**Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty,
Section: Social Sciences**

ISSN: 2284 – 5747 (print), ISSN: 2284 – 5747 (electronic)

Covered in: CEEOL, Index Copernicus, Ideas RePEc,
EconPapers, Socionet

**PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN LAW
ENFORCEMENT – AN ORGANISATIONAL-
LEVELLED ANALYSIS**

Cristina UDREA

Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section:
Social Sciences, 2015, IV (1), 57-68

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://lumenjournals.com/social-sciences/>

Published by:
Lumen Publishing House
On behalf of:
Lumen Research Center in Social and Humanistic Sciences

Professional Training in Law Enforcement – An Organisational-Levelled Analysis

Cristina UDREA¹

Abstract

Investing in human resources has become one of the most effective actions for an organization in reply to current massive challenges we face on a daily basis. The value of continuous professional development for all employees is nowadays generally acknowledged and it bears no denial. An organization's mission and its specific targets, as they have been set out, can only be accomplished if personnel members do hold necessary theoretical and practical skills for a high-standard execution of their work-related tasks.

Since it is a specialized state institution, with a focus on maintaining public order and safety, Romanian Police has made continuous professional training a permanent priority for its employees in order to sustain a superior standard for all services. Although rules and regulations are extremely clear, we believe that a definitive outline of organisational-levelled continuous training for policemen can provide a series of useful pieces of information for future references in which concerns training plans.

A 2014 study on this matter has pointed out both favorable and cumbersome aspects of the process of continuous professional training of Romanian policemen. The results of our investigation can be deemed as significant both in terms of the extension of research for organisational schemes and for the activity of structuring a series of training programmes with multiple gains for this professional category.

Keywords:

organisation, police system, continuous professional training, concept regarding professional training, structuring training programmes.

¹ PhD student, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences - „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iasi, Romania, udra_c@yahoo.com, +40744 902 839.

1. Police system in the context of Romanian organizations

1.1. Organizations: definition, classification and specifics

With early origins stemming from humans' need to manifest their social skills or for the purpose of joining forces in the interest of achieving common goals, organizations today are more than numerous, with various ranges, interests, as well as catering to specific scopes and activities thereof.

There is a multitude of definitions of an organization, from short versions, such as "a structured system of human interaction having as purpose the achievement of common and specific goals" (Vlăsceanu, 1999, p. 37), to some more complex descriptions: "social institutions, created by individuals or groups in their society which aim at accomplishing a series of specific targets by means of employing perspective, planning, coordination, training and control of activities" (Moldoveanu, 2005, p. 18). Organizations are not isolated within society, but ever changing due to an influence from all the other systems and elements of their surrounding environment.

There were various attempts at classifying organizations. Some have opted for a distinction between private organizations (market and wealth-oriented) and public organizations (group and politically-oriented) (Moldoveanu, 2005), while others have proposed a distinction between economic organizations (aiming at generating profit for their owners), non-profit organizations (who defend certain causes) and governmental organizations (that provide services for their citizens) (Cornescu, Mihăilescu & Stanciu, 2003). Another version would propose economic, educational, cultural and entertainment-oriented, military organizations (Zlate, 2004). Each organization faces a continuous evolution or involution, with possible developments by means of increasing the number of their workforce or their scope of activity or, on the contrary, the organization can be dismantled, leaving room for other similar entities and their subsequent development.

Summarizing their specific features, Vlăsceanu (2003) believes that organizations carry these three attributes:

- always specialized (with a certain mission that generates a series of goals);
- cater certain services (by employing a range of techniques that have been continuously shaped and honed);

- represented by a group of individuals that interact in the interest of achieving their common and specific goals.

The core element of an organization resides in its human resources. It is humans who enrich an organization, and investing in human resources is indeed investing in the organization, a fact that reflects in the level of improvement of professional performances or in the quality of their services.

1.2. Police institution: an organization in the interest of society

As it is focused on satisfying human need for safety, police force is one of the government institutions that was established with a view to ensuring law and order for the protection of citizens. As a specially-ranked institution, police comports, nonetheless, typical features of an organization. Thus, it has a specific mission that will set further goals, priorities and a course of action, as well as a consistent culture whose specific elements were maintained in time (e.g. values, language) or modified along with social, political, economic changes that marked even this institution (e.g. symbols, rites and ceremonies). Police forces are tasked with defending fundamental human rights and liberties, private and public property, prevention and detection of crimes, as well as with defending public law and order. This institution's activity is ranked as a specialized public service in the interest of the citizen and his community, in the sole interest of applying the letter and the spirit of the law. Its organizational and operational structure is hierarchic, and built on the principle of obeying a set of rules and regulations.

