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POLICE SCIENCE

FACTORS IN PLANNING AND EVALUATING IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS

HARRY DIAMOND

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EDITOR.

It has become increasingly fashionable for a police department to conduct periodic in-service training programs. To achieve perfection in operations is a goal seldom achieved. One of the main approaches toward institutional fitness or agency effectiveness is the in-service training program. These programs are conducted for officers of various ranks and specializations, and include refresher as well as orientation in new law, court decisions, rules, procedures, and department policy. An increasing emphasis is also given to administrative skills as seen in police in-service training programs such as pre-promotion, human relations, supervisory leadership, executive development, and administrative communication.

Two basic considerations of an in-service training program involve the determination of training needs and the subsequent evaluation of the training effort¹.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING TRAINING NEEDS

The problem of determining training needs can be approached in several ways: (1) routine in-

¹ The Department of Police Science and Administration, Los Angeles State College, conducts an average of six institutes a year on topics such as homicide, burglary, auto theft, narcotics, supervision, arrest, search and seizure, and the police and the public. These institutes run from 3 to 4 days and are open to those working in some law enforcement capacity. Much of the material of this article has been derived from an Institute on Police In-Service Training conducted October 9, 10, 11, and 13, 1961. Inspector Edward Davis, Los Angeles Police Department, spoke on "Surveys of Officers to Determine Training Needs". Mr. William Hardy, Assistant Chief, Employee Development Section, Los Angeles County Civil Service Commission, spoke on "Evaluating the Training Program".

spection by supervisors, (2) examination and tests, (3) special supervisory surveys, (4) staff conferences, (5) survey of officers, (6) survey of the community, (7) review and analysis of reports and records concerning performance and work output. For the purpose of this article, "survey of officers" will be considered.

Any measurement of field performance which would be useful in the determination of training needs should not *only* reflect the ultimate accomplishment of the task but also the propriety and efficacy of the methods used. The use of mere statistical measurements to determine training needs, therefore, has serious shortcomings. An officer might accomplish the arrest of an armed suspect in a "man with a gun" call, but in so doing he might have unnecessarily risked his life or the life of some innocent person. The mere statistical fact that he effected the arrest is not enough to measure the *quality* of his performance on this assignment. If training needs should be determined by field performance, and if the quality of that performance must be judged as well as its quantity, how is this to be done? It would seem that the easiest and perhaps the best method is to ask the man doing the job, or the man who works with him, or the man who supervises them, or all three of these men.

An efficient method of doing this is the Crawford Slip Technique. Doctor C. C. Crawford, Professor of Education at the University of Southern California, has made wide use of the slip survey technique not only to determine training needs but also to develop training material. The slip survey technique was found to be highly useful in

determining the training needs for the Los Angeles Police Department Roll Call Training Program and developing the Daily Training Bulletin of that department. The Crawford program calls for asking the worker to be trained, his colleagues, and his supervisors, what the worker does not know that he should know or what he should know better. This method is directed at the grass roots of training needs. It allowed research of material and training at areas of field performance that might need change and improvement. Perhaps, one of the main reasons that the policeman was so ready to accept the tenets of the Daily Training Bulletin and Roll Call Training was that he discovered the program was attempting to solve *his* problems. The officers who were surveyed were asked: "In what work situations have you found that you do not know how to proceed?" They were asked to reflect back on situations in which they knew they did a job improperly or in which they were not sure of how to proceed. They were told their answers would be anonymous. It was requested that, if possible, each response be written in the form of "How to _____." This was to assist the individual in expressing himself in terms of specific work operation rather than broad abstractions. The responses were written lengthwise on 3 by 5 inch slips, one idea to a sheet. Care must be exercised so that examples will not be used which might lead the response of the officers. Whenever a specific problem was used, for an example, by the man conducting the survey, the officers tended to direct their thinking in that specific direction and many slips came in on this area. It was found to be a good practice for the person making the survey to use examples that were outside the police field. After several men had written responses, several of these were picked up and read rapidly to the group to stimulate the thinking of the group. This approach, using examples from fellow officers, did not seem to have the same leading effect as an example given by the person conducting the survey. After most of the group stopped writing, they were then asked: "In what work situations have you observed that your partner, or some other officer, did not know how to proceed properly?" This request usually resulted in more responses than the original request for self-criticism. When the men were asked to reflect on the shortcomings of present or former partners or other officers who worked with them on field situations, they were

able to think of several cases where they were endangered, embarrassed, or put in a difficult situation by another officer who had not done his job properly.

This survey of policemen was generally conducted at the regular assembly period. It took no more than twenty minutes even with the largest group. The sergeants and lieutenants were generally surveyed at a regular monthly supervisors' meeting. They were asked: "From your observations of the actions and the results of the actions of field officers, what is it that they should know how to do that they did not know how to do?" So that the rank of the writer of a question could be easily determined at a later date, the policemen were given white slips, the sergeants yellow slips, and the lieutenants green slips. Blue slips were used for all higher ranks. Command and staff officers were interviewed on an individual basis.

Closely related job operations were grouped together to form a configuration which contained, as much as possible, a continuity of actual field practice. In all cases where the groupings of work operations related to a specific criminal offense, they were listed under the subject heading, Crimes. All work operations which could be closely and specifically associated with handling a particular crime were also put under this category. For example, "How to Make a Preliminary Burglary Investigation" was classified under Crimes along with "How to Deploy in a Burglary-in-Progress Call", "How to Make a Burglary Report", and "How to Recognize a Burglary Suspect". If "How to Make a Burglary Report" had been classified under Reports, "How to Deploy in a Burglary-in-Progress Call", classified under Field Techniques, and "How to Recognize Burglary Suspects" under Identification, it would have been more difficult to evaluate these closely related problems as a total training necessity. However, when a problem on report did not appear to be closely related to field operations or if its relationship to field police work was too general, it was listed under the subject heading, Reports, for example, "How to Make a Daily Log". Each general subject was assigned an identification number. The work operations grouped under each general subject were given this number with a decimal extension.

