. The aim of the research was to evaluate the impact of this employability focused module on the students' career aspirations, particularly if it affected their confidence and desire to apply to join the police service as an officer along with the appropriateness of the higher educational module in terms of short and medium term benefits for the students as graduates. This in turn may impact upon the implementation of future employability focused modules designed as part of the Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF).

There were four stages to the research, all of which were optional to the participants. The first stage was the completion by all 28 participants of an

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3 initial questionnaire before they commenced studying the one-year module
4 embedded at level five on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
5 (FHEQ) which formed part of a three-year full-time honours degree. After
6 gaining informed consent, the self-administered questionnaire established
7 what learners expected from the module and their career aspirations.
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10 In the second stage, 26 weeks later on completion of the module, 28 learners
11 completed questionnaires, which included the opportunity to include written
12 responses. These questionnaires explored the student's career aspirations
13 and identified if they had gained knowledge and understanding to assist them
14 gaining their future employment.
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17 In stage three, one year later on their graduation, a short questionnaire was
18 completed by 25 participants, three weren't completed, identifying their career
19 aspirations at that moment and how what they had learnt might help them
20 achieve their ambitions.
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23 In stage four, a year after the students had graduated, telephone interviews
24 were conducted with four participants who had consented to be contacted 12
25 months after graduation in order to ascertain if they were employed by the
26 police service and if the CKP had assisted them in gaining their chosen
27 career. This was followed up by short semi-structured interviews with three
28 serving special constables from across North East Police Forces establishing
29 their perceived value of a taught, employability focused CKP to policing.
30

31
32 This three-year longitudinal research project collected data at set points in
33 time from a convenience sample of students, graduates and special
34 constables (university graduates from a separate cohort, who had different
35 experiences of the CKP, in addition to experience of the workplace as a
36 volunteer). The internal validity of the research is good. However, the external
37 validity enabling the findings to be reproduced and generalised more widely
38 across different sample groups is limited due to different educational
39 programmes taught at different levels across universities, colleges and private
40 providers.
41

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43 The researchers are very aware of bias, for example through the selection of
44 certain participants across a range of stages, design of the questionnaire and
45 leading questions during the interviews. The researchers have endeavoured
46 to minimise such effects by, for example, enabling all 28 students studying the
47 CKP at the university to self-select at each point whether or not to take part in
48 subsequent stages of the research, piloting the questionnaire, using
49 impartiality whilst following a script of questions when conducting the
50 interviews, in order to establish a professional distance and to restrict the
51 possibility of researcher bias (Blaikie, 2007).
52

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54 An issue with low response rates in terms of stage four, is that there is a
55 greater likelihood of non-response bias, in terms of estimates of outcomes, as
56 there is a lower representation of the original sample group. However, this
57 does not necessarily mean the sample itself would be biased (Gilbert and
58 Stoneman, 2016).
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5 The findings from the research are informative to the wider community.
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8 **The present** 9

10 As austerity impacted on the police, the service as a whole across the 43
11 police forces in England and Wales, has questioned the opportunities for cost
12 savings by enabling elements of the complex policing curriculum to be taught
13 within the higher education, further education and training environments prior
14 to an application for employment as a police officer. Although estimations vary,
15 Nottinghamshire Police (2012) suggest that the average costs of recruiting
16 and training a new police officer is just under £13,000, with additional annual
17 all in salary costs of just over £30,000. Durham Constabulary (2015) propose
18 that a special constable costs slightly over £1357 to train based on specific
19 class sizes. Even with varying estimations, a reduction in the training time
20 required before a new police officer, or for that matter a special constable,
21 becomes a deployable resource, could result in significant cost savings.
22
23

