



# Coaching Police Conflict Management

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Police officers need to be capable of effectively managing conflict in police–citizen encounters in alignment with the goals of society. Concerning professional conduct within these settings, there are a plethora of factors contributing to the competence of quality policing (Norris & Norris, 1993). While competence (or expertise) might be

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an essential ingredient for professional police conduct, it is the result of a continuous development of the individual that has to be regularly renewed (Staller & Körner, 2021). Depending on their current operational assignments, police officers need the skills, knowledge, attitudes, belief system, and so on that allow them to professionally perform that duty (Bennell et al., 2022). Society, and police organizations as part of it, have to ensure that, when individuals perform that societal task of policing, they have learnt (and further continue to learn) what is needed.

Police trainers<sup>1</sup> are mandated by police organizations to develop these learning environments, including what is taught and how it is taught. While we fully acknowledge that specific organizational regulations constrain the work of police trainers (Cushion, 2022), there is always room for the trainer's agency.

In the current chapter we focus on the police trainer and what they do on a daily basis, which we conceptualize as *coaching*. We start with a brief conceptualization of learning as the basis for understanding the process that police trainers are focused upon. We then go on to conceptualize what we understand by *coaching* and provide a coaching model consisting of six knowledge dimensions that aims at (a) helping and supporting police trainers within their daily activity and (b) providing a framework for police organizations concerning learning and development for their trainers.

## 1 A Broad Conceptualization of Learning

Human development is a continuous, never-ending process that is dependent of various contexts and interactions within these contexts (Huston & Bentley, 2010; Osher et al., 2018). We refer to this change in the individual's system state and capacity due to interaction with the environment as *learning*. As such our conceptualization of learning

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<sup>1</sup> We refer to police trainers as any professional that is responsible for learning settings within the systems of the police and that aim at developing the competence (or expertise) of police officers to engage in police–citizen interactions, including the management of conflict. We stick to the term “trainer” since it is a widely accepted term, even though we feel that coach would be a much better fit for these individuals.

extends to what is—depending on the literature—referred to as training, development, and/or education (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009; Huisjes et al., 2018) in organizational contexts (for a more thorough discussion on our conceptualization of learning, see Staller & Koerner, 2022a).

By referring to our broad understanding of learning we do not point towards a specific setting or activity where such learning has occurred. Also, our understanding extends beyond traditional views, where learning in training settings is concerned with intended changes, also being referred to as the *learning outcomes* (Illeris, 2007). Instead, we contend that police officers are subject to various interactional contexts within their training (beyond explicit learning outcomes), where learning has the potential to occur and that ultimately unfolds its impact when performing their daily duty.

From our perspective, learning is an interactional process between individuals and information leading to permanent changes in the individual system's capacity. As such, information—as the individual's counterpart—potentially to be acted upon, is omnipresent: experiences, training activities, drills, learning material, thoughts, something we hear, something we see, or something that happens to us. As such, as soon as we interact with our physical or social environment, or with stored or generated information in our minds, we learn. This understanding of learning entails—but does not limit learning to—the mental processes that take place in the individual and that can lead to intended and unintended changes.

Our broad conceptualization of learning is more equivalent to the definition of Illeris (2007) who defines learning as “any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing” (p. 3). Adopting such a broad conceptualization has major consequences, especially concerning learning to manage conflictual situations in the line of police work. These premises form the basis of our account:

- Premise 1: Learning is a continuous, contemporaneous process;
- Premise 2: Learning is not fully controllable;
- Premise 3: Learning is done by the individual.

Concerning premise (1), learning is more than engaging in explicit learning settings such as de-escalation training, police use of force training, personal protection training, or firearms training. Vast amounts of research show that learning takes place in formal, non-formal, and informal learning settings (Ichijo & Nonaka, 2007). Learning encompasses explicit as well as implicit processes (Hoy & Murphy, 2001). Learning even occurs when it is not intended to.

This directly refers to premise (2). If, and when, and to what extent learning occurs eludes external control. External information that the individual acts upon can be influenced, for example, through the presentation of knowledge, setting up learning experiences that, in turn, manage what and who individuals engage with. However, the effects—namely what is learned through these interactions—remains vague. Also, interactions that the learning individual will have with the learning material, thoughts, or people are often beyond the control of external influences and remain at the discretion of the individual, which points to premise (3). Ultimately, learning is done by the individual. It is a highly individualized and constructivist process.

