



## Rethinking Traditional and Contemporary Law Enforcement Training in South Africa: An Exploratory Review

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### **Abstract**

This article focuses on traditional and current methods of training officers at police training academies in South Africa. Traditional police training takes the form of paramilitarism that creates a warrior-type mentality, which involves a relatively simplistic guiding philosophy of crime control. Some of the training provided in police academies is irrelevant to real police work, as physical training dominates academic teaching in training colleges. Policing is a complex and difficult career that requires a high degree of professionalism. The evolution of relevant investigation-assistive technology has advanced and has shaped police functions over the years. The result is that South African Police Service (SAPS) officers now focus on the modern law enforcement function of quality-of-life improvement for citizens. Effective, modern policing techniques now encompass non-traditional police expectations that require officers to understand a broader range of issues. Completing the tasks needed throughout a career in law enforcement requires the ability to collect evidence and solve problems while understanding the totality of a crime. SAPS officers, however, receive inadequate training on weapon safety and the use of non-lethal force as a means to apprehend criminals. In firearm-related crimes, SAPS ballistics analysts lack sufficient training and inadequate training in terms of DNA/forensic investigations/crimes. This article calls for a rethink of law enforcement training strategies.

**Keywords:** *Police Training; Traditional Police Training; Paramilitarism; South African Police Services*

### **1. Introduction**

Training is traditionally perceived as the organised process of the acquisition of capabilities or the maintenance of capacity that results in a person being able to perform specific workplace tasks (Nikolou-Walker and Meaklim, 2007). It is also viewed as the systematic process adopted by employers to modify the knowledge, skills, and behaviour of employees to achieve organisational objectives (Erasmus *et al.*, 2010:2). Police training plays a crucial role in the development of police officers. Compared to other occupations, police officers spend the entire beginning of their policing career training and preparing for the job (Wilson *et al.*, 2010). The objective of the training is to help police officers perform their jobs well (Koedijk *et al.*, 2019). However, what police training consists of has changed significantly over the years. Policing is a complex and difficult career that requires a high degree of professionalism (Mnisi, 2015:47),

which has necessitated law enforcement agencies to expand how officers are trained to do their jobs to include developing important relational communication skills with communities and to control domestic and political violence. It is not sufficient for training to focus solely on the law or on perishable skills such as arrest and control, defensive tactics, driving, and firearm usage (Blumberg *et al.*, 2019).

The complex nature of the police occupation and dynamic changes that move through society frequently make the job of policing extremely difficult and perhaps prone to civil litigation (Ross, 2000:169). Crime prevention is understood to cover a vast spectrum of policing approaches (Sherman *et al.*, 2006:5), including the task of helping people to keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe from crime. Regular training in crime prevention is crucial because the nature of crime changes over the years (Scaramella *et al.*, 2011:302). Also, more than 42 000 criminal complaints were made against the police between 2012 and 2019, including rape, murder, and torture, according to the Independent Police Investigative Directorate, a government watchdog body (Egwu, 2021). Today's South African Police Service (SAPS) officers carry more tools on their equipment belts (e.g., tasers) and bodies (e.g., body-worn cameras), utilise more equipment in their patrol cars (e.g., computers), and face more public scrutiny of their actions due to smartphones and social media than officers from prior generations (Blumberg *et al.*, 2019). To accomplish policing tasks, police officers are required to be fully trained and developed professionally. Public perceptions of the levels of professional conduct of police officers are associated with the inadequate quality training and education of its employees, which are closely linked to the actions of professionals.

The media reports regularly on poor police conduct, poor service delivery, and police brutality (SAPS, 2011). An instance of police brutality was aired in November 2000 on the South African national television programme *Special Assignment*, where members of the North-East Rand Dog Unit were shown assaulting and racially abusing three illegal immigrants from Mozambique and setting dogs on them as a training exercise (Mkhwanazi *et al.*, 2022). Other instances of police brutality are evidenced in the shooting and killing of protesting mine workers at Marikana (Farlam *et al.*, 2015); the killing of Mido Macia, a civilian who was dragged by police van (Bruce, 2002:2); and that of Andries Tatane, who was shot and killed during a service delivery protest. These instances give the SAPS a poor public image, which prompts the call for better officer training.