Furthermore, police officers have a special status given the nature of their duties and the level of risk they face while executing their work-related tasks. Policemen carry many professional obligations and duties that require a strong professional training, rigid morals and discipline, as well as an extended range of high values such as justice, truth, loyalty, honesty, respect etc.

2. Police system and professional training for organizations

2.1. Learning – a fundamental process of professional training for organizations

One of the most specific features of an adult individual is the fact that, aside from all the other parts he might have in a family or in

which concerns society (e.g. parent, spouse, partner, member of a certain community etc.), he also occupies a certain position/place in an organization. After entering the workforce, employees discover that the basic training they had received after graduating an academic institution does not offer the guarantee of successful permanent fulfilment of their tasks. Faced with the fact that what they once learned (theory, practice, work skills) can no longer satisfy the requirements of a continuously evolving society, humans recur to multiple solutions for readjustment and a more complex training. Consequently, they attend continuous training programs that are held by their organization or choose various educational packages offered by solid professional training institutions.

Learning is the core of any pursues in training, and it is performed by the interested parties with the view of updating or expanding their set of notions, abilities or attitudes. Organizational learning is adult-centered, designed as a process with systematized plans that pursue actions such as: acquisition of knowledge (from multiple sources), distribution of information (formally or informally), interpreting information (by assigning meanings and significations) and organizational memory (storing information for a larger period) (Huber, 1991 apud. Avram & Cooper, 2008).

Adult learning is, of course, idiosyncratic, as adults have certain traits that are fundamentally different from children and teenager students: a vast life experience as professionals they wish to share, they are significantly more practical, they wish to see the relevance of the information they receive and they are actively involved when their opinion is requested. This is why professional training programs for the members of an organization must be designed for the educational needs of their members as well as for the circumstances of their age.

2.2. Stages of professional training

Professional training, a feature of the members of an organization, consists of the totality of the activities that employees undertake for the purpose of improving their know-how and skills at work. Emilian (1999) claims that professional training is “a learning/instruction process by which employees acquire theoretic and practical information, as well as new skills and techniques that improve their body of work” (p. 162). Moreover, professional training is

considered to be “an activity in the interest of expanding and updating the level of expertise, the development and shaping the necessary skills that employees require for an improvement of the quality of their professional activity according to the demands of scientific and technological progress and its introduction to practice” (Roșca, Vărzaru & Roșca, 2005, p. 289).

Usually, continuous training for organizations requires an act of learning, and, in order to be effective, this type of training demands a responsible, sensible, systematic and thoroughly planned approach. In most cases, continuous training is designed according to Armstrong (2006) plan, who pinpoints four stages:

- identification of training needs;
- designing the actual training programs (methods, means, location, trainers);
- implementing the training programs;
- assessment of the training programs.

Identification of training needs can be performed at an organizational, departmental and even individual level with tools such as: interviews with employees / managers, questionnaires or highly complex techniques (SWOT, PEST analyses, fishboning, error tree method etc.). Once they are detected, training needs must be analysed and selected based on their priority and their impact over the organization’s mission.

For the second stage, having in mind the identified needs, actual designing begins, i.e. each step is clearly stated. According to Sandu, Ponea, Bradu & Vlasă (2011), designing a training program can be performed by answering the following questions: “What will I do?” (setting goals); “How will I do it?” (identification and selection of resources); “How will I know whether I have accomplished my goals?” (establishing a system and corresponding criteria of assessment) (p. 32). A correlation must be set between goals, methods, means and criteria of assessment in order to set coordination between training needs and the outcome of the program.

The third stage is the actual implementation of the program, consisting from performing all activities as established, based on the identified training needs and specific training methods for the organization in question.

Although the latter of the four stages, assessment aims not only at concluding the training, but it also aims at completing it by generating

valuable data required for other future implementations and eventual improvements. Targets include: “assessment of trainees’ performances, content assessment, trainer assessment, program assessment” (Sandu, Ponea, Bradu & Vlasă, 2011, p. 49). At this stage, we are able to gather insight on the training program (whether the participants considered it to be useful, whether the right content was provided, if the training methods and means were considered adequate by the participants, whether the context was appropriate for learning, if one might recommend the program later on etc.), on trainees (whether they experienced an actual progress in terms of know-how / skills / attitudes, if their learning needs were met etc.), on the trainer (whether he masters the required set of skills for such activities, whether he achieved his goals, whether he has a proper academic preparation for such matters etc.).

Assessment can be conducted by following a schedule and some methods, such as (Chivu, Popa & Curteanu, 2000):

- during the execution of the training program (it means observing the trainees, listening to their oral or written opinion as filled on questionnaires)
- after the execution of the training program (written examinations, filling out opinion questionnaires or by employing a semi-projective method).