According to the paradigm of ecological dynamics, individual, task, and environmental constraints provide individual affordances and opportunities for learning which allow the trainee or learner to attune to information and to specify and guide their learning process (Seifert et al., 2019). As ecological psychology emphasizes, the learning individual attunes (consciously and subconsciously) to different sources of information, for example learning material, peer groups, social media, or one's own thoughts (Staller, Koerner, & Zaiser, 2022; Wood & Williams, 2017). Also, different intensity levels of interaction (e.g., (un)conscious, (de)motivated) are heavily dependent on the individual's capacities and state at the moment of interaction (Gorges & Kandler, 2012; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

Furthermore, learning as a change in the individual's capacity posits that the starting point of any learning process is the current system state that is altered through interaction with information. As such, the starting point is always highly individual, depending on different capacities and internal (e.g., emotional and motivational) states (Orth et al., 2018). Finally, each interaction and the subsequent alteration in the individual's

state provides another opportunity for interaction. Using those experiences to learn from is at the heart of experiential and reflexive learning theories (Brookfield, 1998; Kolb, 2015; Schön, 1983).

## 2 Coaching in Police Conflict Management

Based on the assumption that learning (to engage in policing practices and manage conflicts) is at the heart of organizational endeavors to provide police officers with opportunities for meaningful interactions, police organizations assign, recruit, and/or develop professional personnel to foster learning of officers. These personnel are referred to as police trainers, instructors, or coaches (Staller & Koerner, 2021a). From our understanding, *coaching* most adequately describes the core activity of these personnel. Even though the term *coaching* “exists (happily) without academic consensus” (Cushion & Lyle, 2016, p. 109), we adopt a conceptualization that holistically fosters the learning process. From our perspective the terms *instructor* and *trainer* carry the notion of an isolated individual that fosters learning on the side of the police officer through the transmission of information (via instructing and/or training) that allows for the development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed. This notion of a one-sided process is supported by observations within police learning settings that point towards a prevalence of mechanistic, behavioral approaches to training (Basham, 2014; Birzer, 2003; Cushion, 2020; Körner & Staller, 2018; Staller, Koerner, Heil, Klemmer et al., 2021). These approaches seem to be underpinned by an understanding of learning that Cushion (2022) describes as a “construed [...] unproblematic process of transmission and assimilation” (p. 2) and this reflects this one-sidedness. Within such an approach to learning, learners are conceptualized as machines that react based on the input of the machine handler—the trainer or instructor. Here, components of the learning system relate to each other with linear cause and effect relationships, leading to fixed preplanned programs and clear conceptions about what is right or wrong in any given training activity. An alternative view would be to conceptualize the learner as a complex adaptive

system that is a co-producer of the learning process (see Pol et al., 2020 for an extensive discussion of these two perspectives).

Within such a conceptualization, learning would occur through interpersonal synergy (Orth et al., 2018) instead of a one-sided top-down process as *instructing*, *informing*, and *telling* (which is heavily in line with a traditional *training approach*) may infer. An interpersonal-synergy approach would consist of “softer pedagogical approaches” (Woods et al., 2021), where the trainers’ own role is reflected as being part of an interactive complex endeavor, where guidance towards individual task solutions in a complex environment are key. Within such a systemic approach to learning, the coach, like the learner, is part of the learning system (Kade, 2004; Orth et al., 2018). As such, learning is co-created by the two actors and takes place on both sides.

This interpersonal synergy is highly complex, where alterations in one specific aspect (e.g., the mood of the trainer, an injury of the police officer) may impact the whole system. Under the assumption of complexity, control cannot be exerted by the controlling of cause and effect relationships (see premise 2 of learning). Control can only be exercised via insights into the complex structure of coaching-related knowledge domains. With this insight, the police trainer has the potential to perform the core activity of coaching: decision-making (Staller & Koerner, 2022b). Trainers have to continuously make decisions that may relate to macro-strategic goals, meso-planning goals, or micro-moment-to-moment goals based on emerging information within the specific learning system. It requires the application of explicit and implicit knowledge in decision-making related to the specific setting and achievement of learning, development, and performance goals of police officers. This is done by negotiating and considering the specific contexts and requirements of the organization. The judgments and decisions made are embedded in long-term strategic goals related to daily practice. Professional judgment and decision-making are a dynamic, forward-and-backward-looking, regulatory process that continuously monitors learning and development steps and adjusts them according to the progress made and the emergence of new learning goals (Martindale & Collins, 2013; Martindale et al., 2017). Coaching requires professional knowledge and a skill base that emphasizes understanding, perceiving,

simulating, diagnosing, solving, planning, dealing with uncertainty, reflecting, and self-regulating (Abraham, 2015).

