

## Scientific tools for forming professional competence of patrol police officers

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper, the scientific sources analysis was presented. The peculiarities of the professional competence formation of the future patrol officers were determined. Moreover, the specifics of the service activity of patrol officers were considered. The original method for the formation of professional competence of modern police officers was substantiated and tested its effectiveness. The essence of this methodology was to introduce simulated situational tasks, aimed at forming the professional skills and abilities of future police officers. The pedagogical experiment involved students of the primary vocational training course applied in 2018 (n=183) who were studying at the center of primary vocational training “Police Academy” of the National Academy of Internal Affairs (Kyiv, Ukraine). An experimental (EG, n=93) and control (CG, n=90) group were formed. Cognitive and operational criteria evaluated the efficiency of the original methodology. The results of the pedagogical experiment indicated the greater efficiency of the original methods compared to the traditional one. A significant ( $p < 0.05 - 0.001$ ) improvement of the indicators “Knowledge of professional and practical course”, “Professional and practical skills formation” and “The effectiveness of solving scenarios” was designated.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The reformation of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine (MIAU) and the introduction of a new concept of training for the National Police of Ukraine (NPU) requires improvement of the professional training system of modern police officers [1]–[4]. The key task of police education is to ensure a sufficient level of professional competence of police officers, which contributes to the proper performance of official duties (Law of Ukraine on NPU, 2015; Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MESU) “Standard of professional (professional and technical) education (profession: police officer)” [5]–[8].

The study of the patrol police’s service activities peculiarities in the countries of Europe, America, Africa, and Asia gives grounds to state the implementation of several standards. They are including round-the-clock patrolling of the service area, road traffic regulations control, the detention of offenders and getting them to police departments [9]–[15]. Peculiar features of this service are: i) Significant physical, intellectual,

and emotional tension; ii) Performing duties under different weather conditions and time intervals; iii) Vertical and horizontal relations arrangement; iv) Frequent change of one type of action to another due to constantly changing operational environment [16]–[20].

Concerning the patrol police officers' specifics of the service activities, scientists [21]–[24] define their activities as purposeful work, designed to prevent crime by the open and covert presence in a mobile form, taking into account areas and periods of crime intensity, preventing crimes and law and order violations. Carminatti *et al.* [25] noted that the patrol service is at the center of police activities. The scientist notes that the functions of patrol officers in the countries of the European Union are generally not limited to law enforcement activities only on the streets and in other public places but also apply to the housing sector. Schaible [26] shared the opinion of European researchers about the role of the patrol officer, which is determined primarily by one's responsibility for maintaining public order, and only then the law enforcement. Patrol officers are the first line of society defense in the face of illegal phenomena; they are at the epicenter of social conflicts and should be focused on their constructive solution [27]–[30]. Police officers of this unit are the first to appear at the crime scene, and therefore must ensure the implementation of at least initial measures at the scene, protecting the traces of crimes before the arrival of specialists (detectives, investigators, experts) [31]–[33].

Patrol police officers always have to confront the most socially tricky contingent of the population and “problematic” people. These persons are characterized by antisocial attitudes, uncontrollability, aggression, covert nature of the criminal activity, confrontation, and hostility towards government officials. Establishing communication during contact with such a contingent of citizens requires the formation of relevant skills that are part of the professional competence formation of police officers [34]–[37].

Thus, the development of the original methodology that will contribute to forming a sufficient level of professional competence of modern patrol police officers is of great significance. Hence, the aim of the study is to substantiate the methodology for professional competence formation of future police officers in the training process and check its efficiency. In order to achieve this aim, a pedagogical experiment was conducted to substantiate the original methodology of professional competence formation of future patrol police officers and also to investigate the influence of this methodology on the formation level of the professional competence indicators of students. The results and findings of the study are clearly presented in the following sections.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The analysis of the patrol police officers' practical activity gives grounds to state that the low level of professional competence reduces the efficiency of their official activity. This indicates the need to substantiate and introduce modern practical tools for the professional competence formation of future patrol police officers into the educational process. The analysis of modern scientific works indicated a significant number of works devoted to the study of the professional competence of police officers and the search for ways to improve it. Many scientists see the possibility of increasing the professional competence level of patrol police officers by improving the communicative component [24], [31], [32], the formation of professional skills and abilities [7], [19], [21], the introduction of the situational tasks of practical orientation into the educational process [25], [28].