A diligently planned training program can contribute to multiple benefits in which concerns the organization (in the interest of achieving its targets, improving services and increasing the level of external appreciation) and its members (boosted levels of self-confidence, satisfaction regarding their work tasks and significantly greater promotion opportunities).

2.3. Police system – a learning organization

The idea of “learning organization” was introduced by Peter Senge, who defined it as “an organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire” (1990, p. 14 apud. Avram & Cooper, 2008, p. 873). A learning organization facilitates the interaction between its members and the permanent exchange of information, transforming the working environment into a learning space. Organizations experience the need for expansion, improvement

and development, therefore, personnel (from managers to lowest ranks) must exhibit openness, flexibility and a desire to cooperate. Todoruț (2008) believes that a learning organization has the following attributes: learning as a concept is converted into a strategic target; learning is centered on development, re-scaling, transforming and expanding the value of information and skills that would be currently used within the organization; various learning methods (from classical and active methods to an analysis of positive / negative patterns in the organization); managers can be referred as models of learning, and subordinates can adopt their higher-ranked patterns; learning direction goes from managers to their team, continuing with the individual; learning is influenced by a series of circumstances (organizational environment, culture, strategy etc.); use of learning agents with specific tasks.

The profession of policeman will undoubtedly require a broad range of general and specialty training as well as an extended palette of professional skills and attitudes, both in the need of constant re-scaling and improvement. Learning new intervention techniques or updating the know-how is crucial when facing the various challenges that police officers tackle in their field of duty. Police system can be considered as a learning organization for reasons such as:

- daily personnel activities require a permanent clash with a variety of community issues and the diversity of their members, a fact that turns their professional environment into an active learning space. Each task or mission is a good opportunity for applying theory and practice and to reinvent and readapt them as well as to share this type of information with other fellow policemen;
- professional environment encourages the exchange of information, cooperation and team work;
- professional training, having learning as a core element is a work requirement and it is strictly regulated by law;
- various forms of organizing continuous learning programs: ranging from instruction inside the system (e.g. with instruction sessions or special meetings) to activities taking place in specialized educational institutions (e.g. participation at advanced/improvement classes, seminars, internships, conferences etc.) or civil programs (e.g. enrolling for under- or post- graduate programs, Masters, PhDs);

- professional training programs include both higher and lower ranks;
- continuous professional training is a permanent goal for managers and learning mobility is facilitated in multiple contexts.

In order to provide an effective answer to an ever growing dynamic shift in other fields outside their profession (having in mind fields such as the social, economic, cultural ones) which, inevitably so, lead to a multiplication, diversification and a higher complexity in ascertaining crimes, policemen need an active learning process, set in a stimulating organizational environment.

3. The perception of professional training for police on an organizational level

3.1. The reasons and the purpose of our study

Professional training for police officers is a priority for both managers and individuals. Current societal changes over the last few years, technical and technological breakthroughs, educational shifts, and the large number of reforms that were applied in police administration have lead us to believe that, prior to recurring to the four stages of preparing a training program, one must consider an analysis regarding the issue of professional training. Because, in order to design and release effective training programs for police forces, one must discover the advantages and disadvantages of this system, based on its resources and the general context of the society it serves.

For the purpose of our study, we believe that the suitable candidates for obtaining an organizationally-applied conclusion are police officers who are in charge with coordinating, managing and monitoring the process of continuous professional training for police units of the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (for each county, including Bucharest).

Thus, we have conducted a study having as purpose: *An identification of the perception regarding professional training for police on an organizational level*

3.2. Sample and method of research

Our subjects are working for the Continuous Professional Training Offices/Departments for the Bucharest Unit and County Inspectorates. They were asked to submit a SWOT analysis regarding the process of professional training for policemen, as well as a series of personal details concerning their educational / professional course with no disclosure of their identity. Although SWOT analyses are mostly used for small groups of individuals, the extremely variegated geographical distribution of the personnel we had in mind has made it impossible for us to gather them at the same time and space. For this reason, we appealed to written testimonies in order to transmit and collect results.

We had a sample of 59 policemen, aged between 31 and 53 years old (average age: 39,45 years old), with a professional experience within the Ministry of Interior ranging from 5 to 24 years (average experience: 11,96 years) and a professional experience at an office of Continuous Professional Training for police units ranging from 7 months to 13 years (average experience: 6,33 years). Our subjects are high school / post-secondary school graduates (6) or university graduates (53), and, after entering in the police system, 3 subjects stated that they have not taken any other type of professional training, while the other 56 mentioned that they completed at least one course for such purposes, such as post-graduate courses (Masters' Degree), undergraduate studies, advanced/improvement classes on different subjects (how to become a trainer, AeL instructor, computer sciences, martial arts instructor / shooting instructor).

