It All Comes Down to Preparation

A Study of the Perceived Outcomes of Norwegian Police Tactics and Maintenance Training

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Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on the participant's perception of Norwegian police tactics and maintenance training (IP4 training). The aim was to investigate to what extent there was a relationship between training participation and perceived levels of learning and utility. The study reports on data collected from six focus-group interviews with 31 exercise participants (*N*=31). The participants were all Norwegian police officers taking part in an advanced emergency response (IP3) qualifying training course during the fall of 2019. Key findings indicated that the participants experienced perceived learning and utility but that the outcomes were not deemed optimal. This study shows that a greater focus on variation and constructive alignment during training may improve perceived learning and utility levels. Further, we see a value in suggesting an increase in the amount of yearly training. More training would contribute to better maintenance of basic knowledge, which again could allow the instructors to focus more on progressive development and learning.

Keywords
Training, learning, utility, Norway, police

1. Introduction[1]

The police's main tasks are to maintain public order, mitigate and prevent crime, protect citizens and their law-abiding activities, and investigate possible criminal offenses (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2018). In Norway, which is the case of this study, police officers are educated at the Norwegian Police University College. After three years of training, students graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Police Science. Upon graduation, they are given the operational status as "generalists" (Table 1) or "Emergency response personnel with weapons approval" (IP4). A generalist, or IP4, is defined as an officer that holds the necessary skills and approvals needed to perform primary armed police duty and is qualified for further learning through experience (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2005). To maintain an IP4 status, all officers need to complete 48 hours of weapon and tactics maintenance training annually. The assumption is that training strengthens individual discipline-specific skills (Berlin & Carlström, 2015) and tests and evaluates outcomes (Perry, 2004). The general problem, however, is that later research on the outcomes of exercises indicates that training may tend to produce limited results in terms of perceived learning and utility (Carlström et al., 2019; Magnussen et al., 2018; Magnussen et al., 2018; Sørensen, 2017; Sørensen et al., 2018). There exist conflicting sources as to why, but possible reasons include an insufficient focus on realistic scenario development (Driskell & Johnston, 1998; Rolfe et al., 1998), not enough variation (Borell & Eriksson, 2013), and a lacking focus on the coping with unforeseen events (Torgersen, 2018). If the problem persists, it may lead to less efficient handling of adverse consequences (Sawalha, 2014), limited flexibility (Jung & Song, 2015), and reduced fulfillment of societal expectations (Boin & Bynander, 2015). There is, therefore, a need to further research the outcomes of training in terms of perceived learning and utility (Carlström et al., 2019; Magnussen et al., 2019; Sørensen et al., 2018). Primarily, which should be considered a gap in the literature, there is a need to examine the perceived outcomes of police training. To our knowledge, the perceived experiences of Norwegian police maintenance training in terms of learning and utility have yet to be studied. As a contribution to closing that gap, this study focuses on Norwegian police maintenance training (IP4). More knowledge about the participant's perception of IP4 training could help instructors and planners focus more on helping students achieve learning goals and outcomes, thus contributing to enhanced learning, motivation, and increased utility value both on individual and group levels. Such a study would also be considered a theoretical contribution to the fields of police science, crisis management and learning.

The following research questions have been developed; (1) To what extent is there a relationship between participation in Norwegian police maintenance training (IP4) and perceived levels of learning? (2) To what extent is there a relationship between participation in Norwegian police maintenance training (IP4) and perceived levels of utility? Reported relationships between learning and utility are in this study based on the participant's personal and self-reported perceptions. The dimensions are limited to the questions outlined in the interview guide (Table 2) and the chosen theoretical foundation for this study, including Johan Stein's and David Kolb's learning theories and understanding of an experience-based

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1. Reported findings (data) were first published in Grove, M. & Ellingsen, LM. (2020). Når det haster med å handle, blir man sjelden bedre enn forberedelsene tilsier – En studie av operativt politi sin opplevde grad av læring og nytte under årlig vedlikeholdstrening taktikk [When there is an urgent need to act, you rarely get better than the preparations suggest – A study of operational police's perceived degree of learning and usefulness during annual maintenance training tactics]. (Master's thesis). University of South-Eastern Norway. USN School of Business, Norway.

and reflection-oriented learning loop. This paper starts by reviewing relevant literature, followed by an outline of methods and materials. Results will then be summarized and presented before the discussion section describes and interprets findings. Towards the end, a final section will summarize the answers to the stated RQs, outline implications, and recommend future research.

