

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**The Effects of In-House Training on Law Enforcement**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
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**By  
David Hale**

**Farmers Branch Police Department  
Farmers Branch, Texas  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The continuous training of law enforcement officers is paramount to the continued success of both individual officers and the organizations in which they serve. Law enforcement is a dynamic and ever evolving profession that oftentimes changes as society itself changes. However, on many occasions, police executives fall prey to a dwindling budget and are forced to cut training funds during the first signs of any economic downturn or shortfall in governmental revenue. Relevant books, journals, and professional articles that already exist in this area were reviewed to gain insight into the effects of in-house training on an organization. Additionally, a survey made up of 14 questions was distributed to 38 law enforcement managers that posed questions regarding their organizations' level of in-service training.

This research endeavor analyzed the impact that in-service training has on increasing the number of training hours required of professional police officers and the effect that in-house training has on reducing the overall cost of the training provided. The research concluded that in-service training does, in fact, reduce training cost within an organization. However, the research did not conclude that the number of training hours increased as a result of an agency participating in an in-house training program. Overall, research overwhelmingly supported the importance of continued education for law enforcements' continued success in an ever-changing world.

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## INTRODUCTION

Continued police training beyond the basic police academy is critical to the growth and well being of any police agency. The demands placed upon law enforcement officers are ever changing and require law enforcement agencies to seriously consider how they will design a training strategy that will provide the constant flow of information needed to maintain the professional standards administrators demand and citizens deserve.

Most law enforcement organizations find it difficult to send officers away to traditional training venues and provide the funding to pay for these services. For most law enforcement agencies, training funds are limited and manpower is scarce. There tends to be a direct correlation between how much money is available for training and the actual number of hours of training that each officer receives. This leaves law enforcement agencies in a precarious situation regarding how they will provide the training that is needed to accomplish the goals of the agency and maintain the standards that are required to reduce liability and enhance the performance of the officers it employees.

Texas law enforcement agencies have a governing organization that regulates the licensing and training of peace officers. The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education requires that all Texas Peace Officers receive a minimum of 80 hours of training per four-year cycle. They are also responsible for the licensing of educational facilities approved to provide the mandated in-service training. Additionally, they monitor the in-service training that is provided by individual agencies to make sure it is up to date and relevant with current law and trends. To this end, some police agencies can, and do, provide their own in-service

training to varying degrees. The purpose of this research is to determine whether or not law enforcement agencies that have developed and utilize in-service training programs within their agency experience reduced cost and increased training hours.

The research to be conducted will question law enforcement professionals by utilizing a written survey instrument. The questions on the survey will probe law enforcement professionals as to how their agencies provide training to its officers. Additionally, a review of relevant literature, books, and journals will be undertaken to provide additional information that will examine the correlation, if any, between in-house training programs and the effects they may have on training budgets and the number of training hours officers receive. It is anticipated that this research will show that law enforcement agencies that institute in-service training programs experience an increase in the number of training hours for their officers and a reduction in the training cost.

Training is the key to the success of any law enforcement organization. With the appropriate information, any law enforcement agency could implement an in-house training program at their agency and experience a reduction in cost and an increase in the average number of training hours its officers receive. The end result can be a more professional law enforcement organization that is capable of overcoming the difficult and ever changing challenges that law enforcement faces every day.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