24 The College of Policing, reviewed the police services initial training
25 curriculum, identifying subject matter which could be taught prior to
26 employment. As a result of the review, in 2013 The College of Policing
27 introduced the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing (CKP). This qualification
28 was designed to provide students with both knowledge and understanding of
29 a number of core policing themes including public safety, protecting the
30 vulnerable and supporting victims, crime reduction, gathering information and
31 intelligence, ethics, evidence based policing etc., (College of Policing,
32 2017^(a)). The CKP was designed as a level 3 award on the Regulated
33 Qualifications Framework (RQF) requiring both taught and independent study
34 (ibid.). Both the delivery and assessments being regulated through the
35 College of Policing's approved provider scheme for educational
36 establishments. The College of Policing (2017^(b)) suggest that successful
37 completion of the CKP has a number of cost benefits to the police service as
38 whole including a reduction of up to 10 weeks on initial officer training for
39 those recruited, which as a result provides an operational policing resource for
40 the service much quicker. There is however no guarantee that those students
41 who successfully complete the award will gain employment within the police
42 service.
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46 The development of employability is becoming a central function of
47 universities driven by a number of external factors including those that are
48 both political and economic (McCowan, 2015). Pegg et al., (2012) emphasise
49 how important it is for higher education providers to develop the skills of
50 employability within their graduates. In light of this it can be seen the inclusion
51 of the CKP was an appropriate way to embed employability within an
52 academic curriculum focusing on policing.
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55 The CKP is currently being taught within a number of higher education
56 institutions utilising the FHEQ. The CKP qualification has been mapped at
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3 levels four or five of the FHEQ, so that students gain both the employability
4 focused CKP award and academic credits towards their degree level study.
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6 As the CKP was being introduced, Stevens (2013) Independent Police
7 Commission report endorsed the ideas of Winsor (2012) to establish the
8 police as a profession, whilst also recommending some quite controversial
9 changes such as the professional recognition of police officers who should
10 work, and be held accountable to, a set of recognised standards. Brown et al.,
11 (2018) rightly suggests that in order to support the notion of a profession,
12 modern officers not only require an understanding of academic underpinning
13 theories but also the context of practice, linked to expected standards of
14 policing and an ethical code. Although, Becher (1990) suggests that it is
15 always difficult to link both theory and practice together within programmes for
16 professionals in a way which complement each other. Stevens (2013) also
17 proposes the raising of the qualifications required to enter the policing
18 profession and requiring the College of Policing to both review and ensure the
19 enhancement of police training.
20
21

22 With a focus on establishing the police service as a profession, during 2016
23 the College of Policing completed a wide consultation in relation to the
24 development of a qualifications framework for the police which would operate
25 in partnership with higher education. The consultation also included the
26 opportunities for the recognition of existing police staff expertise along with
27 the development of initial entry routes to the police service through student
28 funded undergraduate programmes, degree apprenticeships and graduate
29 conversion courses for existing graduates. Paterson (2011) identifies how
30 police professionalism and the associated organisational reform, can be
31 enhanced by establishing effective collaborations between the police service
32 and higher education. Christopher (2015) highlights how the police service
33 should have confidence that higher education can meet the needs of training
34 and educating future police officers.
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37 The National Police Chiefs Council (2018) recognises that the wide range of
38 approaches and inconsistency of practice relating to police education and
39 training across England and Wales is negatively affecting the professionalism
40 of the service as a whole. As a result, the PEQF, launched in late 2016,
41 directly links to the higher education sector aiming to further develop the ethos
42 of policing as a profession. The PEQF, although initially focused on police
43 officers as the largest number of the police workforce, will then be extended
44 to include police staff and other roles such as special constables. It is hoped
45 that those completing study linked to the PEQF will be equipped to think
46 differently by utilising an evidence based approach to policing practice. As
47 Sherman (2013) highlights, an evidence based approach enables police
48 officers to make decisions not based on theory but actually from good
49 research of what works in practice. Also graduates will possess the ability to
50 utilise some of the core academic skills such as research, critical thinking,
51 enquiry, innovation, communication, collaboration and decision making. This
52 in turn will link directly to the College of Policing (2017 (c)) core competencies
53 as required across the service. As Bittner (1980) suggested some time ago,
54 police officers who have studied within higher education will be better
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3 equipped to deal with the sometimes complex and sophisticated needs of
4 policing. This is supported by Christopher (2015) who argues that
5 contemporary policing continues to be both complex and demanding, with
6 partnerships between the police service and higher education enabling the
7 development of reflective policing professionals.
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10 Findings

