

**Which factors stimulate police officers to take up
training as ‘self-enroller’, taking the initiative
and/or investing their own time and/or money?**

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Summary and Conclusions

It has always been common practice in the police force that police officers are signed up for training courses at the Police Academy by their superiors, that courses are paid for by the force, and courses are taken during working hours. As a result, it is practically out of the question that police officers take the initiative (as a 'self-enroller') for a course at the Police Academy, investing their own time and/or money. In the consultations between the Director of Police and the police unions at the end of 2011, however, the need was expressed to increase the number of 'self-enrollers'. The term 'self-enrollers' refers to police officers who partly or fully at their own initiative and/or partly or fully during their own time and/or with their own money, take a training course. As opportunities for self-enrollers have always been limited, it is unknown what factors would encourage police officers to take a training course as 'self-enroller'. Neither is it known how flexibilisation of police training, defined as offering variations in the organisation and setup of the training programme, could play a role in the process of getting more self-enrollers. This leads to the following research question:

How can police officers be encouraged or facilitated to render them more inclined in the future to self-enroll for training courses - partly or fully at their own initiative, and partly or fully with the investment of their own time and/or money - and could flexibilisation of police training play a role in this process?

This summary presents the main findings of the study.

Research Approach

For this study, use was made of a combination of quantitative and qualitative research: a literature study, a survey among police officers, interviews with parties involved in police training, interviews with police officers, interviews with 'hands-on' experts in the field of education in fields outside the police force, and a focus group of stakeholders. The survey constitutes the principal part of the study. The survey was distributed among 2,411 police officers, 1,044 of whom completed the questionnaire in part or in full. The response rate of the survey is therefore 43%.

Incentives to Increase the Number of Self-enrollers

The two incentives that have the greatest effect on the willingness to 'self-enroll' for training are of a financial nature. For a large majority of respondents, 'A higher salary' and 'being allowed to take a paid course' would be reasons for greater willingness to self-enroll for courses in the future. Even if the possibility were given of taking a training course during working hours, the willingness to partly or fully pay for courses and to take the initiative would increase among half of the police officers. Being allowed to take a training course of their choice or the guarantee of obtaining a position matching the training level, also has a positive effect on the willingness to

self-enroll for approximately half of the respondents. Offering flexible types of training, such as modular courses and time- and place-independent learning, have a relatively less stimulating effect on the willingness to partly or fully self-enroll for training, but nevertheless increases the willingness of approximately a third of the respondents.

The results of this study show that of the three facets of self-enrolling, the willingness to take the initiative is the one that can be influenced most. On the other hand, it appears slightly less easy to encourage police officers to do training in their own time. It is even more difficult to influence the willingness to make a financial contribution to the cost of the training.

Feasibility of Incentives

Training leads to a higher salary in current job/training course is paid for by employer

One of the incentives that increases the willingness of most police officers to self-enroll for training, is the employer paying for the course. However, this incentive is at odds with one of the three facets of self-enrolling explored in this study: participants fully or partly paying for the training course. If, on the basis of various interviews and the focus group, we start from the real situation of constraints on training budgets, then financial incentives such as a course being paid for by the employer or higher salaries in one's current job, are incompatible with this reality. This implies that the implementation of the incentives 'higher salary in current job' and 'training course is paid for' requires an unrealistic increase of financial resources within the units. The immediate conclusion is therefore that these two incentives are not in line with current police policies.

At the same time, the willingness to take the initiative and/or invest time in a training course increases for sixty per cent of the police officers who completed the survey if the employer were to pay for the course. This appears to offer the possibility to give a major boost to self-enrolling on the basis of the facets of own initiative and time. In fact, this is a trade-off scenario that has been successfully applied in a large health care institute in the Randstad. The institute concluded that it would cost much more to take employees out of the work schedule for training than to pay for the training course itself. For this reason, the institute chose to concentrate on increasing the willingness of staff to take training courses in their own time. Only if employees clearly benefit from the training course, they are asked to make a financial contribution. Such training courses greatly improve the general labour market perspectives for the employee concerned, also outside the institute itself.

Taking a training course during working hours

Taking a training course during working hours is an incentive that would also create a greater willingness among relatively a high percentage of police officers in this survey to show initiative in the future and/or pay all or part of the training course. However,

even though this incentive appears to work with respect to those two facets of self-enrolling, it achieves the opposite of what this study explores: that police officers take more training in their own time. At best, this incentive could be used to establish a trade-off, in which a considerable number of police officers would be prepared to take the initiative and pay all or part of the training costs, but then on condition that the course can be taken during working hours.

Employees can take a course of their choice

The study shows that approximately half of all police executives indicate that they have not refused a single training request in the previous three years. This implies that these executives do not obstruct the choices of their employees with regard to training courses, which is a positive aspect for the incentive 'employees can take a course of their choice'. Nevertheless, the required approval of their superiors in itself could interfere with the sense of freedom of choice. Optimal introduction of the 'freedom of choice' incentive would therefore imply that intervention of superiors is no longer required for registration for certain training courses. This does not, however, answer the question who pays for the course and in whose time this course is taken. For approximately half of the police officers, the freedom of choice incentive has a positive effect both on the willingness to spend their own time on the course and on the willingness to invest their own money in the course. The 'freedom of choice' incentive therefore appears potentially successful in order to create more self-enrollers. It would be necessary in that case to ensure that courses are flexible enough to enable employees to take them in their own time.