This conceptualization recognizes that coaching is a decision-making process occurring in complex, dynamic, and unanticipated situations and that is highly context-specific (Staller & Körner, 2021; Turner et al., 2012). What works well in one situation may not be effective in another. A good coach in judo or Thai boxing does not necessarily have to be a good trainer in the police use of force; a good trainer for SWAT officers does not have to be a good trainer for regular officers on patrol (Staller & Körner, 2021).

### 3 A Coaching Model

In order to assist police trainers with the complexity of coaching, we have developed (Staller & Zaiser, 2015) and refined (Staller, 2021) a coaching model for the specific context of police conflict management. The model is focused on six different dimensions of knowledge: who, what, how, the coaching self, the coaching context, and the actual coaching practice. To express the professional nature of coaching practice, we named it the Professional Coaching Model (Koerner & Staller, 2022; Staller & Koerner, 2022b).

From a practical point of view, the coaching process within this model can be seen as a series of decisions. These are initiated by a goal and eventually tested against that goal to choose the best option for a particular training situation (Abraham & Collins, 2011). This process is then repeated endlessly to adapt to changes in situations and over different time spans (i.e., micro, meso, and macro). In order to make optimal decisions, the police trainer needs a sound understanding of the six knowledge domains and their mutual interactions in order to systematically plan, conduct, and reflect on training sessions (see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 Professional Coaching Model for police training (Source Staller, 2021)

## Knowledge Dimension 1: Understanding the “Who”

The knowledge dimension “Who” focuses on the learning individual—the police officer in a training setting. Who is the individual? What are his or her wants and needs? What does the person need to be particularly motivated? What demotivates the individual?

The background for this is that training and developing people in teaching–learning settings is a complex bio-psycho-social process (Bailey et al., 2010; Collins et al., 2012; MacNamara et al., 2011). A deep understanding of the learner’s wants and needs is therefore essential to designing optimal learning environments that are challenging, motivating, and relevant (Abraham & Collins, 2011). The extent to which a person experiences a particular situation as challenging and/or motivating or classifies a training content as relevant to him or her depends on the person’s subjective experience. To the extent that learners’ wants and needs are not served in training settings, there is a risk of reduced motivation (Honess, 2016, 2020) with subsequent negative consequences for learning new skills (Kanfer, 1996). Simply put, if you are not motivated to learn, you will learn little.

For this purpose, police trainers need knowledge structures that provide (a) explanatory approaches to motivation and engagement in training at a general level, and (b) specific bodies of knowledge about the learners in the specific training programs of operational training. The focus here is on theories and concepts that make it possible to understand the subjective experience of the learners and to design the learning environment in such a way that a motivational and positive learning climate is made possible. On a general level, this includes theories of motivation (e.g., self-determination theory), group dynamic processes, or the motivational effects of pedagogical training approaches; on a specific level, the socio-cultural context of police learning settings or the individual motivational structures of police officers are important. Research in the field of police training provides some key findings for both levels in terms of learners' wants and needs. For example, the learning content in police training was not perceived as relevant if officers could not apply the content in their specific work environment (Honess, 2016, 2020). This was also confirmed by officers in the study (Staller, Koerner, Heil et al., 2022a).

## **Knowledge Dimension 2: Understanding the “What”**

Police trainers need knowledge structures regarding the content of police training: What should be learned and trained? This refers to (a) theories and (action) concepts on aggression, violence and interaction dynamics, communication, and (non-)physical conflict management, and (b) the requirements of the learners' specific operational environments. Based on this—and in alignment with any existing curricula—the content of police training can be created.

