

# **“BENEFITS OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES PERSONNEL”**

**Survey Results and Case Studies as Reported  
By Recent Graduates and Course Participants**

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# Research Rationale

- Research aim is to investigate the effect of professional education on managers' performance
- Importance of reflective practice emphasized via case studies
- Goal of professional education is wise action in the field
- Wise action facilitates improved performance for emergency services managers

# Advantages of Professional Education

- Lower cynicism
- Less authoritarian
- Fewer discipline problems
- Higher performance ratings
- Fewer complaints against
- Lower dogmatism
- Greater adaptability
- More open minded
- Greater acceptance of minorities
- Higher motivation
- More flexibility in problem solving
- Less rigid enforcement of law
- Higher value for ethical conduct
- Better job knowledge

# Reference Literature

- Niederhoffer (1967)
- Smith (1967-70)
- Geary (1970)
- Saunders (1970)
- Cohen & Chaiken (1972)
- Guller (1972)
- Bozza (1972)
- Gross (1973)
- Dalley (1975)
- Furkenauaur (1975)
- Finnegan (1976)
- Parker et al (1976)
- Weiner (1976)
- Cascio & Real (1976)
- Sanderson (1977)
- Barry (1978)
- Roberg (1978)
- Smith (1978)
- Weirman (1978)
- Wycoff & Susmulch (1979)
- Lester (1983)
- Carter & Sapp (1990)
- Worden (1990)
- Shernock (1992)
- Palumbo (1995)
- Truxill (1998)

# Gaps Education Literature

- Most research is at least ten years old
- Managers often overlooked in research
- Adult education a new growth area
- Majority of research has been carried out in the United States

# Significance of Study

- Management education is a feature of professionalisation
- New area of research (gap in existing knowledge)
- Implications for facilitating change in organisations and creating learning organisations
- Ties in individual performance with organisational needs
- Indicates if participants in the study perceived an increase in competencies required for policing
- Accountability of government organisations

# Issues Associated with Assessing Performance

- Old paradigm measures, such as arrest rates and response times may be out of date in some cases
- Supervisor reports may be biased
- Little standardisation
- Reluctance of organisations to share information

# The Competency Movement

- The use of competencies are one way of measuring performance (especially if used with other measures)
- New paradigm measures, such as strategic thinking and analytical capacity are more appropriate
- Standardisation is possible
- Less biased if based on correct observations
- Can be used by outside researchers



Based upon your professional education and completing your course how would you rate yourself in the following areas?

## LEADERSHIP ABILITY

Improved	70.5%
Remained the same	29.5%

## UNDERSTANDING OF MANAGEMENT

Improved	90.5%
Remained the same	9.5%

## COMPREHENSION OF ETHICS

Improved	61%
Remained the same	38.5%
Decreased	0.5%

# DECISION MAKING

Improved	78%
Remained the same	22%

# PROBLEM SOLVING

Improved	62.5%
Remained the same	37.5%

# ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Improved	65.2%
Remained the same	34.8%

# ABILITY TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE

Improved	68.5%
Remained the same	20.3%
Decreased	11.2%

# Initial Survey Conclusions

- **After completing professional education improved job performance was perceived by 67% of respondents**
- **Managers who completed professional university courses were more confident across a number of management competencies**
- **Decision making confidence was the competency area that was perceived to have improved the most**
- **Motivation may decrease for some managers with high expectations for promotion based upon their professional education**
- **Overall, managers were satisfied with their professional education courses and had a favourable view towards their studies**

# Decision Making

- Three perspectives of decision making
  - Mathematical
  - Psychological
  - Management
- My research will take a management perspective
- Decision making is a comprehensive process involving eight steps that include identifying a problem, selecting an alternative and evaluating the effectiveness of the decision.

(Adapted from Robbins, Bergman, Stagg and Coutler: 2000)

## Decision Making Case Studies

- All were course members at the Australian Institute of Police Management from 2002 to 2003
- All were employed by various emergency services organisations within Australia
- Gender
  - 77% male
  - 23% female
- Rank
  - 14% front line managers
  - 74% middle managers
  - 12% unsworn/civilian
- University Degrees
  - 54% had a least one degree
  - 46% did not have a degree

Course participants were divided into groups of 5 or 6 (12 groups in total) and asked to make decisions about a number of case studies

# The Decision-Making Process

- **Step 1** Identifying a problem
- **Step 2** Identifying decision criteria
- **Step 3** Allocating weights to the criteria
- **Step 4** Developing alternatives
- **Step 5** Analysing alternatives
- **Step 6** Selecting an alternative
- **Step 7** Implementing the alternative
- **Step 8** Evaluating decision effectiveness

- Management scenarios included operational, administrative, political, media and community considerations for which decisions needed to be made

## **Case Study Findings**

- Groups followed the same decision making process but final outcomes were quite different
- “Group Think” was very prevalent in 5 groups and appears to be more prevalent where individuals have not completed professional education
- No decisions were made in 3 groups and these groups thought that this was a decision
- Political considerations were least evident and community considerations were most evident in all group decisions