Guarantee of a job matching the acquired training level

Interviews have shown that training courses to date were frequently linked to promotion or a change of jobs. The wish to have more police officers in the future take the initiative and pay for their training courses, is also prompted by the idea that police officers would then make their choices for such courses on more intrinsic grounds. It is considered increasingly less desirable that the motivation for taking a training course is extrinsically driven. The incentive of a guaranteed job matching the training level therefore seems incompatible with the shift from a human resources policy based on the legal position to a development-oriented policy.

The training course can be taken in modules/learning is time- and place-independent

Various interviews, meetings and the focus group of policy experts have shown that the Police Academy is positively inclined towards offering more modular courses and applying e-learning. E-learning makes courses time- and place-independent. Moreover, these incentives probably affect budgets the least. The example from the health care sector (see page 53) also shows that, by making use of e-learning for knowledge components of the courses, employees need not be given leave. This limits staffing problems.

Final Conclusions

Compared to the other incentives, the incentives provided by the flexibilisation of police training, modular education and time- and place-independent learning, appear to encourage relatively few police officers to be more willing to take the initiative or to invest time or money. Nevertheless, the potential of such incentives must not be underestimated. After all, the proper reference framework is not the effectiveness of the other, largely extrinsic, financial incentives. The reference framework is the existing situation, in which training courses are usually initiated and paid for by the police force and can be taken during working hours. This is the 'ist' situation in which the study was done and to which the organisation and its employees are used. The first conclusion is:

Because of the existing policy on training courses, police officers are used to take part in such courses for extrinsic reasons. The 'soll' situation, in which more police officers take part in courses partly or fully as self-enroller, is far removed from the situation that police officers and their organisation have been used to until now.

Using this 'ist' situation as a point of departure, it is unlikely that new incentives can be found that would suddenly motivate a majority of the police officers to invest time in a course or pay for such a course. In that sense, it is a confirmation of the degree to which those involved are used to the current situation that the extrinsically motivating incentives based on time and money are effective for so many of the police officers taking part in the survey. In this light, the second conclusion is very positive and promising:

Flexible education, including offering more modular courses and time- and place-independent learning, increases the willingness to self-enroll, partly or fully, for future training courses for no less than a third of the police officers.

This shows that, in spite of their being used to the current extrinsically motivated training policy, a considerable number of police officers already responds to intrinsic incentives.

The study also shows that trade-offs can be established between various facets of self-enrolling. It would be very ambitious and, considering the research outcomes, not very realistic to want to go from a situation without self-enrollers to a situation with a large number of police officers who both take the initiative for training courses entirely by themselves and pay for these courses themselves, as well as doing the courses in their own time. It does appear to be possible, as a first step in this direction, to find more police officers prepared to show more initiative and invest time in a training course, provided it is paid for by the employer. More than 60% of all police officers would then be prepared to do a course in their own time or at their own

initiative. This trade-off - the course is paid for by the employer, but done in the employee's own time - is already effective in the health care sector, as shown by the example on page 68. The third conclusion is therefore:

Self-enrolling can be encouraged in more than 60% of the police officers with regard to the facets of 'own initiative' and/or 'own time', as long as the police force pays for the course. This can be complementary to stimulating self-enrolling through modular and time- and place-independent learning.

The study therefore shows that various incentives can be used to encourage police officers to take training courses in the future as self-enroller. Flexible education, such as modular courses and time- and place-independent learning, constitute the two incentives that appear to have the least effect on budgets and at the same time appeal to the intrinsic motivation of police officers.

Police executives already appear to be ready to a reasonable degree for a situation in which more police officers self-enroll for training courses. This is indicated by various results. Chapter 2 describes that approximately half of all superiors indicated that they have not refused a single training request in the previous three years. If a training request was refused, this was usually for budgetary reasons, and less often for content-related reasons. This suggests an open attitude towards requests from personnel. Chapter 2 also shows that executives believe that the initiative for most types of training courses should be taken significantly more often by employees than by superiors. This indicates that executives no longer believe that only they should determine who takes what course and when. Nevertheless, approximately half of the employees still feels insufficiently supported by their superiors when it comes to career opportunities and commitments in this field. This leads to the fourth conclusion:

All in all, executives appear to have the right disposition to a reasonable degree to handle future self-enrollers, but this is not sufficiently reflected in the practical experience of employees.

However much willingness to take the initiative and to invest time and money in the future can be achieved among police officers, this will have to be widely supported at executive level. Interviews with educationalists both from the health care and the education sectors, show that it is crucial that the idea that training and education are something that employees can take the initiative for, must be propagated as well as applied in a concrete, consistent and top-down way.