Police training is an imperative instrument to simplify organisational transformation within the police service (Birzer, 2003:29). Before the onset of democracy in 1994, the apartheid police force lacked human rights considerations as they perpetrated acts against the majority of citizens in the pursuance of minority interests. At this time, the criminal justice sector was preoccupied with crime control and pursued explicit punitive and deterrence-orientated strategies and practices to instil fear and subservience among the black majority and to ensure compliance among the white minority (Shaw, 1996; Singh, 2008). Police misconduct and officer corruption were rampant (Joubert, 2010:25-30). Following the onset of democracy, the 1997 SAPS Code of Conduct now requires the SAPS to operate with integrity and to adhere to moral duty and obligation to render responsible and effective public service.

SAPS members lack the skills and strategies to deal with challenges such as suspects' lack of compliance and dealing with them in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Act (No. 51 of 1977, section 49(2)). Police training lacks interviewing skills and a legal approach to restraining a suspect. To address the negative perception of the SAPS by the South African public, officer training and education are crucial (SAPS, 2011). Effective training of police officers is necessary to boost community confidence in the quality of police service delivery, which could boost the SAPS's image regarding professionalism.

According to section 205(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the SAPS Act (No. 68 of 1995), legislative and policy mandates, and other initiatives such as the People First principles (SAPS Strategic Management, 2010:2), the 2020-2022 strategic plan, and the Department of

Public Service and Administration's Revised Public Service Human Resource Development Strategic Framework Vision 2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2008), the SAPS has the mandate to increase the number of skilled personnel to meet future requirements and challenges by continuously providing training to its employees. Chapter 8 of the SAPS Act of 1995 also empowers the Minister of Police to regulate members' attendance of training courses, with the National Commissioner deciding what training SAPS members must undergo (Molupe, 2019:20). In the SAPS, the capacity of employees is developed through training provided by both internal and external service providers. There are various training programmes in the SAPS that employees attend to gain the skills necessary to perform their respective tasks.

This article discusses law enforcement training in South Africa and highlights the necessity of online approaches to training in addition to traditional classroom tuition. An exploratory review is used when the researcher is studying something that is new or when data collection can be challenging (Creswell, 2018:85). The first section of the article is introductory. Section 2 discusses traditional and current forms of law enforcement training. Section 3 discusses challenges confronting policing in South Africa and training needs. Section 4 discusses the professional training of law enforcement officers in South Africa, and why training is required, including the necessity for officers to be sensitive to the socio-economic inequalities prevailing in the country. Section 5 highlights international best practices and invites readers to rethink traditional and current police training practices while considering whether online training methods meet the requirements of learning and retention. The last section concludes the paper.

## 2. Traditional and Current Police Training

Apart from being able to perform tasks, training also covers the ability to explain why and how things are done. This is an area where SAPS members are falling short. They are unable to explain to members of the public why they are conducting raids or stop-and-search operations (Latham, 2001). In training, these task demands should be reflected in the responses of police officers to prepare them for duty (DiNota and Huhta, 2019; Kleygrewe *et al.*, 2022).