Processing the scientific literature gives grounds to state a significant number of definitions of the concept of professional competence. Let us consider the approaches of some scholars in detail to outline the essence of the concept of competence. The special literature actively uses the terms “competence” and “competency”. These systemic and multicomponent concepts are used to describe the level of training and activities of a specialist. Despite the significant amount of research on the competence approach in education, scholars have no consensus on the interpretation of the concept [38], [39]. According to Terpstra and Schaap [40], competence is a characteristic that lets one make decisions and form judgments in a particular field. The basis of this quality is knowledge, awareness, experience of socio-professional human activity.

Kubaienko *et al.* [5] stated that professional competence is a qualitative characteristic of the degree of the professional activities mastering by police officers, which involves the awareness of their aspirations, ideas about their social role, the assessment of personality traits, and qualities as a future specialist, the correlation of the results of such assessment with the requirements for the selected activity, regulation of their professional development, growth, self-improvement. Blumberg, Papazoglou and Schlosser [41] interpreted the professional competence of a specialist as a complex integrated phenomenon of education, which is identified, developed and improved in professional activities. The effectiveness of its implementation depends on the level of theoretical, practical, and psychological preparedness, personal, professional, individual, and mental qualities, perception of goals, values, content, and features of this activity.

According to Fuchs [30], professional competence is a system of professional knowledge, skills, abilities, individually formed during professional training and retraining and practical service, which are introverted mechanisms for performing official tasks. The scientist believes that the professional competence of a patrol officer includes personal traits, knowledge, experience, skills and motivation. In reference sources, the concept of competency (Latin for appropriate, skillful) is defined as the range of powers of any official or body; knowledge mastery, experience in a particular field [40], [41]. Competency refers to the sphere of knowledge, skills, and abilities application, and competence is a system of a person's knowledge.

According to Griban *et al.* [42], competence as a complex personal category means a person's practical readiness and ability to act in a particular field; it covers theoretical knowledge, ideas, skills, motives, values and requires experience. The scientist is convinced that future police officers' training effectiveness directly depends on the chosen approach to training. The formation of professionally competent police officers is possible only if we move away from informative, descriptive, and reproductive approaches to training. The scientist sees various active forms and methods among the ways to intensify the educational activities of future police officers, including the analysis of service situations, simulation-game approach (role-playing, didactic, and business games) and group learning activities. The competence approach is focused on intensifying the activities of future police officers as subjects of educational activity. As well as the activity approach, it is based on the idea of the activity nature of the education content. However, according to the competence approach, the educational activity is aimed at another result (forming a competencies system of the subjects of learning). The competencies content presupposes individuals' personal attitudes to objects and processes that are necessary for productive activity. In this regard, scientists focus on the professional orientation of the educational process [20], [34]. Thus, the practical orientation should be provided primarily by introducing scenarios that provide for the implementation of situational tasks into the educational process. The purpose of situational tasks is to form the students' skills in resolving official situations related to public order violations and crimes.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

#### **3.1. Participants**

Experimental studies were conducted based on the National Academy of Internal Affairs (NAIA), Kyiv, Ukraine. The pedagogical experiment involved students of primary vocational training applied in 2018 (n=183) who were studying at the center of primary vocational training "Police Academy" of the NAIF. An experimental (EG, n=93) and control (CG, n=90) group were formed. The experimental group included the students who were studying according to the original methodology while the control group was the students who were studying according to the traditional teaching method. The main pedagogical experiment was conducted in 2018 (March 2018 – August 2018).