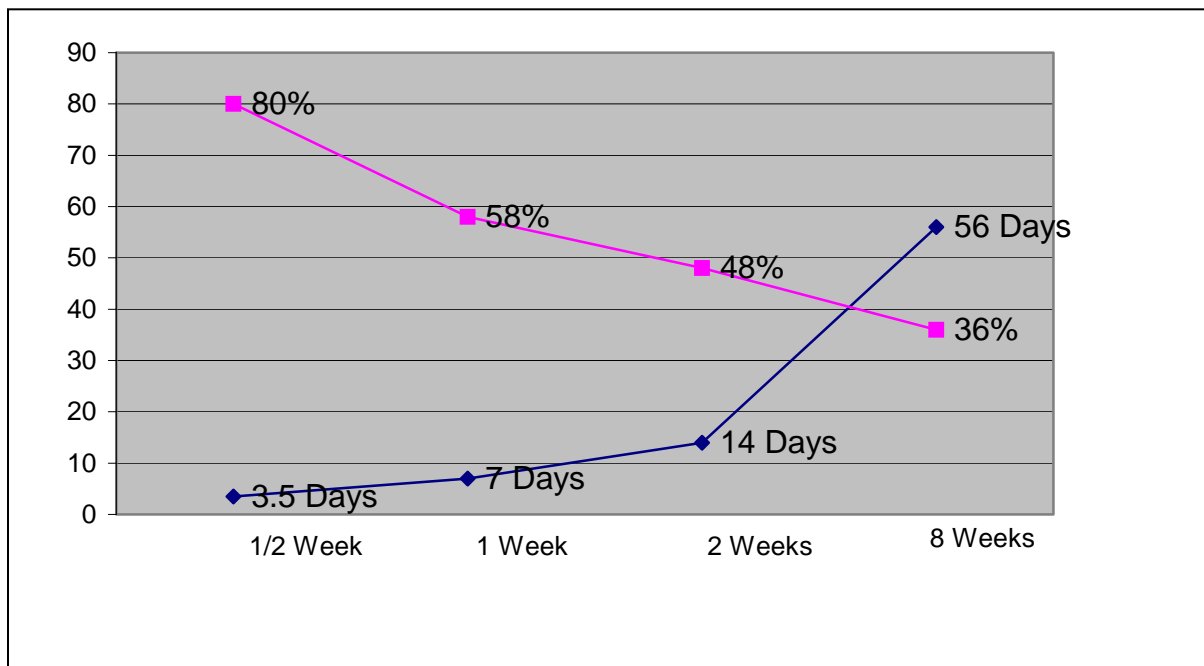
The art and science of adult learning is called andragogy and was introduced by Malcolm S. Knowles in the early 1960s. Adults are more inclined to accept learning that is life-centered, task-centered, and problem-centered (Vertin, 2002). Most would agree that being a police officer is not just an occupation; it is a way of life that deals with the

task of keeping society reasonably free of crime by dealing with problems that manifest themselves in everyday life. If one were inclined to agree with the aforementioned statement, the finding of Knowles in the early 1960s would speak directly to the profession of policing. In the case of police officers, learning can mean the difference between life and death or the amount of stress for appearing in a courtroom defending the decisions and actions that occurred as result of their duties as a peace officer. Additionally, and arguably as important, poor training can lead to decisions that erode the trust of a community for the public safety officers that have sworn to protect and defend the community from others that would violate their constitutional freedoms and erode their everyday quality of life. It is for these reasons, and many more, that police training must gain a significant foothold within every police organization (Seitzinger, 1980).

Police officers are creatures of habit, not unlike the rest of the human workforce that is present throughout the United States and the world. They have a limited memory and suffer from perishable skills that, if not reinforced, will culminate into mistakes and errors in judgment that have devastating effects for the individual officer, the organization, and society as a whole. Law enforcement professionals must realize that the skills learned during basic recruit officer training cannot carry an officer through a successful career (Higginbotham, 1980). Police officers must receive continual training throughout their tenure as a police officer in order to be successful. This includes a leader's responsibility to engage in succession planning that will prepare younger officers to assume the leadership roles that will inevitably need to be filled as leaders leave or retire from the organization. In most fields, continuing education courses are an accepted and expected part of the profession. Continuing education programs help

professionals stay up to date with new information related to changes, methods, breakthroughs, and research in their field of expertise (Morris, 2007). Studies have shown that the relation between the retention of facts and the time interval in which the information was learned diminishes in a relatively very short amount of time. The graph below reflects this erosion of knowledge that occurs over an eight week period.

According to Higginbotham (1980), the adult learner will retain only 36% of the information that they learned eight weeks prior to being tested, with 20% being lost after only a few days from being taught the information. More simply stated, this means that adult learners lose as much as 64% of the information they were presented in as little as 56 days. This data shows the importance of implementing some sort of in-service training program that can help to diminish these staggering figures.



**Figure 1.** The Relation Between Learning and Retention of Facts (Higginbotham, 1980).

Most managers would agree that training or practicing skills that are performed daily is imperative to delivering a reasonably error-free good or service. Concurrently,

one would also agree that training or practicing skills that are seldom utilized, but sometimes required, are also important. This is especially true if the skills involved require the protection of human life in a highly stressful situation.

The continued education of police officers can be a major force in human capital development (Fretwell, 2007). Police and political leaders alike must make a real commitment to provide funding and other avenues of support that are necessary to establish and maintain effective in-service training programs (Martin, 1987). In 21<sup>st</sup> century law enforcement, it is important that those in leadership positions be good stewards of human capital and understand that the services police departments render are ever-changing in their scope. Regardless of the structure of the police organization, be it local, state or federal, most would argue that the single most important and expensive resource in a law enforcement setting are the human beings required to deliver law enforcement services to their community. It is not uncommon for over 70% of a police organizations budget to be allocated to the salaries of its officers. This is a fiscal investment worth nurturing and protecting on many different levels.

