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Why policing should be a professional service



Police Commissioner Mathew Iteere. File

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Posted Sunday, November 14 2010 at 17:09

When it comes to the future of policing in Kenya, it can no longer be business as usual. We are adopting a 'back-to-basics' policy towards policing as a professional service.

At independence in 1965, the quality of skilled manpower in the police compared very favourably with the

other government departments. I hope nobody will be surprised to hear that the quotients of the then “well-educated” at the police headquarters was very way ahead of several government ministries and departments. As a matter of fact, in the person of Bernard Hinga, Ochieng’ Ochola and others, Kenya Police had its own share of Alliance High School alumni.

Like other professionals who became our post-independence pioneers the late, Mr. James Kanyotu graduated with honours from Makerere University in 1959.

Similarly, the oldest training college in this country was Machakos Police Training Depot established in 1911 by the then Inspector General of British East Africa Protectorate and Uganda, W. F. Edwards. It might also be of interest to note that as early as 1967, the police service in this country was sending its officers to study law at Dar es Salaam University. The above trend might explain why in the 1970s, Kenya Police could rightly pride itself as the best police service in Africa. However, for some curious reason, this emphasis on investment in skilled manpower was not sustained.

Today, our infrastructural landscape has an abundance of teachers, agricultural, medical and other research and training institutions and universities. We are also quite familiar with national polytechnics and institutes of technology. However, when you look around, not one university boasts of a school of criminology or a college of crime management, policing sciences or internal security studies. It, therefore, comes as a most confusing contradiction that without the benefit of such institutions, Kenyans never lose an opportunity, to express their expectations of a very modern and professional police service.

Not very surprising for the society we have evolved, we have been rather quiet on the fact that over the years, policing has evolved into a science and almost every policing agency you can think about from South Korea through Europe to Canada and the USA have colleges and academies affiliated to their universities. There has never been a period when this country has had greater necessity for police officers who are experts in their respective duties and discerningly conversant with the social, economic and political dynamics of an emerging democracy.

Mr Iteere is the commissioner of police.