Table 1. Emergency response personnel (IP) categories

IP1	Police Tactical Unit (Delta force)
IP2	Police Physical Protection Unit (Bodyguard Service)
IP3	Police Emergency Response Unit (specialists)
IP4	Police Generalist (with weapon approval)

1.1. A short description of Norwegian police tactics and maintenance training (IP4)

The 48-hour police tactics and maintenance training (IP4) course is designed to ensure that officers hold the necessary skills and approvals to perform primary armed police duty. Every year the Norwegian Police University College, in cooperation with the National Police Directorate, develops a study plan that outlines which specific police operative skills are being drilled and exercised (Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2017). In addition to general education courses and weapons training, the tactical training section covers building tactics, vehicle apprehension, and arrest of a person with a dangerous object (Myhrer, 2015). There is a joint focus on the individual as well as team-based development.

2. Background

This study defines training, often referred to as drill or exercise, as a procedure designed to strengthen individual skills and knowledge and involve repetitive discipline-specific key elements such as procedures and equipment handling. (Berlin & Carlström, 2015). Training as a concept dates back to the Greek phalanx and was later perfected by the Romans (Grossman, 2014). Part of the purpose of the drill is to counteract possible paralysis due to stress (Boe et al., 2012). Through training, one practices procedural memory, i.e., the memory for procedures or actions (Moldjord et al., 2005). Examples of such in this study are arrest techniques, police tactics, and proper use of firearms.

Perry (2004) noted that the terms drill, training and exercise are often used interchangeably in the literature as they can be seen as part of a collaborative process, which all involves planning, drilling, and exercise elements. However, some sources argue a term distinction. For example, training (or the drill) often consists of tasks performed alone or with personnel belonging to the same organization to enhance sector-specific knowledge (Lint, 1998), while the goal of an exercise is to simulate serious incidents, often together with others, and put drilled sector-specific knowledge to the test (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Regardless of the term used, they all have in common the need to ensure continuous learning development through reflection. Reflection is understood as learning where the goal is to learn from prior or current experiences (Moon, 2004). For years, the importance of reflection has been incorporated in the formal police pedagogical processes, as it can serve as a tool for personal and professional development. As the police profession is complex and requires many different skills and abilities, both basic and after-training must be pedagogically designed to give the officers the best possible prerequisites to perform as crisis managers (Karp & Rantatalo, 2020).

In crisis management (which incorporates the police), the concept of learning combines the gaining of new knowledge with increased individual or joint development (Sommer et al., 2013). From a cognitive perspective, learning represents the individual's ability to acquire and reflect on outside information to apply it to a desirable situation (Sommer & Njå, 2012). An example here would be how a police officer drills a target shooting so that he or she is needed, can fire his or her service weapon with confidence and with control.

While cognitive processes focus on individual learning, the concept of sociocultural learning stresses interpersonal relations. Bourgeois (2011) discovered that students' perceived levels of learning increased by promoting team belonging processes and collaboration. Also, it has been suggested that staff encouragement (Courtney-Pratt et al., 2012) and learning supervised by immediate supervisors (d'Souza et al., 2015) have positive outcomes.

Further, to optimize learning strategies, there must first be a precise alignment between learning activities and pre-defined outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2015). Here, past studies have shown that giving out precise information about training goals and expectations before exercise starts has had a positive outcome on the participant's perceived levels of learning and utility (Andersson et al., 2013). Second, to promote utility, the training needs to be designed to add to a perception of realism. As found by Kim (2014) and later supported by (Kristiansen et al., 2017), there often exists a perception that "bigger is better" in exercise planning. Recent studies have argued that such an approach is counter-productive, as, as too large and comprehensive scenarios often result in too comprehensive and too detailed scenario development and get in the way of learning (Magnussen et al., 2018; Sørensen et al., 2019).

Berlin and Carlström (2015) argued that optimal learning is not best achieved through massive scenario participation but rather in situations where the participants experience professional mastery and feel that they have sufficient time to test alternative ideas and approaches. Therefore, training should be designed to customize the participant's professional experience and a long-term pre-defined progress plan. Third, as every emergency or crisis has its unique elements, the participant's ability to improvise, readjust, and collaborate should be put to the test by including both foreseen and unforeseen training events. Introducing the participants to familiar and everyday scenarios has shown to have a positive outcome on learning, as it allows them more time to focus on process optimizing and testing of alternative strategies (Kristiansen et al., 2017). However, as incidents are seldom identical, there is also a need to focus on learning how to deal with unforeseen events. An unforeseen event is an event that appears unexpectedly, often with low probability (Nyhus et al., 2018). By being exposed to unknown or unforeseen events, the participants are forced to think and act beyond previously rehearsed and standardized patterns. Therefore, including scenarios in training that force the participant to think outside the box and improvise has been shown to improve their ability to deal with new or changed natural and manmade hazards (Torgersen, 2015). Fourth, to achieve optimal perceived learning, there has to be room for evaluation and sharing experiences. By coming together to identify problems and discuss possible solutions, participants develop ownership of the problem, engage in progressive learning processes, and contribute to the theoretical and practical development of new knowledge and best practices (Berlin & Carlström, 2009).

