



## **We have something to tell**

This is the vision of the Police Academy of the Republic of Macedonia, member of the St.Kliment Ohridski University, Bitola. For us, teachers, scientists, teaching staff, support staff and management this vision is an image of our future. We aim to realize this vision in the years to come.

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director

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2003 the Law on the Police Academy came into effect. This law provides the Police Academy with a leading role concerning research and education in the field of policing and other areas of security. We want to enhance our educational role by delivering basic and further education of national and international acknowledged quality and by the evaluation, dissemination, production and application of scientific knowledge in the field of policing and other areas of security.

We want to become a centre of excellence in our part of the world as well as belonging to the top five Police Academies in Europe. We consider ourselves responsible for remaining up-to-date in the field of research and education. Our police education will be recognized on national and international level. This means that we will meet national and international quality standards. Our diplomas will be recognized all over Europe and they will facilitate participation in studies abroad. Being a centre of excellence will provide the Macedonian police and the other agencies in the field of security with state-of-the-art expertise. In this way we can serve the police and the other agencies in our field of security of our country in the best way.

Police education will serve operational police, which is responsible for the quality of policing in our country. We will focus on facilitating the acquisition of competencies to do the core activities of jobs and functions properly. A competency is the ability to deal with the core activities of jobs and functions properly. Competencies are based upon knowledge, skills, experience, attitudes and personality traits. A core activity is a coherent set of main tasks and problems a professional practitioner is faced with on a regular basis and characteristic for the profession on that particular level. Job profiles consist of a limited number of core activities. Police officers who do not master the core activities of their job cannot be classified as competent. Our orientation on competencies



and on core activities implies that we focus on abilities of people, now and in the future. Police officers must be competent today, tomorrow, next month and for the rest of their professional career. Therefore remaining competent implies lifelong learning. We will design and support proper learning environments for police officers, so they can learn continuously.

Competency development implies learning. Learning consists of acquiring new knowledge, skills, experiences or attitudes. From an organizational point of view effective learning results in behavioral changes that can be observed and measured. Most people hold the opinion that learning takes place exclusively in school. It is true that school is a good place to learn. However, if we look carefully we can observe that good police officers become more and more competent during their whole professional career. They learn from their work at the workplace. More and more the workplace turns out to be an excellent learning environment. Learning at the workplace takes place when police officers reflect both individually and together with significant others, on their personal theories, expectations and actions. Learning also takes place when police officers create or discover existing knowledge suitable for solving their professional problems. Together with operational police, the workplace will be used intensively as learning environment.

Police officers have a societal significant function for which they are expected to remain competent throughout their whole professional career. Taking responsibility is one of the distinguishing features of the police profession. This implies essential responsibilities in relation to their work and learning too. Therefore, police officers must be given responsibility for their own learning. This process starts the moment they enter the Academy for the first time and it will continue whenever they visit the Academy after graduation. Teachers in school and coaches in practice will facilitate and enhance the learning of their students. Both are highly qualified experts and important role models.

Police officers have to keep up with a rapidly changing society. Their education is aimed at adapting to those changes with principles and features of lifelong learning. The focus on lifelong learning will enable students to become contemporary professionals. The Police Academy prepares students to work in a society that is ever changing in different areas and in each area the penetration is deeper and deeper. To keep up with these changes, a need for acquisition of new and broader competencies becomes a prerequisite. Hence, the capability and willingness to learn is more important for modern day police officers where a wide range of learning contexts is recognized: home, workplaces, communities, and schools. In other words, learning occurs throughout the life span and lifelong learners are essentially those who consciously engage in both formal and informal learning. Education at the Police Academy will have embedded elements that enhance students to become lifelong learners. Students will explicitly be focussed on learning in their curriculum where the responsibility for learning is gradually shifted to the individual student. For the Police Academy, incorporating lifelong learning means



that it needs to work together with the police force if it is to provide learning experiences that truly reflect the needs of policing in the Republic of Macedonia. The Police Academy and the police force need to work in collaboration to design, provide and maintain learning experiences for students that combine academic and applied learning within the context of a learning pathway that is relevant to, and valued by, the students and their professional communities.