#### **3.2. Design**

The students of the experimental group studied according to the original method. The essence of the methodology is to adjust the content of training in terms of advanced professional orientation, which consists of applying specially developed situational tasks while mastering the subjects of professional and practical training and introducing advanced variable situational tasks into the educational process. The practical orientation of the educational process contributes to the consolidation of acquired theoretical knowledge, the formation of professional skills and abilities, which in general contributes to the professional competence formation of police officers.

Concerning the maximum practical orientation of the scenarios, the involvement of a listener in the activity is accompanied by the correlation of individual capabilities with the requirements of the content and conditions of the patrol police activity. While performing scenarios, future police officers have to solve new tasks, probable professional situations, sometimes non-standard ones. In such cases, there are constant contradictions between the requirements of the activity and the development level of both individual entities and professionally oriented structures of the psychics, which is the driving force behind the personality of a future patrol police inspector. Situational tasks are developed based on the questionnaire results of the works of practical divisions, taking into account the problematic service situations which arose while performing professional functions. Scenarios are worked out after mastering tactical and fire training.

#### **3.3. Procedure**

The pedagogical experiment involved conducting a control test after the training period, i.e., the course of initial professional training of police officers. It is conditioned by the fact that the students did not have special knowledge and skills but acquired them during training. To identify the impact of this method on the effectiveness of the professional competence formation of patrol police officers and, accordingly, the quality of service, several indicators were analyzed after one year of service. It is including: i) The efficiency

of tasks; ii) The number of conflict situations with citizens and complaints on patrol police inspectors; iii) The results of the final inspection of the service readiness.

To achieve the goal of the research, a set of modern general scientific methods was used. It is including theoretical, empirical, and mathematical statistics methods. The survey was conducted to identify situations in which patrol police officers faced difficulties in solving and factors influencing the professional competence formation of police officers. The patrol police units' workers of the Patrol Police Department in Kyiv (n=127) were involved in the survey.

Cognitive and operational criteria evaluated the efficiency of the original method. The cognitive standard of professional competence of a patrol police officer reflects the level of knowledge acquisition in specific subjects of practical areas; the capability for cognitive activity. In general, the cognitive criterion presupposes that a worker masters the legislative block, including knowledge of the legal basis and procedure for applying coercive police measures. Based on this knowledge, special motor skills and abilities to apply coercive police measures are formed. An important factor is knowledge of the specifics of the patrol police activities (the features of the patrol officer's activity, ensuring road safety, registration of accidents, materials on administrative offenses, the use of technical means and first aid). To ensure high-quality performance of official duties (come upon call on time, predict possible offenses), patrol police inspectors must know the features of the patrol area (an operational situation, route features, special peculiarities of persons, vehicles, and property wanted, the places of gathering and the most probable offenses).

The operational criterion establishes the students' ability to apply the acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities (to apply coercive police measures, safe handling of firearms and tactics of action from personal security). It is important to perform the standard and non-standard official tasks effectively. Therefore, several indicators that characterize the level of professional competence of patrol police officers were identified. The cognitive criterion was determined by the following indicators: "Knowledge of the legislative unit" and "Knowledge of professional and practical course". The operational criteria development of future patrol police officers was determined following departmental documents on the following procedural indicators: "Professional and practical skills formation" and "The effectiveness of solving scenarios".

The development of the indicator "Knowledge of the legislative block" was determined by analyzing the results of a comprehensive exam. Students had completed test tasks on specialization (three blocks of 20 questions each). The tests were confidential and contained a list of questions on common law subjects (official documentation; the procedure for compiling administrative materials, registration of road accidents; legal grounds for detention). Each test task was evaluated by one point. The minimum passing result was 12 points for each block of questions. To pass the comprehensive exam, a student must have received at least 36 points. The maximum number of points was 60. On this basis, the levels of professional competence were distinguished according to the cognitive criterion "Knowledge of the legislative unit": the low level (36–41 points), satisfactory (42-47 points), sufficient (48-53 points), high (54-60 points).