11
12 On commencing their studies, of the 28 participants (21 female, 7 male), just
13 over 40% (10 female, 2 male) aspired to be police officers, with a slightly
14 higher percentage (9 female, 5 male) unsure of their future career within
15 policing (Pepper and McGrath, 2015). After completing the CKP, 64% of those
16 studying the CKP (13 female, 5 male) returned the questionnaire, with just
17 over 44% of participants (6 female, 2 male) aspiring to be police officers, with
18 just over 38% (5 female, 2 male) still unsure of their future career within
19 policing (ibid.,). Nearly 90% of respondents participants (11 female, 5 male)
20 report an increase in confidence in applying for the police service, with slightly
21 over 10% (2 female) being unsure if completing the CKP increased their
22 confidence (Pepper and McGrath, 2015).
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26 One year later graduating following a three-year BSc (Hons) Crime and
27 Investigation degree (including the CKP in their second year), of the 28 initial
28 participants who studied the CKP, 25 participants (18 female, 7 male) once
29 again completed a questionnaire. At this time, just over 58% (8 female, 6
30 male) of participants aspired to be police officers, with slightly under 33% (8
31 female) still undecided and unsure of a future policing career. Interestingly, of
32 those responding slightly fewer than 50% (9 female, 3 male) reported applying
33 to join the police service at the time of the data collection. One question
34 specifically asked about alternate careers considered by participants at the
35 point of graduation. Participants reported the military police, crime scene
36 investigation, HM revenue and customs and the prison service. When asked
37 about outcomes of the CKP, 100% of participants (18 female, 7 male)
38 reported an increase in personal confidence in the event of applying to join
39 the police service. Interestingly, when asked the main benefit of completing
40 the CKP only 60% (5 male, 10 female) reported an increase in subject
41 knowledge.
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44 At this time all participants were asked to indicate their willingness to
45 participate in a further follow-up interview twelve months later.
46

47 A year after graduating four of the original participants who consented to be
48 contacted were interviewed. Attempts had been made to follow up all those
49 who had earlier indicated willingness for further involvement, the sample size
50 being reduced by some participants withdrawing from further engagement,
51 others having changed contact details thus preventing further communication.
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54 Whilst acknowledging the somewhat reduced sample size, the interviews
55 revealed that one of the participants had applied and been accepted by the
56 police service with a start date in the near future, a second was in the initial
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3 stages of the recruitment process, a third had applied and been unsuccessful
4 and the fourth had decided on an alternate career away from policing. All four
5 interviewees found some aspects of the CKP useful in applying for either the
6 police service or an alternate job, with one commenting that it gave them a
7 good knowledge base for interview and a second recommending others
8 should definitely study the CKP. One respondent did comment how they didn't
9 enjoy studying the volume of course work taught within the CKP.
10

11 The three special constables questioned with regards to their thoughts on the
12 CKP and its usefulness to them as a volunteer, were also graduates.
13 Interviewee 1 (male) hadn't studied the CKP within their course, interviewee 2
14 (male) studied the CKP at university and interviewee 3 (female) studied the
15 CKP with both a private provider as part of their initial specials training (not
16 accredited by higher education) and also within their university course. The
17 interviewees commented:
18

19
20 Interviewee 1

21 "If that [the CKP] was available when I was taking option modules, it would
22 definitely have been a choice that I would have looked into carefully, because
23 you can see its beneficial with the role you wanna go into".
24

25
26 Interviewee 2

27 "With things like the CKP, you tend to just spend, just one or two lectures on
28 it, obviously when you are with the police [undergoing specials training]
29 you do a whole weekend or two weekends covering a subject"
30 "It [the CKP] sort of makes you realise what you need to know, the important
31 parts you need to revise and which bits, that I am not going to say put by the
32 wayside, but you are going to use less commonly"
33

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35 Interviewee 3

36 "They [the two versions of CKP course studied] were totally different, it was a
37 totally different experience altogether"
38 "The initial one that I done with being a special was a four hour webinar once
39 a week"
40 "What we had at University was a taught session, but then a knowledge check
41 ... what they normally do in training"
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44 **Insert figure 1.**
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49 **Discussion and the future of police education**