The primary areas of training by police academies fall into the following categories: operations, firearms, self-defence, use of force, self-improvement, legal education, and mental illness (Reaves, 2016). Traditional policing required police officers to possess self-defence, arresting, shooting, and driving skills, which was reflected in training that focused primarily on teaching these physical activities (Chappell, 2008). Current policing emphasises additional skills such as communication, problem solving, and decision making (Birzer and Tannehill, 2001; Blumberg *et al.*, 2019). To facilitate these skills in the context of policing, police academies and law enforcement agencies needed to adjust the structure, content, and delivery of their formal training (Marenin, 2004). It was the tradition in police academies to adopt a uniform, linear training approach to instruct students on knowledge and skills (McCoy, 2006). As an example, it was not uncommon to teach police cadets self-defence skills where instructors would explain and demonstrate exact techniques using a fixed set of movements for cadets to observe and apply in a static, low-pressure setting. However, the current reality is that police officers encounter complex and dynamic incidents, where decision-making, situational awareness, and communication skills might be decisive for the outcome. The traditional, uniform approach to training seems to have little to do with the realities of police work (Renden *et al.*, 2015).

In the SAPS, training can be provided internally by the organisation or externally by private training institutions. Traditional police training takes the form of paramilitarism, especially with the introduction of additional layers of "paramilitary" police, such as the Tactical Response Units, to manage public order in South Africa. Many police formations have thus been patterned after the military in terms of hierarchy, training, uniforms, and equipment (Rodriguez, 2018:115). This creates a warrior-like mentality (Birzer, 2003), with enemies to hate, fear, and destroy. This approach may encourage violence

and promote a hostile attitude among police officers towards the communities that they must serve. Many SAPS trainees spend up to two years working at police stations before undergoing training in the South African Basic Police Development Learning Programme. This is to ensure that SAPS officers and investigators undergo proper training to enable them to execute their investigation responsibilities effectively (Eldefonso, Coffey and Grace, 1968:206).

### 3. Policing Challenges in South Africa

Technology has evolved and the advancements have benefitted and shaped police functions over the years. Traditional police strategy consisted mostly of vehicle patrols for crime prevention and responses to calls for service, which swiftly migrated to two-way radio communication and later computer-aided dispatch systems. Modern policing techniques that involve effective law enforcement encompass non-traditional police expectations and require officers who understand a broader range of issues (Schafer and Boyd, 2007).

In order to succeed in DNA cases, it is vital for criminal investigators to possess clear knowledge and understanding of basic fundamentals and the value of DNA evidence (Maharaj, 2013:iii). A lack of knowledge on the part of detectives in DNA-related investigations, as well as a lack of training, coupled with delays in gathering evidence, result in critical evidence being lost or contaminated. This leads to such evidence becoming inadmissible during criminal trials and has an undesirable impact on the conviction rate of such crimes. Crime scene forensic investigations are now digital, including those involving Geographic Information System (GIS) tools. Most police services and agencies around the world are expected to maintain and enforce the law while at the same time coordinating multi-pronged crime prevention efforts on behalf of the communities they serve (Steyn, 2008:40). Also, since investigations involve the careful collection of digital evidence, police officers must possess skills to match those displayed by criminals in committing the crime.

### 4. Professional Training in the South African Police Service (SAPS)

Referred to as law enforcement training centres or police universities, police academies are solely responsible for the education and training of middle- and senior-ranking officers, as well as police administrators (Caglar, 2004). They are the institutions responsible for training police cadets to prepare them for a career in law enforcement (Siebritz, 2022). Globally, workplace learning is the dominant form of training and education (Buckley and Caple, 2009; Dochy and Billett, 2011). Along this line, new recruits in the SAPS undergo a 24-month Basic Police Development Learning Programme, of which 12 months are spent at the academy and 12 months in the workplace. Table 1 lists police academies by location in South Africa.

