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Exploration of Chinese Police Officers' Perceptions of Training

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Abstract

This paper presents findings from an exploratory study, which examined Chinese police officers' perceptions of training experiences. This study, which was undertaken in 2005 in Australia, set out to investigate the key factors influencing the effectiveness of Chinese police training programs. The research is significant in that it investigated police training particularly from the perspective of the trainees while in Australia. An in-depth face to face interview method was employed. Five Beijing police officers, who came from different departments and pursued Masters Degrees at the University of Canberra, were interviewed in March 2005. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were translated from Chinese into English. The findings showed that individuals' needs for professional development should be considered in designing training programs. To enhance the effectiveness of police training, a needs analysis system should be established. Police trainees would not benefit greatly from training if their expectations were neglected. Competent trainers, updated curricula, consideration of individual professional competence, and a linkage between knowledge and practical work were regarded significant factors contributing to effective training. The findings also suggested that application of knowledge into workplaces needs to be connected with the performance appraisal. This study carries strong implications for police training and development in the Chinese context.

Context

This paper presents an exploratory study of the perceptions of police training held by a small sample of Chinese police officers. It investigates the key factors influencing the effectiveness of police training programs in the Chinese context. The study is significant because it is the first in-depth analysis of police training in China, especially from the perspective of the police trainees while in Australia.

The training of police has taken on a significant role in the process of facilitating change within police organizations around the world. Changes in the law, equipment, and criminal behavior all require new skills and training (Glenn et al., 2003). In the age of globalization, criminals operate beyond national boundaries; traditional law enforcement methods prove ineffectual against growing international terrorist threats; and technology heralds in a new era of crime detection and crime prevention (Lee, 2005). There is an obvious need for police officers to acquire knowledge of the latest legal decisions, technological advances, and tactical developments in the field, and to remain proficient in a number of job-related skills (Birzer & Tannehill, 2001). At an organizational level, the rising demand for services, the challenges of policing, an

increasingly diverse society and the high expectations of better informed communities place a growing demand on police training commitment (Lee, 2005).

In the light of increasingly complex policing, Chinese police forces at all levels have made great efforts to improve the quality of service through training and education of police officers. In 2001, the Ministry of Public Security released *Principles of Police Training* (2001), which provides the framework for police training in China. It emphasizes that all police officers must be trained regularly to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of policing agencies. In 2004, the Ministry of Public Security released another document, *the 2004-2008 Police Force Management Compendium* (Ministry of Public Security, 2004). It further stresses the important role of training in policing and provides more details about establishing a professional training system and integrating training with performance management.

Furthermore, local police forces in China made efforts to train and educate police officers (Ministry of Public Security, 2005). The Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau (BMPSB) has regarded training police officers as a priority, especially in preparation for the 2008 Olympic Games. In 2004, *the 2005-2008 BMPSB Education and Training Project* was drafted. It prescribes police training in terms of levels, contents, population and management. It also highlights the integration of training and performance management (BMPSB, 2005).

Rationale

Given the great effort and the vast budget allocation and number of trainees involved in police training in China (BMPSB, 2005; Ministry of Public Security, 2005), it is surprising that little empirical research has been conducted on the topic. There is a profound need to consider how to achieve effective police training in China. As Birzer and Tannehill (2001) indicate, police training authorities need to have specific knowledge of the most effective teaching-learning strategies so that trainees learn and conceptualize new information and tasks more effectively. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the key factors influencing effective police training programs in China is timely and has the potential to improve the quality of Chinese police training programs in the future. This research is an attempt to begin filling the void of in-depth and empirical research into Chinese police officers' perceptions of training. It has the potential to generate qualitative insights into police training in China.

This study is intended to answer the major research question: 'what are the key factors influencing the effectiveness of Chinese police training programs?' The purpose of this research has been three-fold. The primary purpose is to understand Chinese police officers' perceptions of training. The second is to investigate the key factors

influencing effectiveness of police training programs in China. The last is to develop recommendations for Chinese police training.