The relationship between Maintenance Training (MT) and learning outcomes has been much studied (Tobias & Fletcher, 2000). However, organizations, including the police, tend to lack and apply a unified MT definition. Possible explanations may vary, but a possible reason might be that numerous interpretations of the term are based on sector affiliation and pedagogical orientation. This study has chosen to use concept definitions rooted in profession-oriented pedagogy and mainly related to emergency preparedness and High-Risk

Organizations (HRO). In the present study, MT means a combination of Refresher Training (RT) and Continuous Training (CT), which also corresponds to the training content of the annual 48-hour course for IP4 personnel. The goal of Refresher Training is to conserve or refresh essential sector-specific competencies. RT is often offered following periods without or lacking practical skill application. CT, on the other hand, trains and develops new skills (Farmer, 1999).

This study's references to experience-based and reflection-oriented learning loop models have roots in, among others, David Kolb's learning theories (Kolb & Kolb, 1984). Central to Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle model, learning is a

> "cognitive process involving constant adaptation to, and engagement with, one's environment. Individuals create knowledge from experience rather than just from received instruction. Conflicts, disagreements, and differences drive the learning process as learners move between modes of action, Reflection, feeling, and thinking. Different learning styles reflect learning preferences that can change with the situation" (Bergsteiner et al., 2010).

In Kolb's (Kolb & Kolb, 1984) model, such a cycle consists of four main phases: 1) Concrete Experiences, 2) Reflective Observation, 3) Abstract Conceptualization, and 4) Active Experimentation. The police's maintenance training may, in such, be viewed as a structural learning process, with the overall aim of raising learning and utility. The primary training outcome will thus be to combine and utilize their own professional experience with training activities. An important factor, especially when transitioning between Kolb's phases three and four is the participant's perception of IP4 utility value. As the perception of utility may be linked to the participant's acquired feelings of mastery and self-efficacy, it is thus vital that the training is considered relevant and that there is compliance between training activities and learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2015). In turn, that may contribute to more efficient and motivated police officers and the natural development and progression of IP4 training.

As earlier stated, to ensure theoretical and practical development within crisis management, training and learning, more in-depth knowledge about the participant's perceptions is needed. As previous Norwegian studies on emergency and crisis learning and utility have had a quantitative focus and, in large, focused on training and exercising in an intra-collaborative setting (Carlström et al., 2019; Magnussen, et al., 2018; Sørensen, 2017), we argue that findings in this study will be of importance, as they offer an inter-organizational approach. Further, using an existing interview guide based on the same theoretical framework and designed to map the participant's perceived levels of learning and utility allows later comparisons.

3. Material and methods

This qualitative study reports on six focus-group interviews with 31 exercise participants (*N*=31). Data reported on here was first presented as part of a master-thesis work at the University of South-Eastern Norway (Grove & Ellingsen, 2020). The participants were all Norwegian police officers taking part in IP3 police academy training during the fall of 2019. IP3 is a "Police Emergency Specialist Response" course and thus not deemed relevant to the purpose of this study. However, this group was selected as all the participants had recently undergone IP4 training, and it allowed the opportunity to interview a wide range of officers from different police districts at the exact location, and at the same time, ensure a well-distributed geographical spread.

A qualitative approach was deemed most suitable for fulfilling the study's aim and stated research questions. Furthermore, compared to earlier quantitative studies on crisis management learning and utility, this approach facilitated more in-depth knowledge about the participant's perceptions and allowed them room for consecutive reflection and dialogue (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Focus group interviews were selected as the most suitable data collection method as it gave the participant the opportunity to voice their own opinions, hear and respond to their colleagues, and reflect and elaborate on their collective experiences both as individuals and as part of a group (Jacobsen, 2005).

3.1. Data collection and procedures

The location was at the Police University College campus in South-Eastern Norway. The interviews were conducted in a separate, well-lighted, and ventilated room. It should be noted that one of the researchers works as an academy instructor and might be known among the participants. Therefore, another researcher with no affiliation to the Police Academy nor the police organization conducted the interviews. A "do not disturb" sign was placed on the door and outside the corridor. The interviews were tape-recorded, and each interview lasted for about one hour. Before conducting the interviews, two pilot interviews were conducted. First, three police operative Police University College employees with expert knowledge of police tactics maintenance training were asked to evaluate and provide input on the guide and process. Based on their feedback, the guide was improved. A final version was then developed. The final version consisted of a total of 15 open-ended questions (Table 2).