Table 1: SAPS academy by location in South Africa 2023

SAPS academy	Location
SAPS Academy	Benoni
SAPS Academy	Bishop Lavis
SAPS Academy	Chatsworth
SAPS Academy	Oudtshoorn
SAPS Academy	Paal
SAPS Academy	Philippi
SAPS Academy	City of Tshwane
Tshwane Metro Police Department Academy	City of Tshwane
Addo Police Academy	Kirkwood
DAM School of Policing	Polokwane

Source: Siebritz (2022)

Nikolou-Walker and Meaklim (2007) opine that the SAPS must ensure that officers and staff are skilled to carry out an increasingly complex role in society. This inevitably speaks to participation in a certain amount of ongoing training or professional development, which is essential for organisational effectiveness (Birzer, 2003; Donavant, 2009b). In the police, this training is often mandatory (Brockett, 1992; De Vere and Azzopardi, 2019); however, SAPS officers receive inadequate training on, for example, weapon safety and the use of non-lethal force as a means to apprehend criminals. Ballistics examiners need extensive ballistics training in theoretical sciences and in practice (Dack, 2014), while bloodstain examination needs considerable experience and training to ensure that the interpretation of bloodstain patterns is accurate (Fisher and Fisher, 2012:196).

#### **4.1 Why Police Officers Require On-going Professional Training**

South Africa has an exceptionally high crime rate and South African criminals do everything possible to avoid being apprehended, including eliminating or attacking officers. Walton van Rooyen, a traffic officer, was shot dead on duty while trying to apprehend a suspect for a traffic violation (Hlati, 2020). The SAPS leadership is dominated by political appointees, with limited law enforcement professional experience and/or understanding of the requirements of efficient and accountable policing (Watson, 2013), whose current training in the SAPS may not be relevant and appropriate, and may not be in line with the context and understanding of, for example, the Regulation of Gatherings Act (No. 205 of 1993) (Martin, 2011:9).

There are varied reasons that police officers require ongoing professional development, including changes in the law, changes to police procedures, improvements in equipment, and changes in the demographics of the population (Etter and Griffin, 2011). The nature of policing is becoming increasingly complex and requires continuous officer development and education (Jones and Lister, 2019; Hunter *et al.*, 2019; Huey *et al.*, 2019). In addition, some skills and knowledge acquired by officers are described as “perishable” if not regularly used or practised, such as emergency life support or self-defence tactics (Lysaght and Altschuld, 2000). Law enforcement personnel now confront increasingly complex social issues that require appropriate responses – some of which are difficult to address without adequate training in comprehensive community-based programmes (Napier, 2005). Proper training of police officials who deal with crowd management will enable them to read and assess a situation correctly and respond in a way that will not exacerbate the situation. The SAPS and Metro Police, through the Vuku Zenzele programme, are receiving training in crowd control as part of the broader goal of professionalising public order policing (Mkhize, 2014; Martin, 2011).

Crime patterns and citizen behaviour change as people move from place to place and interact with others and when they interact online and use new technologies, (Kruger, 2008:18).

#### **4.2 Sensitivity to South Africa’s Socio-economic Dynamics**

##### **4.2.1 Economic Inequalities in South Africa**

The role of the police as problem solvers and community partners is expanding rapidly. One of the drivers of violent crime in South Africa is socio-economic inequality. South Africa is a highly unequal country by various measures. Evidence suggests that these inequalities are passed down from previous generations, which implies little change over time (Sulla and Zikhali, 2018:60). Demombynes and Özler (2005) provide evidence that a relationship exists between crime and inequality in South Africa and argue that inequality leads to crime in general, which necessitates new officer training methods (Napier, 2005; Sharp, 2003). It is important for SAPS officers’ education and training to continually adapt to changing law enforcement dynamics (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2015:52).



#### **4.2.2 Sensitivities to the Treatment of Foreign Nationals in the Country**

In light of recent experiences of xenophobia in South Africa, policing refugees and asylum seekers adds an additional layer of complexity to the relationship between the SAPS and non-nationals living in the country, especially in relation to the implementation of relevant legislation. In recent years, the arrest, detention, and deportation of asylum seekers have resulted in litigation against the SAPS for failure to abide by procedural guarantees that resulted in the wrongful deportation of both asylum seekers and refugees from South Africa (Alfaro-Velcamp and Shaw, 2016). SAPS officers are not provided with regular information on the challenges associated with the renewal of asylum permits (Alfaro-Velcamp and Shaw, 2016).