Literature review

Some Chinese professionals suggest that Western police training practices could be adopted by the Chinese police forces (e.g., Liu, 2005; Wang, 2005). However, little empirical research has been conducted to investigate foreign training of Chinese police. This study was informed by the gap in the literature and sought to address the issues identified. The literature review begins with an examination of the Western literature on training and the relevant training practices used by Western police forces. Since the research aims to find out the key factors influencing effectiveness of police training programs in China, a review of the Chinese learning traditions is also presented.

Training needs analysis

Training needs analysis (TNA) is a fundamental part of training system because it determines what training needs to be done so that money, time and effort are not wasted on unnecessary training activities. Tovey (1997, p. 43) defines the TNA as “a systematic and thorough investigation of a problem with the purpose of identifying exactly the dimensions of that problem and whether or not it can be solved by training”. The TNA provides a framework on which to base training activities.

The most frequently cited approach to needs analysis is that of McGehee and Thayer (1961, cited in Smith, 1998, p. 115) who modeled the process on a three-level view of the organization, involving: organization analysis, operations analysis and individual analysis. In addition, McGehee and Thayer (1961) produced a long list of techniques that can be used for analysis at individual level. However, Tovey (1997, p. 43) indicates that each method has its own strengths and weakness and should be chosen carefully to get the most reliable and valid results within the constraints of available time, the access to people and money.

McGehee and Thayer’s model continues to be cited by more recent researchers. Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) recommended McGehee and Thayer’s model to the British local police forces (HMIC, 1999, p. 70). HMIC indicated that the link between the three levels (organization, operations, individual) needed to be effective and allowed the needs of the individual to be balanced against improved organizational performance. Furthermore, HMIC provided an example of how an organizational goal could result in a training need for an individual member of staff. The example shows how the training need is best identified at the operational level,

and forms part of the performance management function.

Similarly, Australian Federal Police (AFP) also linked staff training and development with performance management. The AFP's performance management tool is referred to as the Performance Development Agreement (AFP, 2004, p.124). One of the functions of the Performance Development is to provide relevant information that will enable organizational recognition of individual performance and identify and meet timely development needs. The Performance Development Agreement is entered into an operational or administrative goal basis on a trimester cycle.

Western theory of andragogy

The theory of andragogy has made a significant impact within the realm of educating adults. For example, Merriam and Brochett (1997, cited in Birzer, 2003) assert that the development of andragogy had a tremendous impact on how adult educators understand and work with adult learners. Andragogy appears to be adaptable to a large number of venues (Knowles 1984, p. 20). As opposed to pedagogy, which is the "art and science of teaching children," andragogy is defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998, pp. 64-68). The andragogical theory provides the following six learner-centered guidelines for the education of adults:

1. *The need to know.* Adults must recognize the necessity of learning something before undertaking to learn it.
2. *The learners' self-concept.* Adults recognize the responsible for their own decisions - their own lives.
3. *The role of the learners' experiences.* Adults enter an educational experience with more and different experience than youths.
4. *Readiness to learn.* Adults are more eager to learn things they must know and apply in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.
5. *Orientation to learning.* Adults are life centered (or task centered or problem centered) in their orientation to learning.
6. *Motivation.* While adults are responsive to some external motivators (i.e., better jobs, higher salaries, promotions), the most potent motivators are internal pressures (i.e., the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life).

Recently some researchers also incorporated the theory of andragogy in police training. Reinertsen and Hedeges (1988, cited in Birzer, 2003) firstly addressed the application of andragogy in a police investigation course. Subsequently, several researchers assert that the nature of policing calls for andragogical training approaches and suggest police training needs a more student-instructional format (Birzer and

Tannehill, 2001; Glenn *et al.*, 2003; Palmiotto, Birzer, and Unnithan, 2000). For example, Messe and Ortmeier (2004, p. 263) argue that police training methodology should be “problem-based, incorporating adult learning concepts”. In addition, some agencies have begun to change training protocol to keep up with the times. For example, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) made major changes in the 1990s due to new challenges faced in policing (Himmelfarb, 1997, cited in Birzer and Tannehill, 2001, p. 249). The RCMP placed increased emphasis on self-directed learning and continuous learning.