The content that is taught in police training is directly linked to the understanding of the “who”. The relevance of any content should be high, given that the time for training is perceived to be always too short (Jager et al., 2013; Renden et al., 2015). It is worth noting that relevance reflects an individual value that connects to performance in the field but also to the motivation to engage with the content (Abraham &

Collins, 2011). While normatively one could think that the two relevance criteria are the same, current research shows that what is needed in the field does not necessarily reflect the relevance criteria as to why learners are motivated to engage with certain content (Koerner et al., 2021; Staller, 2022).

The diversity of police tasks requires different performance models for different user groups. For example, the demand on police officers on patrol is more focused on citizen-oriented interactions between police and civil society, whereas special tactical teams or undercover officers take different approaches to police–citizen interactions. The content of training should therefore be based on the demands and requirements of the specific performance environment than on the various alternatives for addressing those requirements (e.g., firearms training, self-defense, verbal communication). Expertise in conflict situations is the result of individual information-based interaction between the learner and the environment. However, the environment differs depending on the task. The specific characteristics of the police mission (e.g., citizen-oriented policing on patrol, domestic violence intervention, tactical hostage intervention) influence the level of complexity of the situation. Viewed through a systems theoretical perspective, complexity includes different levels and dimensions (Luhmann, 2009). The degree of complexity of a situation depends on the type and number of influencing variables with factual, temporal, and social relevance (Staller & Körner, 2020). Here, it becomes clear that police–citizen contact is complex and allows for a multitude of possible courses of action and interaction. The more complex the situation, the more difficult it becomes to determine “the right” action. On a pedagogical level, this means that the more complex the situation is, the more principle-based a to-be-learnt solution might be without neglecting the potential for alternative solutions. For the practice of police training, this means that the design of learning and testing environments should focus on individual and situational “right” actions—actions that suffice to attain the intended outcome.

Concerning the selected training content, the time available for training must also be considered. As a rule of thumb, the less training time available, the more principle-based the techniques and tactics taught should be (Staller et al., 2020).

## **Knowledge Dimension 3: Understanding the “How”**

The third knowledge dimension of “how” focuses on questions that relate to the design of the learning environment, that is, police training. Which training activities should be carried out and how should they be designed? Answering these questions requires knowledge structures about (training) pedagogical theories and concepts in order to optimally design learning opportunities for the participants. Three aspects seem particularly important: (a) developing a functional relationship between trainer and learner, (b) moderating the expectations and perceptions with which learners enter a training setting, and (c) designing effective learning environments for the acquisition of professionally relevant skills.

### **The Functional Relationship Between Learners and Police Trainers**

In terms of building functional relationships between learners and outreach trainers, it is important to behave in a way that lets learners know they are cared for, respected, and trusted (Abraham et al., 2015; Sagar & Jowett, 2012). Also, it seems to be important for police trainers to be trustworthy, hardworking, and knowledgeable, as this positively impacts people’s willingness to respect that person (Langdon, 2007). Therefore, it seems important for trainers to demonstrate these qualities, along with caring, equality in interactions, and shared goals, in order to build quality relationships with learners. With regard to police training in particular, initial studies show that the trainer serves as a role model for recruits and that the learners greatly appreciate being treated as equals (Staller, Koerner, Heil et al., 2022a). Also, interview data from recruits of a German special unit suggest that feelings of being cared for, respected, and trusted are functional elements that foster learning performance (unpublished data).

## Expectations and Perceptions of Learners

The design of training activities is closely linked to the expectations and perceptions with which learners participate in police training. Learners may have specific assumptions about what training is best and what they subjectively need. For example, the need for safety and orientation in technique execution on the one hand contrasts with more chaotic forms of training that promote adaptive behavior and variability. A recent study with police trainees regarding the training of defensive actions against knife attacks showed that non-linear training (with many chaotic elements) led to more adaptive and situation-adapted behavior, though the subjective perception of the participants differed (Koerner et al., 2021). Thus, the subjectively perceived relevance of training activities is an important aspect in the planning and reflection of coaching. In terms of the perceived relevance of training content, studies showed that Australian patrolling officers wished that more verbal-communication and de-escalation skills were integrated into police training (Rajakaruna et al., 2017), whereas German officers pointed out the relevance of effectively interacting with individuals in crisis (Wittmann et al., 2020). In addition and related to the last aspect of designing effective learning environments, the police officers in several studies reported the need for more realistic training (Rajakaruna et al., 2017; Staller, Koerner, Heil, Abraham et al., 2021).