#### **4.2.3 Perception of Corruption within the Ranks of the SAPS**

There is a symbiotic relationship between corruption and law enforcement, which provides an enabling environment for corruption. Between 1995 and 1999, an average of 1 320 police officers were convicted each year on criminal charges (Rademeyer and Wilkinson, 2016). Corrupt officials are more likely to kill or maim other officers in order to keep them quiet (Doorewaard, 2016:265).

### **5. International Best Practices in Law Enforcement Training**

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2020) reports that the FBI's Washington training academy's training and research stand out as the international benchmark for best practices in police training worldwide. This FBI academy provides resources such as shooting ranges, a gym, dormitories, a library, and even a mock town for practical exercises to train both specialised entities and regular law enforcement departments. In the process, the FBI offers standardised training programmes that include field training initiatives, comprehensive firearm training, tactical and emergency vehicle training, survival training, and even executive management training programmes.

On the other hand, the Home Office Central Planning and Training of England and Wales sees merit in centralised police training that uses a teacher-centred training model that focuses on the acquisition of policing knowledge. In this context, tactical survival training for police officials is suitable as most constables see their responsibility as providing law enforcement services to any situation to resolve it. Skills are therefore expected to be developed mainly through experience and not through any formal training system (Southgate, 1988).

Stanislas (2014) recommends the Canadian Police's continuous training methodology and discusses police officers' techniques used in suspect control, the need for police officials to learn from the skills that criminals possess, and to attend training in the interpretation of body language. Stanislas (2014) also suggests that learning interventions that discuss survival guidelines and methodologies will go a long way towards helping police departments, which are often unable to release members to attend contact training sessions.

Within the two-tier Taiwanese police system, both the operational street police and the command/leader tier adhere to the strong tradition of formal education, in which the highly centralised and closed system places a high value on officers' academic qualifications in relation to responsibility (Cao, Huang and Sun, 2016:531-542). The value of a university degree in the police occupational environment will be evident in the innovative training of police officers to enhance police professionalism (Makgopa, 2019). Integrating foundation degrees into police training will enhance officers' workplace learning (Heslop, 2011:302).

## 5.1 Rethinking Traditional and Current Training Needs of South Africa's Law Enforcement Agencies

Ten thousand new police recruits were trained in 2022, and an additional 10 000 are undergoing training in 2023 to curb crime in South Africa (SA News, 2023). The cost of SAPS officers' basic training amounted to R93 647 per capita in 2017 (SAPS, 2017). The training received by SAPS officers at training academies is very basic (Lukele, 2018). The uniqueness of law enforcement is that the police deliver training that is directly linked to the safety and protection of communities. Compared to the South African military, the SAPS relies more heavily on citizens' cooperation for public security provision. This means that police training can directly impact on the levels of confidence, trust, and legitimacy that they are afforded by the public (O'Rawe, 2007). Considering the violent manner in which the Marikana protest was handled by SAPS officials, the necessity of crowd management training cannot be overemphasised (Kinnis, 2019). Tait and Marks (2011) found that the tactical unit of the SAPS does not possess relevant police training to handle public gatherings and manage civil protests. There is also a need for training in the identification, analysis, collection, and preservation of DNA exhibits (Zondi, 2021).

With a current training complement of 257, the SAPS had a shortage of 683 trainers to train 10 000 recruits in April 2023 (Maqhina, 2023). Bayley and Bittner (1984:35) found that training provided in police academies is irrelevant to real police work. This is because of the dominance of physical training over academic teaching in the training colleges. Salem (2019:3) found that there is a lack of effective training quality in the SAPS procedures that is taught to officers, and that this poor training quality has negatively impacted SAPS officers' performance.