Training evaluation

Given significant investment made by organizations, it is vital to measure and evaluate contribution that training makes to improving performance. Kirkpatrick’s evaluation model is the best known among trainers (Dennis, 2002, p.223). Kirkpatrick (1996, p. 295) suggests that there are four levels on which evaluation can be based, namely, reaction, learning, behavior and results. Some policing organizations adopted Kirkpatrick’s model to conduct course evaluation processes. For example, the Canadian Police College is highly successful over long periods of time by employing ongoing evaluation of their courses to determine the continuing relevancy and effectiveness of each course in their catalogue (Canadian Police College, 2004). Similarly, the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan carried out pre- and post-course evaluation in order to evaluate the training programs effectively (HMIC, 1999, p. 113).

Chinese learning traditions

It seems that little empirical research has investigated explicitly police training in China. According to Gao and Watkins (2002), conceptions of teaching, learning, and knowing are deeply rooted in specific cultural antecedents. Therefore, in order to explore the key factors influencing effectiveness of police training programs in China, it is helpful to examine some fundamental knowledge about Chinese learning traditions in relation to the training programs that have been in place in China.

Some researchers argue that the learning traditions in China have been a process of transmission of information and skills from teachers to learners (Gu 2001; Lu and Kang 2002; Pratt, 1992). For example, Pratt (1992, p.313) states that, in China, the teacher’s responsibility is to deliver content; the learner’s responsibility is to absorb it— teachers give and learners receive. In other words, the teachers take responsibility and the learner remains a passive recipient. The Chinese teaching and learning traditions lead teachers to be very formal and serious—the unquestionable authorities in the classroom. They appear to encourage students to accept and conform to the established principles and procedures. Chinese students also expect classes to be

formal. They expect the teacher to control the class, and “cram knowledge” (Wang, 2004; Yu, 2002). This study investigated if the Chinese learning traditions have any influence upon police training. It therefore bridged the gap in the literature and provided new understandings on training that were being investigated.

Research approach

This study seeks to get a better understanding of Chinese police training from the trainees’ experiences and to utilize trainees’ understanding for investigating the factors influencing the effectiveness of police training in China. It employs a semi-structured, in-depth interview method because of the qualitative nature of the study.

The five interviewees selected in this study were police officers from the Beijing Police Force, who were studying Master of Professional English at one Australian university. This research focused on the exploration of Chinese police training in the last ten years. The interviewees’ experiences in police work ranged from five to twelve years at the time the study was undertaken. As they came from different departments, they had diverse police training experience. All the training programs in which the respondents participated were provided by the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau (BJMPSB).

The five interviewees were interviewed individually for appropriate 30 to 50 minutes in March 2005. All documents distributed to participants had been translated from English to Chinese by the researchers, and all interviews were administered in Chinese. In this way the research could capture articulate, fluent and developed responses in the mother tongue, which would not have been possible if the interviews were conducted in English.

Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and analyzed by the researchers. At the first stage of data analysis, the researchers read through each interview transcript and looked for indicators of concepts identified as relevant at the start of the study, and jotted down notes about repetitive emphases and critical details that informed their understanding of the scene. After several readings of interview transcripts and analysis of responses, preliminary categories were formed and frequency of reporting items from categories was counted. According to the categories, the researchers wrote a summary of each interview. The researchers then compared the summaries and refined the categories until they had ensured the emergence of all perspectives indicated by the participants. According to the refined categories, the researchers translated relevant parts of the transcripts and presented the findings.

Findings and discussions

The findings in the study are categorized into six sections: training needs analysis, trainer, training content, training method, trainee and training evaluation. The discussion of the research findings probes the theoretical and practical significance of the study and the implications for Chinese police training. Interview data about the key factors influencing the effectiveness of Chinese police training programs are presented as follows together with typical responses from participants. In this study, pseudonyms are used in order to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents.

Training needs analysis

All the participants reported that training needs should be considered from the perspective of the individual. They stated that training qualities would be improved in this way. For instance, Bob believed that “the training professionals will offer the most effective training for police officers after they are aware of officers’ needs”. The logic for having individual training needs analysis was also stressed in Alice’s comment:

Training should be like a good circulatory process, based on needs and response to needs. In training, first of all you should know who the trainees are and what they need to learn. Accordingly, you provide training for them and then achieve effectiveness in the training. If training professionals are aware of the process, they can improve the pertinence and practicality of the training, and ensure the investment in training will be returned (Alice).