## Designing Effective Learning Environments in Police Training

Training programs must be designed in such a way that what is learned and trained there can be transferred into practice, that is, can be applied there. The selection of (training) pedagogical strategies must be measured against this. Several different approaches exist in training pedagogy and motor research, and their situation-specific, well-reflected selection is an important aspect of professional coaching (Collins & Collins, 2020). Accordingly, police trainers need declarative knowledge structures about

different approaches and their mode of action in order to use them situationally, adaptively, and effectively (Staller et al., 2020). An essential aspect seems to be knowledge about the underlying learning theories (Olson & Bruner, 1996). Here, it is not a matter of understanding and implementing “the one” teaching–learning theory, but of understanding the advantages and disadvantages of different theories and making them applicable in practice in a situationally justified way.

### **Knowledge Dimension 4: Understanding the “Context”**

Coaching in police training is highly contextual (Cushion, 2022; Staller & Körner, 2021). The context in which police trainers work influences, limits, and enables what they do. This includes the social, cultural, and political context of the work environment. For police training, this includes resources, logistical and physical constraints, organizational or institutional values, laws and regulations, accepted practices and traditions, and the expectations of others (e.g., classes, other police trainers, learners, supervisors). For example, the assigned learner’s specific use (e.g., patrol officer vs. criminal investigator), the given regulations regarding the operational skills to be trained, and the resources available for that purpose significantly influence what is possible in training. In addition, the societal and political climate, the current values of the police organization itself, including individuals at the management level, and the immediate supervisors influence the context and culture of daily police training practices. For example, in Germany a politically communicated orientation towards a more robust police force (Behr, 2018, 2019) influences decisions about what to teach in training. A deep understanding of the dynamics of power and dominance relations between learners and police trainers and the influence of dominant traditions in training is an important basis for overcoming problematic coaching approaches. An examination of one’s own coaching philosophy allows for professionalization opportunities here (North, 2013). In addition, there is a basic understanding of theories of socialization in the police context and in deployment training, such as cop culture (Myhill & Bradford, 2013) and the mindset regarding the conduct of police work

(Li et al., 2021; McLean et al., 2019; Stoughton, 2015). Knowledge of these contextual factors forms the basis for reflections on the factors influencing one's actual practice in police training.

### **Knowledge Dimension 5: Understanding the “Self”**

The fifth dimension, understanding the self, comprises the sum of one's own knowledge, beliefs, values, and behavior, which is considered essential for continuous personal development and for ensuring the quality of one's own practice of action (Buchheit, 2017). Here, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge structures can be differentiated. Skills and abilities and knowledge in these two areas are regularly emphasized (Abraham & Collins, 2015; Gilbert & Baldis, 2014).

Interpersonal knowledge refers to structures that enable the trainer to communicate appropriately and effectively with learners, peers, supervisors, and others (Bowes & Jones, 2006). For police training in particular, findings indicate that effective communication with supervisors is an essential, albeit sometimes frustrating, aspect of police training (unpublished data from Körner et al., 2019a, 2019b). Therefore, developing these interpersonal skills may prove useful in communicating ideas, discussing problems, or negotiating change within the organization.

The intrapersonal knowledge of trainers relates to their self-understanding of their own role and allows for introspection and reflection (Côté & Gilbert, 2009). This includes aspects such as one's coaching philosophy and values, self-reflection and self-control, lifelong learning, and self-regulation (Till et al., 2019). The coaching philosophy, especially with regard to one's own vision, perspective on learners, and the environment, was identified as a central aspect in the work of continuously successful coaches in sport (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016). Coaches had a clear philosophical viewpoint regarding their goals, values, and beliefs with their philosophy focusing on (a) adopting a learner-centered perspective, (b) advocating for high moral values (e.g., loyalty, honesty, respect), and (c) achieving a work–life balance for athletes and coaches. This provided them with a strong sense of purpose and direction in their approach. With regard to lifelong learning, the constant pursuit of

knowledge and self-improvement has been identified as an essential characteristic of specialized coaches in sport (DeMarco & McCullick, 1997; Grant & Dorgo, 2014; Koehler, 2022).