Meaningful in-service training leads to the likelihood of increased officer professionalism and a decrease in the potential for complaints and the eventuality of litigation that may surround the skills possessed by a poorly trained police officer (Higginbotham, 1980). The role of the law enforcement officer requires highly trained personnel who are prepared to upgrade their knowledge and skill levels continually in order to adapt to the increasing demands that they face (Brand, 1977). This is especially true since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Law enforcement officers in the new millennium have been challenged with learning skills that have never been required of peace officers in the United States prior to the terrorist attacks of 2001.



New topics have been added and/or the coverage of topics has changed. This speaks again to the importance of in-service training beyond the police academy. Tenured officers that served for years prior to the terrorist attacks continue to serve their communities today. They were never taught any of the skills necessary to protect and defend themselves and their communities against a chemical, biological, or nuclear attack, unless they were taught in post-academy in-service training.

The importance of developing and maintaining an in-service training program is well documented by the contents of the literature presented. Review of the relevant literature on training in both police and unrelated fields did not reveal any negative points associated with providing continuing education to existing and new employees. All of the resources found for this research agreed that the education process and the act of training employees is beneficial to both the employee and the organization. However, several obstacles did appear in the area of making the actual training a reality within the organization. Political and administrative systems that are present in most organizations, including law enforcement, tend to provide several obstacles in implementing an in-service training program.

Law enforcement agencies, not unlike the private sector, have budgets they must adhere to. As publicly funded organizations, they are charged with being good stewards of the tax dollars that fund every aspect of their operations. As with any budget, they are susceptible to fluctuations in funding and even reductions during the budget cycle, depending on the economy and other circumstances that may influence funding within their particular political system. Budget considerations are a crucial factor in the development and maintenance of any police training program (Higginbotham, 1980).

Unfortunately, resources are not growing as fast as the demand for more complex police services. Many agencies actually have seen a drop in funding. In such cases, training often represents one of the first budget items cut because many administrators see education as addressing the future and not dealing with the circumstances that are immediately pressing within the organization (Nelson, 2003).

The literature review regarding training in police organizations almost exclusively agreed that continued in-service training for law enforcement officers is paramount to the success of the individual officers and their organizations. The literature pointed out that continued professional development did appear to have an effect on the amount of litigation an agency may be exposed to.

Also apparent from the literature is the direct correlation between the funding provided an organization and the amount of training that they may or may not receive. Throughout the subject material, multiple references were made to the importance of the budgeting process for police organizations as it relates to training. Many of the references pointed out that training budgets seem to be the first line item cut when systems of government experience a shortfall in revenue or some overt form of economic set back.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of conducting the research contained in this paper is to determine whether or not law enforcement agencies that have developed and utilize in-service training programs within their agency experience reduced cost and increased training hours. The question posed is regarding whether or not law enforcement agencies that institute in-service training programs experience an increase in the number of training hours for their officers and a reduction in the training cost.

Many law enforcement organizations across Texas and the United States struggle with the ability to provide continuing education for the police officers that serve within their communities. Many encounter budgetary constraints that will not allow administrators to provide the many types of new or refresher training that officers need to keep their skills polished in 21<sup>st</sup> century law enforcement. Many training budgets are the first category on the chopping block as governmental systems place pressure upon organizations to operate with less, yet they are asked to provide the same or superior services. Historically, law enforcement organizations have utilized external training sources that are fee-based to provide in-service training for their officers. In today's market, these venues offer a wide variety of topics that are usually taught by well respected and reputable law enforcement professionals. Though reputable, these classes often take officers away from their assignments for several days at a time, often creating a manpower shortage that can equate to overtime for other officers.

With the challenges presented above, it is acknowledged that law enforcement agencies that create and maintain some form of an in-house training program will experience increased training hours for their officers and a reduction in the cost of training that is provided. A written survey instrument pertaining to how agencies provide training to their officers will be distributed to 38 law enforcement managers representative of Texas law enforcement. All agencies that surveyed will be requested to provide a written response. The written survey will be analyzed using simple frequency statistics as a basis of analysis.

## **FINDINGS**

A 14 item questionnaire was distributed to 38 law enforcement officials from different size organizations from the State of Texas. All 38 officials responded to the

survey. However, several of the surveys did not provide complete information. The two questions most frequently unanswered were regarding how many training hours each officer received in a given training cycle within their agency, as well as how much money was budgeted for training for their entire police organization. These two incomplete factors did not allow adequate comparison of training hours received as compared to the amount of funds budgeted.