In addition, the majority of the respondents felt that involving police trainees in diagnosing the training needs would not only advance the qualities of training programs but also motivate the learners. For instance, Cindy stressed that “in fact, if they asked about my own need, it will benefit both the organization and the individual”. She further emphasized that “the police officers will be happy and motivated to involve themselves in police training”.

As for how to collect information about individual training needs, some participants did not think that “using questionnaires” was the only appropriate tool for collecting information. Eva observed that “training professionals cannot get enough information from the police officers through questionnaires”. Daniel shared the same view and suggested that “the questionnaires should not be just like ticking off *ABC*”.

The evidence therefore suggests that the establishment and development of effective training programs for police officers requires training needs analysis at the individual

level. Failure to conduct needs analysis can result in demoralized trainees and an inappropriate use of human and financial resources in the policing organization. These findings provide empirical support for the contentions of Tovey (1997) and Smith (1998). It is vital that the link between organizational analysis, operations analysis and individual analysis is effective. In particular, the needs of the individual should be balanced against improved organizational performance.

This study highlights that the identification of training needs at the individual level is quite significant. It is inadequate that only questionnaires are used in determining individual needs prior to some police training programs. According to Tovey (1997, p. 43), performance appraisal data, job observation, interviews, questionnaires, job tests, critical incidents and attitude surveys should be used carefully, providing cross-matching of police needs. Therefore, the approaches of British and Australian police agencies to identify needs, which link staff training and development with performance management (AFP, 2004; HMIC, 1999), may be adapted by the Chinese police.

Trainer

One concern voiced by all the participants was related to the need for suitably qualified trainers for the police environment. As suggested by interviewees, three types of instructors are usually present in the current policing training: “experienced police officers in their own professional field”, “teachers from police academies” and “external professors or experts”. The findings reveal that the trainers who provide effective instruction for police officers should have a good command of policing skills or be able to deliver conceptual knowledge related to policing work.

All respondents believed that instructors needed to be experienced in policing areas when they taught the police trainees practical skills. Bob believed that “the experienced police officers, who are working in a certain policing area, are capable of teaching others”. He further explained that “they often study new things in their area; they know how to use new knowledge and skills in practice”. Daniel agreed that “police experts from the front line can deliver the lessons from their own working experience and teach you how to relate the laws to policing”.

Some of the participants claimed that the lecturers from police academies were also competent to instruct the police trainees in the professional skills. Eva echoed this view and explained the reason by analyzing the differences of lecturers between two English courses she participated in. Firstly, she described a lecturer from a police academy as follows:

One of the lecturers was from China Public Security University and had a good knowledge of policing. He taught us the procedure and details about how to deal with cases of theft, robbery and brawls involving foreigners, such as writing inquiry report and improving interview skills. Before the training program, I knew little about this area, but now I am confident to deal with such cases by myself if foreign affairs police officers are not available to deal with it. What the teacher provided was relevant to our daily policing work. I found it was very practical (Eva)!

Eva went on to elaborate on another course which was also conducted by the branch bureau with the aim to enhance police officers' foreign language skills.

The teachers were invited from Beijing Jiaotong University. They were proficient in English teaching, but knew nothing about policing. I don't think that they were suitable to teach the police officers. In police training, the instructors must have a good command of policing knowledge (Eva).

The majority of the participants insisted that the instructors need to know some policing knowledge when lecturing about particular theories to the police trainees. Some of interviewees welcomed experts or professors from outside of the police organization. For example, Alice commented that "these scholars could give you theoretical guidance rather than practical skills. You could acquire a lot of fresh and valuable ideas from them". She further explained that "they not only had a thorough grasp of management knowledge, but also knew something about our security area. One of them was our advisor who could relate the management knowledge with our work". It can be seen that qualified trainers with relevant policing knowledge play an important role in police training.

Training content

The findings reveal that the types of knowledge and skills to be acquired were the main concern of all the respondents. To achieve effective police training, the interviewees agreed that the training contents need to be closely linked to policing work, tailored to the specific needs of jobs and regularly updated.