The indicator "Knowledge of professional and practical direction" was determined by testing. The tasks were developed according to the subjects of "Tactical training" and "Fire training", which mastered during the courses of primary professional training of police officers. The total number of questions accounted for 60. Each correct answer was evaluated by one point, incorrect by zero points. According to this indicator, the levels of professional competence were determined: people who gained up to 35 points (low level), 36 to 42 points (satisfactory), 43 to 51 points (sufficient), 52 to 60 points (a high level).

The indicator "Professional and practical skills formation" was determined by assessing the level of readiness in terms of self-defense tactics and fire training. The development level of the indicator "Professional and practical skills formation" was evaluated on a 20-point scale. The distribution of points was carried out according to points for situational tasks and fire training exercises. Normative documents provided evaluation criteria, according to which people who gained 12 or fewer points had a low level of professional competence in terms of this indicator; 13-14 (satisfactory); 15-18 (sufficient); 19-20 (high).

The indicator "The effectiveness of solving scenarios" was determined by performing the situational tasks provided by the scenario. The performance of the situational task was assessed by three professionals: a professional in tactical training, pre-medical training, and the legislative block. The maximum number of points that a student could get in each area during the situational task accounted for 60. The minimum passing grade was 32 points. The total grade was the arithmetic mean of the three grades. The professional competence levels of students in terms of the indicator "The effectiveness of solving scenarios" were determined: a low level (from 32 to 38 points), satisfactory (from 39 to 45 points), sufficient (from 46 to 52 points); high (from 53 to 60 points).

During the research, the authenticity of the difference between the indicators of the experimental group (EG) and control group (CG) employing Student's t-test was determined. The significance for all statistical tests was set at  $p < 0.05$ . All statistical analyses were performed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 21. The procedure for organizing the study was previously agreed

with the committee on compliance with Academic Integrity and Ethics of the NAIA. Prior consent to participate in the experiment was obtained from all the participants. The procedure for organizing the study was previously agreed with the committee on compliance with Academic Integrity and Ethics of the NAIA. The activity of the committee was approved by the Academic Council of the NAIA (Protocol No. 2 of 14.01.2016). In accordance with the provisions of the committee on compliance with Academic Integrity and Ethics of the NAIA the members of the scientific community are guided by the rules of ethical conduct and professional communication. The topic and content of the study corresponded to the provisions of the priority areas of research of the NAIA within the research work for 2018-2024 under “Psychological, pedagogical and sociological support of law enforcement” (state registration number 0113U008196). The topic of the study was approved by the Academic Council of the NAIA (Protocol No. 5 of 27.02.2018). Prior consent to participate in the experiment was obtained from all the participants.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1. The cognitive and operational criterion indicators of the EG and CG students' professional competence

Determining the professional competence of students of the EG and CG at the final stage of the pedagogical experiment gave grounds to state an insignificant difference in the students' training concerning the cognitive criterion “Knowledge of the legislative unit” as shown in Table 1. The average grade of the EG students was  $48.5 \pm 0.90$ , while the CG was  $47.1 \pm 0.93$ . The amount of knowledge of the legislative unit did not differ significantly, but the studied indicator was higher in the EG ( $p > 0.05$ ). This result was conditioned primarily by the fact that the proposed training method provides for the acquisition of practical knowledge necessary for active making decisions on the application of coercive measures in specific conditions and the formation of appropriate motor skills.

The mathematical processing of the cognitive criterion indicator “Knowledge of professional and practical direction” at the end of the experiment showed a significant difference in the readiness of the EG and CG students ( $p < 0.05$ ). The average grade of the studied index in the EG was higher by 5.5 points than the index of the CG representatives. It accounted for  $49.8 \pm 1.06$  in the EG and  $44.3 \pm 0.92$  in the CG.