To what extent these results can be generalized to police training must remain unanswered at this point. Due to the structural similarity of the profession, these results can serve as initial orientations. With regard to police training, it has been postulated that self-reflection and the search for knowledge sources for continuous learning are essential characteristics for the acquisition of expertise in coaching (Staller & Zaiser, 2015; Staller, Koerner, Heil et al., 2022b; Staller, Koerner, Abraham et al., 2022). Preliminary data concerning police trainers in a German Special Forces Unit (unpublished data) also indicate the relevance of a reflected coaching philosophy for eliciting performance improvements and learners motivation, and sustaining a healthy working climate, which has the potential to protect against radicalization within these sub-systems of the police (Koehler, 2022).

## **Knowledge Dimension 6: Understanding the “Process”**

The five dimensions discussed previously (Who, What, How, Context, Self) provide a set of concepts, principles, and theories that inform the actual practice of coaching in police training. Trainers draw from the knowledge structures of these interdependent dimensions to arrive at decisions during planning, implementation, and reflection. A key aspect of planning is knowing what learners should know and be able to do as a result of the coaching process (Staller, 2021). Intended learning goals emerge from an analysis of the learners' needs in relation to their current context and form the basis for long-, mid-, and short-term plans with specific outcome, performance, and process goals. These goals serve as reference points from which trainers can evaluate and adjust their planning, implementation, and reflection. As such, planning provides a “tentative map” to follow and clarifies expectations against which development can be evaluated and from which alternative coaching strategies can be adopted to address and respond to changing learner needs and/or contextual changes (e.g., resources). Trainers can only intervene if

the need for action is identified during the long-, medium-, or short-term planning process or during the actual training activity. In order to identify the need for action, police trainers must be constantly alert to important moments or disruptions (Körner & Staller, 2019). Deliberate and purposeful planning can help the trainers uncover anomalies by articulating clear expectations against which current observations of reality can be compared and which might otherwise be overlooked (Jones et al., 2013). The ability to think in this way as events occur in the coaching process is also referred to as reflection-in-action (Martindale & Collins, 2012; Schön, 1983). By clearly articulating expectations prior to a coaching event, the opportunities to reflect-in-action and draw on this momentum as a reflection prompt after the coaching event increase (i.e., reflection-on-action). Reflective practice is generally viewed as a continuous interaction between planning and execution through which one's experiences can be more thoroughly appreciated, which in turn leads to more effective professional practice (Schön, 1983). In relation to police training, the reflective practitioner has been highlighted as a goal to strive for in the education and development of trainers (Körner & Staller, 2018).

Based on assumptions about the continuous planning, implementation, and reflection process of coaching, there cannot be a fixed and rigid planning strategy for police trainers. Rather, a planning strategy must be continuous, dynamic, and adaptive, enabling the coach to respond to changes in learners and the environment (Abraham et al., 2015; Kiely, 2012). To help trainers address this complex and dynamic requirement, planning and reflection frameworks that help them to clarify their own expectations and foster connections between desired goals and associated coaching strategies are appropriate (see for the German context: Staller, Koerner, & Zaiser, 2021; Staller & Koerner, 2021b).

In terms of police training, for example, the complex and ongoing process of planning, implementation, and reflection at the heart of coaching is not yet fully recognized. The background here seems to be one of outdated concepts of learning and teaching, which cannot be changed overnight (Cushion, 2020). However, the first attempts to understand coaching as a complex and adaptive process are also

emerging internationally (Cushion, 2022; Koerner & Staller, 2020; Nota & Huhta, 2019; Staller, Koerner, Heil et al., 2022a; Staller & Körner, 2021).

## 4 Conclusion

The conceptualization of coaching in police training as a complex and adaptive process replaces outdated notions of what trainers do. Based on a broad conceptualization of learning, which highlights the interpersonal synergy of trainer and learner as an interwoven system, we have described the Professional Coaching Model as a helping tool for trainers and police organizations alike. The six dimensions of knowledge presented highlight that professional coaching requires well-founded knowledge structures and virtuosity in dealing with the daily demands in general as well as in any situational context. The model clarifies the ideal image of a police trainer and points towards the goal of learning and development: a reflective practitioner who, based on interwoven knowledge structures, finds situational solutions to any problems concerning training practice and implements them virtuously.