Closely linked to policing work

When the participants described their effective training experiences, they all mentioned that the contents of the training programs were very practical or helpful in their work. This theme is captured in the following comment:

The professional training program for our traffic-accident police officers was quite

practical and detailed. We learned how to take photos, how to investigate the scenes and how to deal with traffic accidents. Although the program merely lasted two days, the instructors gave us very explicit instruction (Bob).

The other participants also commented that training programs, which were integrated with the workplace or which were corresponding to the daily work were truly practical. Cindy believed that effective programs must provide the knowledge of the skills and actual practice that could be applied in the workplace.

Some participants agreed that program organizers' attention needed to focus more on practical training rather than elaboration on theories in police training. For instance, Eva indicated that "theoretical and practical knowledge are both essential in training", but "practice should play a more important role in training". She further illustrated that "no matter how many theories we have learned, we must integrate them into practice. We needn't learn too much about theories. But it is necessary for us to learn some theories after we have a good command of practical skills". Daniel echoed her view and suggested that "the practical skills should account for 70% to 80% of the training content". All participants believed that practical skills are the most crucial contents which the police trainees expect to acquire in training. This finding is consistent with Knowles's andragogical theory: Adults are more eager to learn things they must know and apply in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations (Knowles et al., 1998, p.69).

Tailored to the specific needs of the job

Most participants argued for the need to have separate training programs for the police officers working in different working areas. For example, Eva described her recruitment training as an unsatisfactory experience because "all the police officers learned together, no matter which department you came from or no matter what kind of job you had." She preferred to learn with others who did the same job as her. Bob shared a similar view about the recruitment training and suggested that "maybe all the novices are required to learn some of courses, but not all of the courses". He also emphasized the need to "tailor course provision to adapt to the workplace and the positions of the learners".

This study reveals that there is little chance of successful training without an effective link between specific needs of the police officers' jobs and the instructional contents. This empirical study supports Knowles's contention that adults become ready to learn something when they experience a need in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks and problems (Knowles et al., 1998, p.69). This finding also supports Messe and Ortmeier's (2004) argument that police training methodology should be

problem-based, incorporating adult learning concepts.

Updated information

Most participants favored the new knowledge and skills provided by the instructors. Cindy commented that “I desire to take part in training programs which can provide me with plenty of information, update my knowledge and have a great impact on me, for example, attending some national or international conferences”. Bob added that “what I need now are those training programs which can update my knowledge. During the training I could keep absorbing new knowledge and new skills and then apply the new things in my workplace after I grasped them.”

Some of the participants proposed that the content of training courses should be updated. For example, Eva argued that “if the police officers attend lectures full of out-of-date knowledge, the training is meaningless. The officers can’t solve the new problems they meet in the workplace with the old information. The curricula should be updated regularly”.

The evidence therefore suggests that some of knowledge or skills delivered in the police training programs were out of date. If the police officers realize that they have already grasped some knowledge or skills provided in the training programs, they may devalue the programs or pay less attention to them. This finding also supports the argument that adults must recognize the necessity of learning something before undertaking to learn it (Knowles et al., 1998, p.69). In addition, the finding is consistent with the contention that the changing nature of policing will promote andragogical training approaches throughout the organization (Birzer, 2003).

Training Method

The findings revealed that a lot of training programs that the respondents attended used monotonous methods of delivery. The participants argued that these methods contributed little to effective learning. It was disclosed that watching videoed-lectures was a common training approach used in police training, which was regarded boring and ineffective by most participants. Eva confirmed that “in fact, police officers all hate watching videos. It was too boring. I prefer to kill time by sleeping”.

In addition, all participants mentioned that most police training programs were teacher-centered and transmissive. It is clear that many instructors merely lectured and crammed the police trainees. For instance, Cindy stated that “some of the instructors just kept talking at all times during lectures. It seemed that they just aimed to finish the teaching task, caring nothing about recipients’ learning outcome”. The findings

showed that the transmissive and didactic pedagogy appeared to dominate Beijing police training.