Jaschke (2010:302) and Scaramella *et al.* (2011:94) report that, considering the more complex nature of policing, it is necessary to move away from the traditional experience-based training and education to a policing style that relies on science and research. The evolving nature of policing requires police officers with broader knowledge of the policing needs of citizens, not just physical ability and common sense (Kakar, 1998:634; Task Force Report, in Dantzker, 2003:297-298).

The techniques for addressing crime have changed, with Internet-based predators and cybernetics that contribute heavily to the increase in criminal activities. On-duty police officers engage in physically and psychologically demanding tasks (Andersen and Gustafsberg, 2016). Law enforcement in South Africa has evolved from the relatively simplistic guiding philosophy of crime control to the modern perspective of quality-of-life improvement of citizens, which requires broader knowledge of citizens' policing needs, and not only physical ability and common sense (Makgopa, 2019).

The evolution of the mandate of law enforcement agencies necessitates the development of training regimes that are reflective of the prevailing societal expectations of the profession. In order to meet the public safety demands of a contemporary society, law enforcement administrators and trainers must seek to develop innovative approaches that prepare and empower law enforcement personnel to keep pace with increasing and evolving operational requirements. Over the last several years, the use of online professional training has expanded to meet the needs of non-traditional learners often found in law enforcement agencies.

According to Scaramella *et al.* (2011:77), "none of the subjects dealt with in training programmes at the Police Colleges are static. Each one is constantly changing, what we knew yesterday may turn out to be myth tomorrow".

Significant incidents of police misconduct are also regularly reported in the mass media (News24, 2015; Quintal, 2015a), primarily because the use of paramilitary tactics, which are grounded in police training, such as using force to deal with public tension, is common in South Africa (Faull and Newham, 2011).

Training received by officers should reflect police officers' level of preparedness for duty (DiNota and Huhta, 2019; Kleygrewe *et al.*, 2022). In post-conflict societies in particular, such as South Africa, but also in many non-conflict situations, police reform interventions are much needed, often in the form of retraining for police officers with a particular focus on human rights principles (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011:2). With an index of 77.29%, the United Nations (2021) ranks South Africa as having the third highest crime rate globally. As such, the most important task of the country's law enforcement is to ensure public order and fight all kinds of crimes, which they should be adequately prepared for (Steyn, 2008:40).

## 5.2 Online Training for Law Enforcement Agents in South Africa

Online learning refers to a course of study where more than 80% of all content is delivered online, and there are no face-to-face meetings with instructors (Allen and Seaman, 2013). Online training reduces overall operational costs for law enforcement academies by eliminating the added cost of a classroom instructor. In Türkiye, online training has been found to be effective in changing police officers' attitudes (Halicioglu, 2010). Shults *et al.* (2021) suggest that online learning can meet many of the demands of the human brain to engage with the material, retain information, and ultimately perform better in the real world. Online training and learning solutions are ideal to train larger audiences and they also allow self-paced learning (Borszéli, 2021). Schmeekle (2003) asserts that the students who completed online lessons were able to do so in approximately half the time as their counterparts in the traditional classroom setting, without hindering the student's ability to retain information or to learn.

The successful application of e-learning training programmes requires the necessary technological platforms, as well as software and hardware setups. These are imperatives to e-learning (Marshall, 2012; McGill *et al.*, 2014). Considering the continuous advancements in an Internet-based atmosphere, multiple studies have confirmed that the content delivered to employees via e-training programmes is more effective than the content of traditional training programmes (Abdous and Yoshimura, 2010). E-learning training programmes are gaining popularity in law enforcement organisations (Lin *et al.*, 2019) and are considered imperative for the grooming and education of officers (Desai *et al.*, 2006).

Online training narrows the gap between the field and the police college and the university. A police recruit training programme typically provides SAPS officials with a base level of skills in a learning environment where they engage with more capable peers, in the form of more experienced and senior police trainers. In this environment, the novice and expert engage in learning interactions that move both beyond their individual capabilities and develop within the novice a complex interaction of their identity in and knowledge of the practice of policing.