### Key Takeaways

The conceptualization of coaching in police conflict management training has implications for different levels of the police organization. Professional conduct as a conflict management trainer requires cooperation and support on the different levels.

### Police Officers

Police officers are not directly affected by the conceptualization of coaching described above. Nevertheless, they can support the professional conduct of trainers tasked with conflict management training. Since coaching is primarily a pedagogical process, the expectations of the learners should also focus on this. Police trainers do not necessarily have to be professional police officers themselves—their expertise lies in designing learning environments that enable the development of operational expertise.

### Conflict Management Trainers

The Professional Coaching Model offers conflict management trainers a framework for (a) their own continuing professional development and (b) their on-site practice. Regarding their own continuing professional development, the self-reflected identification of optimization potential concerning knowledge structures enables systematic further development as a trainer. In relation to coaching, the model provides a general overview of the relevant knowledge areas that influence the outcome of coaching events. The following questions related to the individual knowledge areas could be useful here.

Related to the knowledge dimensions, this means:

- What do I know about my participants? Which bio-psycho-social theories do I know that are important for understanding the participants? How can I use these theories and concepts to improve my coaching practice? (The who dimension.)
- What possibilities and principles of conflict resolution do I know? Am I sufficiently competent in this? Do I know the content and rationale structures of the curriculum and do these correspond to the requirements of the reality of policing? (The what dimension.)
- Which possibilities of designing learning activities do I know and which learning theories underlie them? How can I use these meaningfully and in which situations so that sustainable learning is likely and the performance is also retrievable in the case of use? (The how dimension.)
- What are my values, attitudes, and beliefs about coaching in police training related to conflict management? What images of people, learners, police officers, and citizens do I have? What distortions am I subject to in my thinking from time to time? What are the blind spots in my perspective that I have possibly overlooked? (The self dimension.)
- Do I know the working context of my participants? How well do I know the constraining conditions and problems of my learners' work? What possibilities do I have for shaping my working context? How can I help shape this context and make it useful for my training? (The context dimension.)

- How structured am I in my planning and reflecting regarding my training session and the embedding in the big picture of police officer learning? At which points do I react flexibly, intuitively, and on-the-spot, and at which points do I plan and reflect analytically? According to which structure do I carry out my planning and reflection? (The process dimension.)

### **Police Decision-Makers**

Coaching in police conflict management training is primarily a pedagogical process. This goes hand in hand with the recognition, promotion, and development of thought and decision processes in relation to coaching. The competence of one's own operational action is a not unimportant, but nevertheless smaller, aspect in the overall picture of the required knowledge structures of a trainer. Professional conduct as a police trainer requires the structures within the organization to enable, evaluate, and expand the acquisition of knowledge based on the six knowledge dimensions described in the Professional Coaching Model. These are:

- Coach learning for police trainers: A well-founded coach education and development program for police trainers focuses on the six knowledge dimensions and their interconnection. Trainers are enabled to align their actions with the requirements of the individual training situation through planning and reflection processes.
- Continuing professional development of police trainers: Trainers must be provided with structures to deepen, broaden, and also revalue their knowledge (and application) in the different dimensions. It should be ensured that the need of police trainers to deepen certain dimensions corresponds to the needed dimensions.
- Supervision of police trainers: The virtuoso handling of the knowledge dimensions and the situational weighing of sometimes contradictory possible solutions for a given training situation requires continuous reflection. Supervision for police trainers by specially trained personnel (e.g., coach developers, expert trainers) could be helpful here.
- Highly qualified education, development, and supervision personnel: All of the aforementioned structural prerequisites in relation to police trainer learning require coaching by highly qualified personnel. Such

persons use scientific evidence, focus on the relevant knowledge structures in the overall view, and adapt them to the needs of the police trainers. Especially in view of the attention to scientific findings and to ensure the continuous transfer into the police organization, it seems purposeful to have external coach developers or appropriate personnel (e.g., expert trainers) regularly trained and employed externally.

Professional police trainer conduct is adaptive and takes the situational circumstances (e.g., context and learners) seriously. This means that no two training processes are alike. A standardization of training processes in the sense of prescribing what should be trained in which way does not seem to make sense here. Rather, police trainers must be enabled to deal with the requirements of the current training situations in a reflected manner and to develop solution strategies for the specified goals that are individually tailored to the learners.

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