The majority of the participants commented that using case studies enhanced learning effectiveness. For example, Alice observed that “the teachers quoted several vivid or humorous cases for illustration. The examples helped us to understand the theories”. Cindy echoed her view and commented that “if the instructors could give more examples for explanation, the training effectiveness would be enhanced”. Most of the participants argued that technological aids should be used to improve the learning outcomes. For example, Cindy observed that “visual aids such as PowerPoint slides are not very popular”. She went on to state that “that is a problem that instructors should consider. They should make full use of the modern technologies to enrich the teaching process”.

The findings also suggested that collaborative learning and group discussion helped to enhance the training effects. For example, Bob confirmed that “discussion plays an important role in effective learning during courses”. Cindy echoed his view and indicated that “if I discussed what I had learned with other trainees, the effect of training would be better”. This study indicates that the methods employed in police training need to be flexible and encourage the trainees’ involvement in order to motivate them and reinforce learning effectiveness. This is in accordance with Knowles’ argument that instructors should help adult students learn (Knowles, 1980, p. 222). For example, the study reveals that the instructors are expected to deliver knowledge and skills with vivid examples and technological aids to improve the police trainees’ interests and learning outcomes. Moreover, the respondents preferred to have group discussion or communicate with instructors after the information transmission process.

The findings suggest that the teacher-centered instruction needs to be integrated with more interactive methods such as group discussion and workshop in Chinese police training programs. It is interesting to note that the totally student-centered teaching approach (e.g., Birzer, 2003; Glenn et al., 2003; Knowles et al., 1998; Palmiotto et al., 2000) seems to be inappropriate in Chinese police training programs. Although collaborative learning and group discussion were mentioned by the majority of interviewees, the teacher-dominated instruction approach seemed to be well accepted by all the participants. The findings reveal that a teaching mode, which involved content delivery, personal reflection and group discussion, appealed to all the participants. These Chinese police trainees seemed to be accustomed to the delivery of content first, which involved examples or technological aids. After lectures, they preferred to communicate with their instructors or colleagues to reflect on the information they had learned.

Trainee

Participants believed that individuals' differences in professional competence should be considered in police training. For example, Bob advised the training organizers "to take police officers' competence into account when designing training programs".

The basic professional education is quite central for the novices. However, the experienced officers need to learn something new about how to further improve their skills or knowledge. The senior officers should learn more updated information in order to contribute more to the organization" (Bob).

The five respondents held different views about the recruitment training because of their different professional backgrounds. Bob, Cindy and Eva, who graduated from police academies, considered the recruitment training as unnecessary. Cindy explained that "I don't have to learn the knowledge or skills delivered in the training, because I had already grasped them when I was at university". In contrast, Alice and Daniel, who graduated from non-police universities, commented that it was quite helpful for them to participate in the recruitment training, although some areas in the training need to be improved. Alice claimed that "basic policing knowledge was quite necessary for us to learn."

The study suggests that individuals' professional competence is an important factor contributing to the effectiveness of police training. This finding is consistent with Knowles' study that "adult learning experiences should be organized around competency-development categories" (Knowles et al., 1998, p.69).

Training assessment and evaluation

All the respondents indicated that training assessment and evaluation enhanced training effectiveness. They commented on two reasons to evaluate training effectiveness. One is to motivate police officers to learn seriously and actively and to transfer the knowledge to work. The other is to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of previous programs, and then to use them for reference to design and develop future programs.

This finding has revealed that there were no assessments in some courses. Alice described one of her training experiences as "bad with an unsatisfactory learning environment". She explained that "it didn't matter whether you listened or not, whether you took notes or not. The trainees didn't study seriously, because nobody tested their learning outcomes". In some programs, it was found that the trainees' learning outcomes were assessed by written exams. All the participants held the view that "it is inappropriate to assess the training effects by only having written tests". In

addition, they believed that training assessments need to be connected with trainees' performances after training. For example, Eva indicated that "training effects can be judged from the police officers' working performance".