50
51 The small scale longitudinal research project suggests that completion of the
52 CKP embedded within a higher education degree may have had influence on
53 learners by increasing their confidence to make applications to join the police
54 service at that moment in time. However, with the confidence of learners
55 continuing to increase as they completed their degrees, it becomes unclear if
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3 the increased confidence can be fully attributed to the CKP or other external
4 factors such as their continued skills development as part of their career-
5 related studies.
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7 The research also suggests that studying the CKP increases the number of
8 individuals aspiring to join the police service, particularly during the final year
9 of their studies, so again there may well be external factors affecting the
10 learner's responses. However, after graduating the small sample involved in
11 the research all felt the CKP had been useful to them when applying for jobs.
12 The comment referring to the high quantity of work within the CKP was also
13 reflected upon by a special constable. Of the three special constables
14 questioned, one who had studied the CKP thought it was beneficial to them
15 and their volunteering whilst highlighting the differences in how a module is
16 taught within a university setting compared to police training, one special
17 constable, who had not studied the CKP, thought it would have been
18 beneficial to have had opportunity to study it as part of their course, and the
19 third highlighted the great differences in delivery methods between two
20 different CKP providers.
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23 The research suggests that the CKP is useful as an introduction to policing, it
24 develops an interest in the police service and at least start to develop the
25 confidence of learners in their own ability to apply to join the service. There
26 may however be much wider influences which impact on a learner's interest,
27 confidence and employability. The volume of material taught during the CKP
28 and the lack of opportunities for work experience is a concern highlighted.
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31 By implication, a much longer and well-constructed higher educational
32 programme, which goes far beyond the CKP as an 'Introductory module',
33 could do much to develop a pool of future police officers to join the profession
34 of policing. Larson (1990) suggests a profession can be structurally defined as
35 a link between both knowledge and professional practice, set within a
36 hierarchical education and occupational system. Such a definition of a
37 profession would seem to fit this model of police higher education. The
38 research also goes some way to support the National Police Chiefs Council
39 (2018) who suggest that the introduction of the PEQF will provide a formal
40 standard of education, which will assist in building a profession and assurance
41 to the public and the other professionals with whom the police service works
42 on a multi-agency basis.
43
44

45 The College of Policing will phase out the CKP as a qualification by 2020, by
46 which time the PEQF will be established within the police service, offering a
47 portfolio of three entry routes for the police constable (College of Policing,
48 2018^(a)). None of the routes appear to incorporate opportunity for Recognition
49 of Prior Learning (RPL) for those who have studied the CKP, although there is
50 potential for recognition of practical skills development by those having also
51 undertaken the voluntary role of special constable.
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54 The first route is a College of Policing approved and licensed, individual
55 student funded undergraduate pre-join knowledge-based programme the Pre-
56 Join Degree in Professional Policing. The licensed programme would take a
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3 learner three years' full-time study to complete a specifically named honours
4 degree. On completion of the degree, graduates need to apply to join the
5 police service.
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7 The second, a degree apprenticeship (called the Police Constable Degree
8 Apprenticeship) leads to a named honours degree. Degree apprenticeships
9 are funded by either single or collaborations of police forces who recruit new
10 officers who are then paid to work, complete training and study within higher
11 education over their three years' probation to be confirmed as a police officer.
12 Numbers for this route to employment and a degree are bound to be limited,
13 but the opportunities and benefits to both the individual learner and the
14 partner organisations involved, in this largely workbased learning, are high.
15 Both of these routes will lead to the learner graduating with a level six honours
16 degree in Professional Policing.
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19 Finally, there is a graduate conversion course, the Degree Holder Entry
20 Programme, for existing graduates of any academic discipline enabling them
21 to study a set curriculum mapped to the PEQF. Once recruited to the police
22 service, Graduates will study this curriculum over a period of two years to
23 equip them for their role.
24

25 The curriculum for each route is similar in terms of the knowledge elements,
26 to ensure a common level of learning is achieved, including the topic of
27 Evidence-Based policing.
28

29 The common theme throughout is that new 'qualified' police officers will be
30 graduates and they will have studied a standard curriculum through to level
31 six on the FHEQ. Brown et al (2018) discusses how the PEQF can only be
32 effective to continue to develop the profession of policing, if it can itself evolve
33 as required and be informed by a wide range of research methods
34 underpinned by academic theory.
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37 It must however be acknowledged that it is very unlikely that all graduates
38 through these educational routes will be recruited, or retained, by the service
39 as new police officers. Crawford et al (2016) identify that 11% of officers who
40 resigned from the police service had less than 2 year's experience, whilst also
41 noting that resignations generally were associated with stronger employment
42 markets and hence potentially better employment conditions. As the research
43 into the CKP suggests, whilst studying there is an increased interest in joining
44 the police service as an officer. It is therefore imperative that those entering
45 the programmes of study understand the importance and transferability of
46 their graduate level skills to other non-police officer roles within the police
47 service and beyond.
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49