3.3. Results

After collecting data, we have conducted a quality analysis thereof. Thus, we used open codes, and all answers were categorized and consequently grouped, each being assigned with a defining name.

The results SWOT analysis we conducted can be examined below in the two tables. The first one represents the internal environment, with a focus on the police system's strengths and weaknesses in terms of professional training for its personnel from the subjects' point of view, and the second table describes external opportunities and threats for the organization that we chose to study.

Table 1.

Internal environment	Strengths (nr. of codes)	Weaknesses (nr. of codes)
Ministry of Interior's policy on professional training	16	31
Personnel characteristics and their correlation with the process of training	51	33
Logistics / financial resources	7	35
Training methods	5	9
Training means	18	6
Types of organization of training programs	14	15

Table 2.

External environment

Opportunities	Nr. of codes	Threats	Nr. of codes
External training source of the Ministry of Interior	36	Financial resources	29
Relationships with civil society	27	Policy regarding professional training on a national level	23
Financial resources	14	Relationships with civil society	19
Access to information	9	National legal framework	17
		Mass – media	11
		Psychological and physical circumstances that might influence an individual	8

Although some of the categories are considered as strengths and weaknesses at the same time, (e.g. Personnel characteristics and their correlation with the process of training) or similarly, opportunities and threats (e.g. relationships with civil society), we believe that the numerical distinction we have recorded can help us determine where exactly can we assign that criteria.

3.4. *Conclusions and further options for research*

The results of our study indicate that the most valuable resource of the police system in which concerns the field of professional training consists of its employees, and the multitude and variety of externally provided educational options as well as the positive relationships with civil society can improve the process of professional training for policemen. Some of the aspects that damage training pertain to: policies (on a national and a systemic level), methods and forms of designing the training programs, current logistics and financial resources for the field we have investigated.

Having this outcome in mind, other studies can be conducted in the interest of contributing to the identification of solutions for improving the process of continuous professional training for police workers and an enlargement of the research regarding professional training within organizations: an identification of policemen's concept regarding training for other levels (i.e. departmental, individual); applying specific educational patterns of other systems in the case of professional police trainin; identification of their motivation to study as per the specifics of the organization they might be part of; assessing the level of efficiency of certain training methods of the personnel in various organizations etc.

References

- Armstrong, M. (2006). *A handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* (10th ed.). Londra și Philadelphia: Kogan Page.
- Avram, E. & Cooper, C. L. (2008). *Organizational and Managerial Psychology*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Cornescu, V., Mihailescu, I., & Stanciu, S. (2003). *Organization's management*. Bucharest: All Beck.
- Emilian, R. (1999). *Human Resources Management*. Bucharest: Expert.
- Moldoveanu, G. (2005). *Analysis and Organizational Behavior*. Bucharest: Economica.
- Rosca, C., Varzaru, M., & Rosca, I. Gh. (coord.) (2005). *Human resources, management and administration*. Bucharest: Economica.
- Sandu, A., Ponea, S., Bradu, O. & Vlasa, B. (2011). *Training of trainers. Operational models*. Iasi: Lumen.

- Todorut, A. V. (2008). The organization which learns in the society that has basis on knowledge. *Annals of „Constantin Brancusi” University, Tg. Jiu, series Economy, 1*, 423 – 432.
- Vlasceanu, M. (1999). *Organizations and organization culture*. Bucharest: Trei, available on <http://www.lefo.ro/carmensylva/Carmensylva/ppap/>
- Vlasceanu, M. (2003). *Organizations and Organizational Behavior*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Zlate, M. (2004). *Treatise of organizational psychology*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Law no. 218 of 23.04.2002 regarding the Romanian Police organization and functioning, as amended and supplemented.
- The Order of the Minister of Administration and Interior no. 69 of 28.04. 2009 - for approving the career guide of the policemen and military personnel of the Ministry of Administration and Interior.

Biodata

PhD Student **Cristina UDREA**

I graduated the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences – „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, specialization – Pedagogy and a Master in the field of "Intercultural Education" at the same university. Currently, I'm a PhD student at Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, field of study - Continuous professional training and at the same time I'm a police officer at Neamt County Police Inspectorate - Human Resources Department.

My areas of interest are: adult education, professional training in organizations, the adult training methodology, trainers and training programs for adults, education policies etc.

I have published articles regarding adult education or professional training in Romanian journals („For the Motherland”, „Public Security Studies”) and international journals („Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences”) and I have also participated in international conferences, such as Adult Education, fourth edition (in Iasi, 2014).