Some participants believed that the performance after training should be evaluated. For instance, Cindy proposed that "the actual effects of training should be evaluated by comparing performance prior to and after training". In spite of this emphasis, she admitted that "sometimes the training effects are hard to assess". She further explained that "the changes after training cannot be assessed instantly and they may have a potential influence on performance". In such situations, Cindy advised the training organizers to "communicate with the trainees and listen to their opinions about the training" instead of "testing the learning outcomes in a piece of paper". The majority of the participants indicated that training evaluation should be a long-term process. Alice made the following comments:

Although the immediate evaluation after training is very necessary, the long-term evaluation needs to be considered. In fact, it is more crucial because the transfer of knowledge should be taken into consideration in training evaluation" (Alice).

Daniel proposed a method to "evaluate the training effects from three perspectives". These were "police officers, their supervisors and the customers who receive their services". He believed that "to analyze the feedbacks from the three groups together and then get an integrated evaluation" is the most persuasive process. His view was shared by Alice. She argued that "the feedback of training should come from both trainees and the circumstances they are in".

All the participants agreed to relate the training assessment and evaluation with the performance appraisal. They thought the link will motivate the trainees to study hard and apply the knowledge or skills into their workplace actively. Bob illustrated the function of the performance appraisal as follows:

In our bureau, the training results are associated with the officers' performance appraisal. The performance appraisal is very important and all the work units take it seriously. If you failed in performance appraisal, you would be dismissed (Bob).

Bob's view was echoed by Cindy. She supported this point by listing the problems when there was no connection between training programs and performance appraisal.

Until now, there is no relation between the training outcome and the performance appraisal. Due to a lack of a management system, their performance may remain unchanged after the training. In this way, the training objectives cannot be attained at

all. However, if there is a link between training and performance appraisal, they will be motivated to make full use of the training chances (Cindy).

It appears that training assessment plays an important role to motivate the police trainees to learn seriously and transfer the knowledge or skills successfully to work. This finding is in accordance with Knowles' argument that "adults are responsive to some external motivators" (1998, pp. 64-68). The study also reveals that it is crucial to forge effective links between the training evaluation and the performance appraisal. A long-term evaluation process needs to be established in the police training system. To ensure the effectiveness of evaluation, more comprehensive evaluation involving various stakeholders should be conducted. This study also supports the Kirkpatrick four-level evaluation model (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Therefore, the successful training evaluation strategies employed by the Canadian Police College (2005) and the Scottish Police College (HMIC, 1999) may be helpful for Chinese police training.

Summary of major findings

Based on the findings, the researchers proposed a model for Chinese police training (see Figure 1). There are three phases in the model, namely pre-training, during-training and post-training. This model is significant in that it may provide a useful framework to achieve effective police training in China. It is presented together with a review of the major findings of this study.

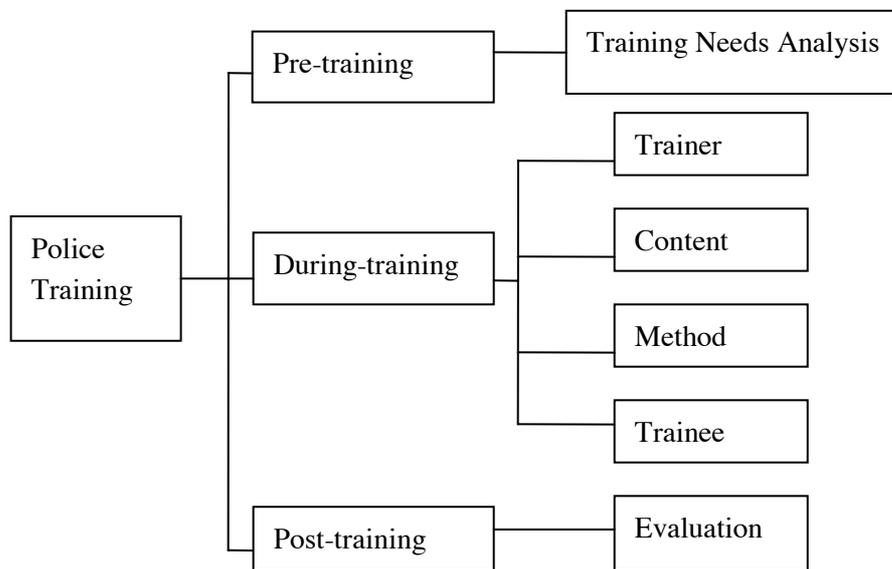


Figure 1 A Model for Chinese Police Training

Pre-training

Before the training, police trainees need to be involved in analyzing training needs. The findings revealed that individuals' needs for professional development should be considered in planning and designing training programs. The trainees will not benefit greatly from training if their expectations were not satisfied.