50 Although those teaching such higher educational programmes have a great
51 deal of professional knowledge, arguably such a knowledge base helps define
52 the profession, there are obviously differences in the focus of academics and
53 those teaching the practical elements (Becher, 1990). In order to embed the
54 importance of both education and training, Wood and Tong (2009) emphasise
55 the need for effective work-based support in order to maximise the learning
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3 opportunities. The best way to embed such studies being a merging of both
4 academic and employability focused learning (McCowan, 2015). When
5 researching students studying professionally accredited Royal Institute of
6 Chartered Surveyors (RICS) courses, Poon and Brownlow (2015) identify
7 the importance of enabling learners to apply their new knowledge and
8 skills in practical situations, these could be real or simulated, such
9 practical applications of learning being particularly important where there
10 is a defined career outcome for the study. Both students and employers
11 also acknowledge the value of work-based experiences as a means of
12 enhancing employability (Tibby, 2012). The College of Policing (2018^(b))
13 themselves acknowledge the value of learners gaining practical
14 professional experience as special constables whilst studying the three
15 year full-time licenced degree in Professional Policing.
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17
18 Degree apprenticeships will, by their nature, facilitate such exposure to the
19 workplace. However, this is far more challenging for those students who enroll
20 on the three year full-time honours pre-join degree in professional policing. As
21 forces will not be in a position, either in terms of resources or finances, to
22 support large numbers of special constable recruitment. Tibby (2012) reports
23 how in some sectors there are limited opportunities for work experience. As a
24 result alternate options for volunteering within the wider criminal justice
25 community should be explored and acknowledged as assisting in the
26 development of employability appropriate for policing in a multi-agency
27 context. Such work experiences will also assists in the embedding of the new
28 knowledge and skills so many of those involved in the CKP research found of
29 value in building their confidence.
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32 Wood and Tong (2009) also suggest that one of the challenges to educating
33 and training police officers within a university setting, is the ongoing need to
34 abstract learners from the workplace, in the case of the higher degree
35 apprenticeship, the suggestion is that this should be in the region of 20% of
36 the time. However, recruiting new officers from a pool of individuals who have
37 completed a self-funded, College of Policing approved honours degree,
38 removes the need for officer abstraction and should mean that with additional
39 workbased support the individuals should become operational resources
40 much quicker and forces will save money on officer education. It is in this
41 arena that future longitudinal research should be focused when measuring the
42 impact of the PEQF on the police officer workforce.
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47 **Conclusion**

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49 It is suggested that, although beneficial to those aspiring to join the police
50 service, the CKP was only an initial step evolved by the professional body for
51 the police service, The College of Policing, as an educational programme to
52 meet the needs of the service. This concept has now evolved much further to
53 encompass a full honours degree in professional policing mapped to the
54 PEQF, a positive step in the evolution of policing as a profession.
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3 The small scale longitudinal research project suggests that employability
4 focused modules, such as the CKP, assist not only in the development of
5 interest in roles within policing but in the development of an individuals
6 confidence in their ability to apply for such a role. The research, although
7 limited, indicates that the knowledge acquired through their studies assists
8 individuals in gaining their employment. Consideration should also be given to
9 providing learners with some experience of the broader criminal justice
10 workplace in order to provide a context for the learning, and to enhance
11 understanding of workplace opportunities available in this sector.
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14 There were concerns raised over the volume of work to be covered by
15 learners completing the CKP, hopefully the anticipated three-year degree with
16 opportunities for the development of knowledge, understanding and skills for
17 policing will address this concern.
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19 The Quality Assurance Agency (2014) suggest that a honours degree should
20 equip graduates to enable them to complete appropriate professional training.
21 Whilst acknowledging that there are different policing priorities and needs
22 within police forces, it is imperative that the approach to police education and
23 training is standardised across the whole service. Honours degrees mapped
24 to the PEQF appear to be an appropriate way forward.
25