The survey sometimes showed that supervisors were not always aware of the problems of the work level. An example of this: while twenty-

eight policemen stated that "How to Investigate a Traffic Accident" was a problem, only seven sergeants indicated that this was a problem and no one above the rank of sergeant noted it as a problem.

On the other hand, the officer at the work level is not always aware of his lack of good performance. This was indicated in the work operation "How to Make an Arrest Report". While only one policeman states that this was a problem, ten captains stated that policemen usually do not know how to make an arrest report properly.

EVALUATION OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Although it is comparatively easy to ascertain the costs of training, it is often much more difficult to determine its true value. However, if training is to be conducted as effectively as possible, then some method of evaluating such training should be developed.

The responsibility for developing such methods is usually given to the person responsible for the training. This arrangement might create problems since the person who does the training may not be able to take an objective look at what he is doing, and such an attempt to evaluate may deteriorate into attempts merely to justify. If we start out with the underlying assumption that training is inherently good, then evaluation usually consists of seeking ways to make it even better. Unless the person who sets out to evaluate training is able to develop some guidelines for doing it objectively, he may be confronted with problems which will tend to confuse and nullify his best efforts. One of the best ways to begin such a task is to develop a more precise definition of what we call evaluation of training. A good definition would be—an attempt to apply the scientific method to the problem of determining the effects of an activity which we call training. This is admittedly vague, but it does point out that an effective approach to evaluation should eliminate the "feeling" factor that training is "good," and that it must incorporate procedures which are both objective and valid.

The difficulties involved in evaluating training may explain why evaluation is not a common practice. There are a number of rationalizations which can be offered to explain this reluctance to evaluate; and these can be generally gathered into three categories: (1) failure to realize the value of it; (2) lack of knowledge or ideas as to how to proceed; (3) a fear of doing it.

There are at least four aspects which, if measured accurately, might give some picture of the value of a recently completed training program.

(1) *Trainee reaction*—This is a measurement of how the trainee felt about the training. It requires the trainee to take an introspective look at his own feelings about the training. It should be realized that this dimension may not be a measure of the real training value. The trainee might feel wonderful about the training because it makes him feel that his management is interested in him, or because it gets him away from the problems of the job for periods of time; but, beyond this, the training may have no real values for him. So, there should be care in an interpretation of this measurement, and an understanding of its limitations. Properly used it could be helpful in evaluating the training program. When this approach is used, a number of things should be kept in mind: (a) the reaction sheet should be easy for the trainee to fill out; (b) the responses should be subject to qualification and measure what it is we want to know; (c) the sheets should be filled out anonymously; (d) space should be provided for the expression of additional feelings; (e) the proper timing for using this device should be carefully considered; (f) the researcher or evaluator should be clear as to what he is looking for.

(2) *Amount of learning*—Just because trainees "like," a program may not indicate the extent of its real value. Another approach is the attempt to measure the extent to which the principles, facts, techniques, procedures as incorporated in the program were understood by the trainee. One method of doing this is to use before and after measurements. What does the trainee now know which he did not know prior to the training? Individual examinations, question-answer periods, performance tests (simulated situations) can be useful in this area. Sometimes the attitude of learning can be measured by devices such as role playing.

(3) *Behavioral change*—It is possible to understand completely a new technique or principle and never put it into practice. One of the most important goals of training is to change or modify or obtain a specific behavior. Certain basic requirements in the training situation should be present before an approach is made to measure the direction and extent of behavioral change: (a) The trainee must have a personal desire to change his behavior; (b) the trainee should understand where his behavior needs changing; (c) the "psychological

climate" on the job must permit him to change; (d) he should have the opportunity and the time to make the change. This type of evaluation can also be approached by before and after comparisons. Changes which occur in the specific areas covered by the training can usually be linked to the training. It is obvious that a time factor be allowed to intervene before the "after" measurements are made. Most behavior takes time to change, and some changes may not be permanent.

(4) *Results achieved*—Most training begins by defining the objective to be achieved. Unless the purposes of the program are clearly understood by the trainer, the training cannot be very effectively done. Evaluating the results of training is done by comparing what actually happened with what was supposed to happen. For example, did the program actually help to reduce absenteeism or turnover, or did it result in a better safeguarding of the crime scene and gathering of evidence. A description or analysis of performance before and after training might indicate the character and extent of changes made. While it is true that a careful measurement might indicate that change has taken place, it may not indicate very clearly to what

extent the training was responsible for the change. It is a point to be kept in mind, however, when this method of evaluation is used.

It should be remembered that each evaluative method has its limitations. The information gathered concerning the results of training is useful only when carefully analyzed and interpreted with these limitations clearly in mind. It is obviously very much worthwhile to have facts which will justify training by revealing its true value in strengthening the organization.

CONCLUSION

The health of any agency depends on a wide variety of factors usually thought of as principles of administration. Certainly, staffing, one of these principles which includes training as an objective, should be a serious concern to any administrator. Where there has been a realistic approach to the determination of training needs (obtaining data by surveying officers and supervisors of all ranks) and a subsequent evaluative effort to find out the degree of validity of the training program, the police department should be well on its way toward effective operations.