During-training

During the training, four issues need to be addressed by police training professionals: employing qualified trainers with relevant policing knowledge; updating training contents which are closely linked to police work and tailored to the specific needs of the job; incorporating flexible and interactive training methods into teacher-centred instruction; and customizing training content to trainees' individual professional competence.

Post-training

In this phase, police training professionals should integrate training assessment and evaluation with performance management. Most interviewees felt that it was inappropriate to evaluate the effectiveness of police training programs only by written examinations. It is crucial to forge effective links between the training assessment, evaluation and the performance appraisal. It seems that a long-term evaluation process needs to be established in the police training system. To ensure the effectiveness of evaluation, the comprehensive assessment and evaluation strategies should be adopted.

Implications and Conclusion

This study is limited to the perspectives of a small sample of police officers in Beijing, the capital city of China. The five participants were aged from 28 to 33 and were all superintendents with Bachelor degrees. They were pursuing Masters Degrees in Australia at the time this study was undertaken. Generalization of their perceptions to other Chinese police trainees, who have different educational backgrounds, who are from other age groups, or who are in different police ranks, requires caution. Further research which covers a greater number of participants and wider rangel of samples in various regions in China would be required. Moreover, this study focuses on the perspectives of police trainees rather than those of instructors or program organizers. In order to further investigate the key factors influencing the effectiveness of police training in China, future research is needed to examine the experience and perceptions of the instructors or organizers.

The focus of the study is on exploring the key factors influencing the effectiveness of police training from the trainees' perspective. Readers interested in the research will be various, including instructors engaged in Chinese police training, training professionals who plan and provide police training programs, human resources managers in Chinese police forces, and researchers who are interested in Chinese police training and Chinese learning traditions.

Taking into account the limitations, the study makes contributions to theories and practice in the following aspects. The study contributes to the knowledge base of police training in China. To date, and to the knowledge of the researchers, relatively few in-depth studies have been conducted in this field to explore the Chinese police officers' understanding of training. This study is the first empirical research to depict the perceptions of Chinese police officers who had training experiences in both Chinese and Western contexts, and it examined their reflections on their previous training experiences in China. Moreover, this study makes a contribution to further understanding of the Western androgogical theory, particularly in the Chinese context. It suggests that the Chinese learning traditions and cultural pedagogy need to be taken into account when applying the Western adult learning principles into police training in China.

This study examines Chinese police officers' perceptions of training and utilizes their perceptions to investigate the key factors influencing the effectiveness of police training. This study identified a gap between the organizational goals and individual training needs. It suggests that the individuals' needs for professional development should be taken into account in designing training programs. The findings indicated that conducting training needs analysis at the individual level, qualified trainer, updated training content, and an emphasis on knowledge and skill transfer were significant factors contributing to the trainees' perceptions of effective police training. This study also showed that application of knowledge into workplace needs to be linked to the performance appraisal. Furthermore, the study suggests that the learning traditions need to be considered when designing and developing police training programs in a specific context.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Could you please introduce briefly your workplace and position? How long have you been a police officer?
2. Please briefly describe your training experience? How do you think those training programs?
3. What kinds of training do you expect to participate in? In your opinion, what are the key factors which affect effectiveness of training?
4. Did anyone collect information about your training needs before training events? Among previous training programs, which ones were you glad to take part in? And which ones were you compelled to accept? Please explain the reasons respectively.
5. Please cite an example to illustrate one of effective training programs you have experienced. And please explain why you think it is effective.
6. Please cite an example to illustrate one of ineffective training programs you have experienced. And please explain why you think it is ineffective.
7. In your opinion, how should training programs be evaluated? In your department, do police officers' training evaluation relate to their performance appraisal?
8. Do you think the training department should collect information about police officers' training needs regularly? And why (not)? Do you think the training department should collect the feedback about previous training from police officers regularly? And why (not)?