The analysis of the operational criterion “Professional and practical skills formation” at the end of the pedagogical experiment showed a significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) difference in the EG and CG students' readiness as shown in Table 1. On a 20-point scale, the average value of the studied indicator in the EG accounted for  $16.26 \pm 0.33$  points while in the CG was  $15.00 \pm 0.36$  points. Mistakes mostly accompanied the performance of situational tasks by the CG students. The most common were violations of personal safety measures, slow performance, loss of balance, not always a high-quality and skillful use of special tools. There are many situations in which the CG listeners showed insecurity in their actions, did not have time to respond with adequate defensive measures to the enemy's offensive actions by punching, kicking, hitting with improvised means and cold arms. The procession of the indicator “Effectiveness of solving scenarios” showed a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ) in the readiness of the EG and CG students at the end of the pedagogical experiment. This indicator was higher by 5.2 points in the EG and accounted for  $44.1 \pm 0.96$  and in the CG was  $38.9 \pm 0.94$  respectively.

Table 1. The professional competence of the EG and CG students at the final stage of the experiment (Mean  $\pm$  standard deviation)

	Indicators	EG (n=93)	CG (n=90)	Significance value	
				t	p
The cognitive criterion	“Knowledge of the legislative unit”	$48.5 \pm 0.90$	$47.1 \pm 0.93$	1.082	$> 0.05$
	“Knowledge of professional and practical direction”	$49.8 \pm 1.06$	$44.3 \pm 0.92$	3.919	$< 0.05$
The operational criterion	“Professional and practical skills formation”	$16.26 \pm 0.33$	$15.00 \pm 0.36$	2.580	$< 0.05$
	“The effectiveness of solving scenarios”	$44.1 \pm 0.96$	$38.9 \pm 0.94$	3.870	$< 0.001$

Mean: arithmetical average; SD: standard deviation; p: significance of difference between the indicators of EG and CG; t: the meaning of the Student's t-criterion

##### 4.2. The professional competence formation levels of the EG and CG students

The analysis of the answers provided an opportunity to distribute the EG and CG students according to the levels of professional competence in terms of the cognitive criterion “Knowledge of the legislative unit” as shown in Table 2. Thus, 6.5% of people with a low level belonged to the EG, while 13.3% to the CG. A satisfactory level was 32.3% to the EG, and 30.0% to the CG. The number of students with a sufficient level of professional competence differed slightly: 45.2% in the EG and 40.0% in the CG. A high level was 16.0% in the EG, and 16.7% in the CG.

Table 2. The professional competence formation levels of the EG and CG students at the final stage of the experiment

	Group	Levels			
		Low	Satisfactory	Sufficient	High
“Knowledge of the legislative unit”	EG (n=93)	6.5	32.3	45.2	16.0
	CG (n=90)	13.3	30.0	40.0	16.7
“Knowledge of professional and practical direction”	EG (n=93)	3.2	9.7	45.2	41.9
	CG (n=90)	6.7	33.3	46.7	13.3
“Professional and practical skills formation”	EG (n=93)	0	12.9	67.7	19.4
	CG (n=90)	6.7	40.0	50.0	3.3
“The effectiveness of solving scenarios”	EG (n=93)	22.6	32.2	35.5	9.7
	CG (n=90)	56.7	23.3	16.7	3.3

The responses analysis made it possible to distribute individuals by the levels of professional competence according to the indicator “Knowledge of professional and practical direction”. According to the obtained data, 3.2% of listeners with a low level of professional competence belonged to the EG, while 6.7% was the CG. Besides, 9.7% of listeners with a satisfactory level were found in the EG and 33.3% in the CG. At the final stage of the experiment, 45.2% of listeners with a sufficient level were detected in the EG and 46.7% in the CG. The number of students with a high level of professional competence was distributed: in the EG was 41.9% while in the CG was 13.3%.