The benefits of managing SAPS field training online include (1) increasing visibility with real-time dashboards, (2) eliminating subjectivity with standardised, in-the-moment scoring, (3) saving time and resources with programme templates, (4) ensuring readiness with easy-add programmes for every role, (5) enhancing programmes with detailed data and comparisons, and (6) reducing risk with documentation at the click of a button. Table 2 lists institutions that currently offer online law enforcement training in South Africa.



Table 2: Type, duration, and cost of online police training by institution

Type of training	Institution	Duration	Fee in 2023
Bachelor of Policing Practices	School of Policing & Law Enforcement	Six semesters	R4 840 per year
Diploma in Policing	School of Policing & Law Enforcement	Two semesters	R3 800
Diploma in Policing	Stadio	Two semesters	R3 800
Higher Certificate in Paralegal Studies	School of Policing & Law Enforcement	Two semesters	R4 620
Face Recognition Training	Knowledge Academy	One month	R38 495
Forensics Investigations	University of South Africa		
Forensics and Police Investigation	Skills Academy		
Diploma in Criminal Justice Forensic Investigations	Lyceum Correspondence College for Higher Education	Three to six years	R19 704
Law Enforcement Training	George Fivaz Forensic & Risk		
Crowd control	HJN Training		
Investigation and Evidence Reporting	HJN Training		
Digital Forensics	Cyanre		

Source: Institutional websites

### Conclusion

The South African Portfolio Committee on Police (2023) expressed grave concern regarding the severity of law enforcement trainers in the country. Salem (2019) reports that even when officers are trained, their training needs are rarely assessed before they are deployed to training facilities. Law enforcement agencies in advanced economies such as the USA have expressed concern about the minimal amount of investigation training that their investigators and patrol officers receive (Horvath *et al.*, 2001). In recent years, modern policing has acknowledged the proliferation of handheld smartphones, which has promoted citizen documentation of troubling police-citizen encounters. This calls for police reform that also requires new forms of training.

Policing is a task-based function that cannot be based on academic theory only. Skills that are based on experience gained must be included in police training to develop a well-balanced police official with the necessary interpersonal skills to solve problems and handle people effectively (Southgate, 1988). Online learning offers agencies an effective and cost-efficient method for teaching officers about policy changes. However, many of the states in Midwestern USA reject online law enforcement basic training in police academies because policymakers question its effectiveness compared to face-to-face learning (Kinnison, 2017). However, many other states allow online training to meet law enforcement officers' continuing education requirements.

Traditional teaching is generally preferred for its comparative effectiveness over training methods, depending on learner type and their previous educational levels (Donavant, 2009a). Blended learning that combines classroom and online learning appears imperative to help officers incorporate theory into practical training and real-life police work (Blumberg *et al.*, 2019). While online learning can never replace the "hands-on" process of acquiring physical skills such as driving, shooting, and defensive tactics, online training can play a critical role in developing the decision-making skills required to

effectively perform these skills. A large proportion of ongoing training courses in the police service in England and Wales are made mandatory by the organisation and are delivered online (Honest, 2016).

In today's criminal justice system, one of the most powerful tools in the search for the truth is DNA evidence, but the complexity of forensic DNA technologies, techniques, and analysis presents new challenges to prosecutors, defence lawyers, and judges. This should be incorporated into SAPS basic training. Also, while DNA is significant and conclusive in solving a number of crime cases, SAPS academies' lack of DNA equipment compromises assessment. While there are four DNA testing centres in South Africa, only two are operational (Zondi, 2021).

Online training programmes are now available to handle the complexities involved in DNA evidence presentation (Schmitt, 2006). It is also possible to use online training as a "warm-up" exercise to maximise in-person training sessions when needed. This will give officers online pre-work to enable them to better understand the main topics and information before they arrive for on-site training.

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