26 Poon and Brownlow (2015) identify the importance of the employer being
27 involved in the design of the curriculum as well as their involvement in the
28 whole teaching process including lectures, visits and work based
29 experiences. Andrews and Russell (2012) identify that a recurring theme from
30 their research into employability was the ability to predict the future needs of
31 employers. As such it is imperative that the PEQF continues to be reviewed
32 and updated in partnership between the police service and higher education
33 in order to provide an evidence base ensuring the most appropriate
34 professional education and training to meet the needs of a policing profession.
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38 Recommendations:

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41 Whichever route of higher educational study is chosen; it is imperative that
42 opportunities for exposure to the workplace are embedded within the
43 curriculum in order to provide a context for learning and prepare learners for a
44 role in the police service.
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46 The National Policing Curriculum has been developed by the College of
47 Policing to ensure required knowledge is contained within the course of study
48 (Pre-Join Degree in Professional Policing or Police Constable Degree
49 Apprenticeship). Those involved in its delivery must design learning
50 programmes which ensure a balanced content, avoiding an overload of
51 information, whilst incorporating learning for the real world of policing.
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54 Further research is crucial to the evolution of the PEQF to measure its impact
55 on the development of the police as a profession and the employability of
56 students.
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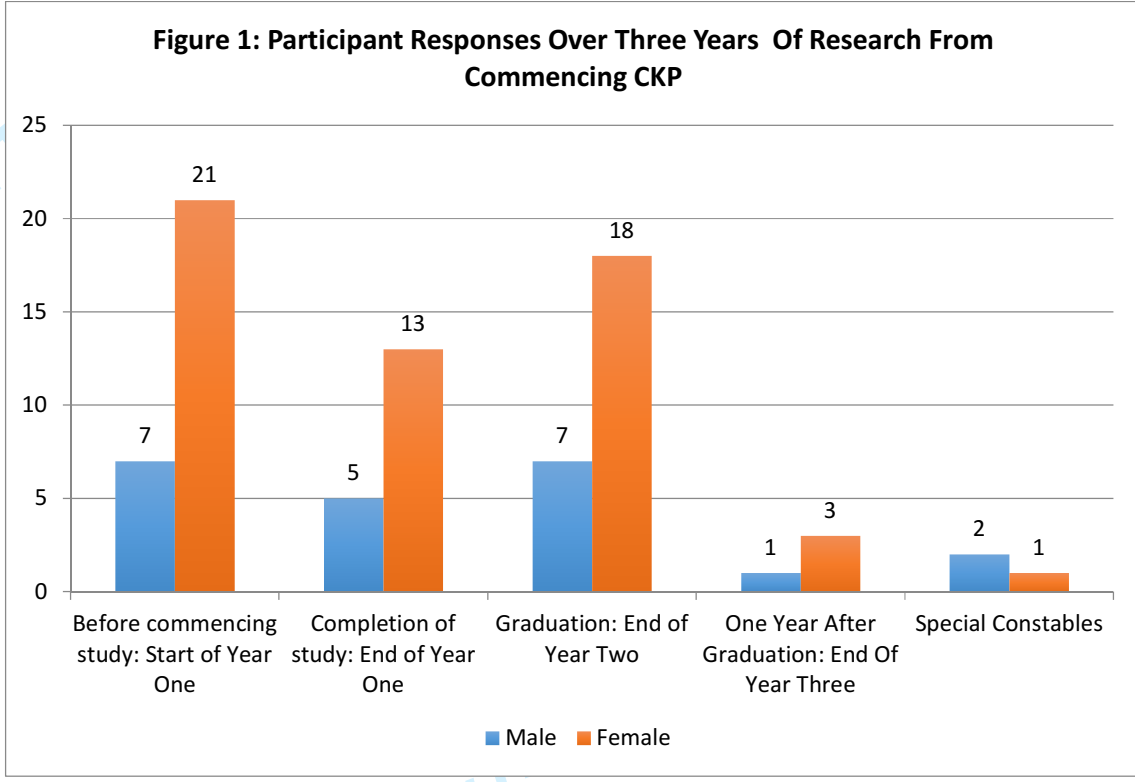
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