In every-day police practice one of the key competencies of police officers is working together with various colleagues on their tasks. There is an increased emphasis on teamwork within the workforce where workers need to be able to think creatively, solve problems, and make decisions as a team. By explicitly incorporating collaboration competencies into the curricula of the Police Academy, students will be better prepared for their tasks in the future workplace. Also, active exchange of ideas, concepts and principles within small groups of students increases interest among them. Cooperative teams achieve higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work as individuals.

The shared learning gives students an opportunity to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning, thus becoming critical thinkers. Teachers need to monitor the proceedings in all the teams and control the process more closely when mastery of foundational knowledge is concerned. Once students become reasonably familiar with the material, teachers can take some steps back.

Our students are responsible for their own learning. As learning in the Police Academy was traditionally dominated and controlled by teachers, students seldom make decisions about their own learning. Even though our current philosophy of police education is aimed at graduating students who are responsible police officers capable of participating thoughtfully in a democracy, the educational practices at the police academy have a tendency to foster dependence, learner's passivity and a "tell me what to do and what to think" attitude.

Giving to students the responsibility for their own learning allows them to become more engaged learners and creates more dynamic and richer learning settings. Such students take charge and are self-regulated. They define learning goals and problems that are meaningful to them and have a global picture how specific activities relate to those goals. Students evaluate their learning process and adjust it when necessary. They know their own strengths and weaknesses and know how to deal with them productively and constructively. Engaged learners are also able to shape and manage change, thus being able to solve new problems. In engaged learning environments teachers need to facilitate and activate students with contexts in which students are able to take responsibility. Besides learning how to become a competent police officer, students need to learn how to learn. It is in this learning-to-learn process that the students will gradually be given more



responsibility for their own learning.

Students learn in active learning environments in which they solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, and brainstorm during class, as opposed to the more conventional teacher-centered methods.

Teachers are often tempted to tell students the answers to questions. While this seems an appropriate strategy in some circumstances, it can also undermine the development of students' own understanding. To foster learning settings in which students develop deeper understanding, first, their activities need to be focussed on reasoning and evaluation of evidence. This allows our students to develop abilities to formulate and solve problems. Second, when confronted with a difficulty, students need to be encouraged to make assumptions about the problem and how it is best approached. Students are required to work together, among themselves and with teachers. In this collaboration there is explicit emphasis on students' own thinking, reflecting, questioning, negotiation and problem-solving strategies. In order to design pedagogy for active engagement in learning, teachers must pose challenging problems, encourage significant discussions between students, allow sufficient time for students to wrestle with the problem and work through its multiple facets.

Our teachers are challenged to pose problems that highlight the essence of the subject matter. In order to teach for active engagement in learning they must not only be competent police officers but also possess pedagogical content knowledge.

Teachers at the Police Academy and coaches on the workplace are facilitators of the students' learning process. They allow students to acquire the necessary competencies in such ways that the students are responsible for their own learning both individually and collaboratively. Learning takes place not only at the Police Academy but is also substantially integrated on the job – the future workplace. The Police Academy provides students with a safe learning environment where teachers offer possibilities to acquire initial competencies by learning on the job. Our students will acquire more in-depth competencies and gain first experiences to prepare them as competent professionals. Teachers at the Police Academy and coaches on the workplace each fulfil their own role according to the goals needs of the learning context described above.

The teacher supports the students' learning process by explaining, demonstrating and providing training in skills used in predefined procedures. With respect to the execution of this task, the teacher provides specific information and poses direct questions. He helps the students to acquire and keep their learning process going and guide it in the right direction when intervention is needed by assessment and providing feedback. In other words, the teacher creates facilities and preconditions for learning. Finally, the teacher may also design learning environments, learning activities, teaching



tools, pedagogical context and materials that both invite and facilitate student learning.

For coaches at the workplace, it is important that they are competent professionals in the core activity in which the student is acquiring the competencies. Next, in order to allow students to learn from him effectively, the coach needs to master appropriate pedagogical competencies.

Our Academy is engaged in a process of development. Like many other institutions in our country we receive substantial support from the international community and we cooperate with more and more partners. Against the backdrop of this vision, the support of the international community will be coordinated. Coordination will assure that the support offered will match the organizational and educational model adopted by the Academy.