Based on the effectiveness of the situational tasks, the EG and CG students were divided into groups with different levels of professional competence following the operational criterion “Professional and practical skills formation”. At the end of the experiment, no people with a low level of professional competence were identified in the EG, and 6.7% of people with a low level were found in the CG. The listeners with a satisfactory level accounted for 12.9% in the EG and 40.0% in the CG. The largest number of students with a sufficient level of professional competence as defined in the EG was 67.7% while in the CG was 50.0% respectively. The number of students with a high level of professional competence differed significantly: in the EG was 19.4% while in the CG was 3.3%.

Table 2 shows the largest number of the EG students had a sufficient level of professional competence was 35.5% and 16.7% of such learners were found in the CG. The students with a low level of professional competence accounted for 22.6% in the EG and 56.7% in the CG. A satisfactory level was 32.2% in the EG, while 23.3% was in the CG, and 9.7% of students with a high level were found in the EG. Lastly, there was 3.3% in the CG.

### 4.3. Discussion

A thorough analysis of the situations of official activity of patrol police officers gives grounds to state a low and, in some cases, the insufficient level of professional competence. The low level of the police officers’ readiness is a consequence of applying illegal actions against citizens and deliberately exceeding the limits of necessary defense during coercive measures. Such actions of police officers provoke mass riots, which may spread to other countries. This leads to a violation of the usual way of life and significant economic losses [11], [16].

The low level of professional competence formation of police officers is evidenced by statistics on the deaths and injuries of personnel while performing duties. It is stated that the United Kingdom is the country in Western Europe where the largest number of police officers who die performing duties is recorded. Every year more than 14,000 police officers are attacked in this country, and more than 3,000 are seriously injured due to the use of improvised means, cold arms, and firearms by offenders. The analysis of the clashes between United States (US) Police Officers and offender’s states that most of them happen in medium and large cities, the smallest rural areas. The insufficient level of professional competence led to injuries and deaths of police officers. The cases of abusing power by police officers to abuse are quite common that cause injuries and deaths of detained people [21], [27], [33].

In Ukraine, a low level of professional competence of police officers does not ensure the proper performance of official duties. It increases the number of complaints from citizens about illegal and unprofessional actions of police officers. An insufficient level of readiness and non-compliance with security measures result in injuries and deaths while performing duties [32], [35]. The level of professional competence of police officers is also evidenced by the degree of public confidence in the police and the number of citizens’ complaints on law enforcement officials’ illegal actions to the movements for internet active users (MIAU) [8], [19], [36].

Based on literature sources and considering the experience of the modern practice of patrol police in leading countries, we substantiated and developed the original method for the professional competence formation of future patrol police officers and introduced it to the educational process of primary training at

NAIA. The study of the professional competence formation of students of the EG and CG students at the end of the experiment showed the effectiveness of the proposed method (significantly better indicators were found in the EG in terms of both cognitive and operational criteria).

The analysis of indicators that characterize the quality of the professional activity of patrol police officers after one year of service gives grounds to state the effectiveness of the original method. It was found that the efficiency of solving official tasks by police officers who had been studying according to the original method was higher than those who had finished the course of initial professional training according to the current professional program. Accordingly, there were fewer complaints from citizens against patrol police inspectors, by 16.3%. Besides, the higher levels of police readiness in tactical training, self-defense, and personal safety tactics were defined. The results of the study confirm the conclusions of the works of many scholars [9], [14], [19], [26], [28], [37], [43]–[46] and expand them.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The original method of forming the professional competence of future patrol police officers was substantiated. The essence of the original method is to deepen the professional orientation of learning, particularly in the application of specially designed situational tasks during the mastering of the block of professional and practical training and variable situational tasks during the scenarios. The pedagogical experiment results proved the effectiveness of the original method. A larger number of police officers with high and sufficient levels of professional competence formation was identified in the EG in terms of these indicators compared to the CG. The efficiency of the presented method was also confirmed by the indicators of the professional success of police officers after one year of police service. Prospects for further research are to determine the interrelation between the professional competence formation levels of experimental group students and indicators of their professional activity in the later stages of service activities.

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