However, most questions in the survey gained measureable responses from which inferences can be made. Respondents were first asked if they utilized traditional fee based off-site training as a means to provide training to their officers. Ninety-five percent responded that they did. Additionally, 95% of those surveyed also reported that they paid for their officers' training. Interestingly, when asked if their agencies also provided in-house training, 92% responded that they utilized this resource as well, with 61% reporting that they conducted in-house training frequently. The next several survey questions posed were designed to determine if agencies that provided in-house training to their staff also reported that training to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in order to gain credit toward their state mandated in-service training as well as what venue they utilized to report that training. Eighty-four percent of agencies responded that they did, in fact, submit their in-house training to the state for credit with 74% also answering that they utilized their in-house training programs to provide for the state mandated courses required by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). Only 39% of agencies polled responded that they had an agreement training contract with TCLEOSE which allows for direct reporting of training hours to TCLEOSE. This infers that some other avenue of authorized reporting is being utilized by the majority of those polled. When agencies

were asked what percentage of their officers' training was provided through in-house training, the majority, 58% responded they utilized internal training resources, and 42% responded that they utilized an outside training venue to fulfill their training needs. Of those agencies reporting that they conducted in-house training courses, 68% reported that their agency allowed outside agencies access to their training courses. Ninety-five percent of departments polled reported that in-house training in any amount provided for a cost savings to their agency, and 97% of respondents reported that training of any kind, regardless of the venue, reduced personal and departmental liability for officers and the organization.

## **DISCUSSIONS/CONCLUSIONS**

Law enforcement organizations across the State of Texas and the United States continually struggle with providing adequate in-house training for their police officers. In an ever-changing world and profession, it is expected that law enforcement officers must participate in continued adult education in order to successfully and efficiently serve the citizens within their jurisdiction.

At the onset of this research, the researcher hypothesized that law enforcement organizations engaging in some sort of in-house training program experience increased training hours and a reduction in the cost of training in general. Also proposed was that increased training would likely lead to decrease in liability for both the individual officer and the organization which they serve.

This research project set out to determine whether or not law enforcement agencies that participate in some form of in-house training program would increase their training hours while also reducing the cost of their overall training. Additionally, the

question was also posed whether increased training would also lead to a reduction in liability to both the officer and the organization.

Both the relevant literature as well as the independent research conducted provided significant information to conclude that providing some form of in-house training program does, in fact, provide for a cost savings within police organizations. Also apparent is that law enforcement professionals agree that training can reduce both individual and organizational liability. However, the independent research did not conclude that training hours significantly increased individual officers training hours if, in fact, their organization did engage in some form of in-house training program. The researcher believes that the survey instrument itself did not pose all the appropriate questions needed in order to draw this conclusion. An additional hindrance was that several of the respondents did not have access to the data related to training hours and budgets and, therefore, left these items blank or simply responded "Unknown." These shortcomings in the research can be overcome in the future by two separate means. First, it was quickly learned upon evaluating the completed surveys that question design is very important in obtaining the exact information to be measured. It would be beneficial to test the survey on several people to fine tune the questions before distributing them in mass. Secondly, additional time researching your intended target population could yield more useful results. In other words, it is important to sure the survey instrument gets to the correct person who will have the most knowledge of the survey topic.

Despite some of the shortcomings of this research, it is obvious that training is paramount to the continued success of law enforcement organizations. Leaders of both city government and police organizations must continue to invest in their police officers

by providing continual training and professional development. Police leaders need to understand the concept of “Once trained, always trained” is not valid and that their officers depend upon them to be good stewards of the training funds that they are provided. Police leaders must be innovative in the ways they go about providing continual in-service training to those in their police organization.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Training Survey**

**Please fill out and return to David Hale**

1. Does your agency send officers out to traditional fee- based off-site training venues?

Yes

No

2. Does your agency pay for Officers Training?

Yes

No

3. On average, how many hours of training do your officers receive in a training cycle?  
(Remember TCLEOSE requires a minimum of 40 hours per cycle)

Officer Average: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Does your agency conduct in-house training?

Yes

No

5. My agency conducts in- house training to the following degree.

None

Very Little

Some

Frequently

6. Does your agency submit your in-house training to TCLEOSE for credit?

Yes

No

7. What is the training budget for your entire Department? \$\_\_\_\_\_

8. Does your agency provide mandated TCLEOSE training courses in-house?

Yes

No

9. Providing in-house training in any amount provides a cost savings to your Department.

Agree

Disagree

Not Applicable

10. If your agency conducts in-house training, is it open to outside agencies?

Yes

No

\*\*\*\* Please answer the below questions keeping in mind that your percent scores should add up to a total of 100% for both questions.

11. What percentage of your officers training is met by an outside source?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

12. What percentage of your officers training is met by in-house training?

\_\_\_\_\_ %

13. Do you believe that training reduces your personal and departmental liability?

Yes

No

14. Does your agency have an agreement-training contract with TCLEOSE?

Yes

No

Unknown