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# On-Line Education and Training and the Economics of Policing: Issues and Strategies

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# On-line (OE) Learning and the Economics of Policing

- ◆ Education and training hold considerable potential to improve policing, although similar to the general discussions of the economics of policing, there are few evaluations
- ◆ Deliberations on police learning are occurring within the larger framework of the economics of policing and on-line education (OE) is being touted as an effective cost-reduction strategy
- ◆ It is uncertain whether a direct cost-benefit framework can be applied to learning

# Challenges in Evaluating OE Programs

- ◆ The absence of a clear definition of effectiveness
- ◆ The lack of evaluative frameworks
- ◆ The variety of approaches that are used
- ◆ Confusing terminology, i.e., “e-learning”, “virtual classrooms”, “computer-mediated communication”

# What We Know About OE

- ◆ No empirical evidence to support OE as a strategy for professional development
- ◆ OE most effective with well-prepared and highly motivated students
- ◆ Most studies of effectiveness rely on student self-reports, which are inherently biased
- ◆ The student's learning style contributes significantly to the effectiveness of OE
- ◆ A key challenge is creating “communities of practice” that exist in TI settings

# Research on OE and Police Officer Education and Training

- ◆ No evidence that OE increases job-related skills, knowledge or abilities of police officers
- ◆ The most common accolade for OE is that “people like it”, primarily due to its convenience
- ◆ The level of support among police officers for OE depends upon the specific subject matter
- ◆ OE is best viewed as a complement to traditional instruction (TI)

# What We Should Study

- ◆ The potential of specific OE approaches, avoiding the “one-size-fits-all” model
- ◆ The challenges for OE given that policing is a “hands-on” occupation that relies heavily upon face-to-face communication skills
- ◆ How the learning styles of individual police officers can be accommodated in OE
- ◆ What levels of resourcing and facilitation are required for effective OE

# Key Components of an Education and Training Strategy

- ◆ Defining core policing
- ◆ Involving key stakeholders and developing collaborative frameworks
- ◆ Considering adult learning concepts
- ◆ Establishing evaluative frameworks

# Going Forward: Suggested Initiatives

- ◆ Conduct a comprehensive survey of learning needs and opportunities for police officers
- ◆ Ensure that policies and programs are informed by best practices and are evidence-based
- ◆ Conduct a survey of police services to determine the potential for the development of OE education and training
- ◆ Create appropriate evaluative frameworks

# Suggested Initiatives

- ◆ Consider the role of colleges and universities in police education and training and the potential for accessing existing OE programs and capacities
- ◆ Create a variety of opportunities for officers at all levels of the organization and delivered by a variety of vendors
- ◆ Establish a national committee for police education and training composed of representatives from police services, governments, and colleges/universities

# The CPA Position on OE and the Economics of Policing

- ◆ Discussions of the potential of OE must be informed by evaluation research and by best practices
- ◆ Evaluative frameworks must be developed to ensure that any OE initiatives are properly assessed
- ◆ OE programs must be based on established principles of adult education and learning
- ◆ Consultation, collaborative partnerships and a commitment to excellence should provide the foundation for any initiatives going forward

Questions?

Comments