3.2. Interview-guide

An interview guide had been pre-developed. After searching for relevant guides in academic databases, the Collaboration, Learning, and Utility (CLU) interview guide was deemed most relevant and selected. The CLU was developed by Berlin and Carlström (Berlin & Carlström, 2009). The guide has its roots in, among others, Meyer and Rowan's (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) organization theories of the relationship between formal structures and theoretical models and Stein's (1997) organizational learning theories. This study was limited to the two dimensions of learning (L) and utility (U). However, the CLU guide learning (L) and utility (U) questions were considered relevant and valuable to this study, as they each were specially designed to map the exercise participant's perceived levels of learning and utility (Berlin & Carlström, 2009), thus supporting the aim of this study.

Focusing the interview questions around learning activities allowed the participant to reflect on both strengths and weaknesses of tactical training and the possibility of learning, thus supporting the above-stated importance of reflection as part of the formal police pedagogical processes. As the terms training, drill and exercise, as noted, are often used interchangeably, asking the respondents first to explain the term "tactical training" was considered helpful as it would help the respondents reflect on the purpose and outcome of the IP4 training. Next, asking the participants to share some of their tactical training experiences was considered a good starting point for further in-depth discussions. Encouraging testing of alternative strategies and introducing the participants to both foreseen and unforeseen scenarios and joint evaluations has a positive documented outcome on learning (Kristiansen et al., 2017; Torgersen, 2018); the respondents were therefore asked about their experiences. The utility-related questions map the participant's perception of the IP4 utility value. This study's stated assumption was that training is designed to strengthen individual skills and knowledge and involve repetitive discipline-specific key elements (Berlin & Carlström, 2015). Therefore, it was essential to map whether the participant perceived that IP4 learning

also had a utility value to fulfill the aim of this study. Here, it was desired to map both general perception and acquire in-depth knowledge about factors that might or might not impact the overall utility value, e.g., levels of realism and colleague's motivation.

Table 2. IP4 Interview guide

	D[1]	Questions
1	L	How do you explain the term "tactical training"?
2	L	Can you briefly share some of your tactical training experiences?
3	L	Do you perceive that there was room for making mistakes?
4	L	In your perception, did the training includes unforeseen elements?
5	L	Have you ever experienced that something planned unforeseen occurred?
6	L	Was there room to improvise?
7	L	Besides annual training, do you have any other experiences with tactical training?
8	L	Was there sufficient attention to discussions and evaluations?
9	U	Based on what you have learned, was the training useful to real-life activities?
10	U	Did you learn something during training that you perceive has low or no utility value to real-life activities?
11	U	Do you perceive that persons in need of police tactics maintenance training participated?
12	U	Based on your perception, was the training realistic?
13	U	Which learning activities did you perceive had the most utility value?
14	U	Based on what you learned, will the training have an impact on your daily work?
15		Anything you wish to add? [2]

[1]D indicates the dimensions used, either learning (L) and utility (U).

[2] The Open-ended question was not directly related to the two dimensions of learning (L) or utility (U).

3.2. Data processing and analysis

The analysis process started by transcribing each group interview separately in verbatim form. The digital software NVivo and MS Word were applied. A qualitative deductive method was used for the analyses (Jacobsen, 2005). As a starting point for reading and sorting out data, the two theoretical categories learning and utility, were applied. The categories coincide with the theoretical framework of the overall and interview guide. Further, the categories were chosen as previous research on training and exercise among emergency professionals (Berlin & Carlström, 2015; Carlström et al., 2019; Magnussen et al., 2018) show shortcomings of learning and utility.

In NVivo, the participant's statements were structured according to a pre-defined coding strategy. First, each separate interview-guide question was transformed into a separate node. Second, joint nodes were created. Coding allowed the researchers to search for emerging patterns and ideas. To ensure anonymity, all individual features, names, other characteristics, and dialects were removed. To ensure a systematic approach, the responses to each question were initially logged individually and divided into three main feedback (nodes) categories: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, or (3) others. They were then further organized into two main groups (learning and utility) based on the two above-stated research questions.

3.3. Ethics

Several steps were taken to ensure that all research phases were conducted according to ethical standards. Before data collection, permission was sought and given from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD). Request to research the organization was sent to the Norwegian Police Directorate, which also gave their consent. The participants received information about the study and a written invitation to participate. The invitation was sent out a week and a half before the data collection started. Those who wished to participate were asked to fill out and return a consent form. There was, from the beginning, a focus

on anonymity and volunteerism. The sample was informed that they could at any time withdraw their participation and consent without risk of facing professional or individual reprisals.

4. Results

All the invitees chose to participate in the study. The study did not consider demographical factors such as age, gender, or years of experience, as the participants had already been screened based on these elements upon course admission.

4.1. Tactical training

All the respondents agreed that tactical training had to do with learning and refreshing basic police working methodology. Examples such as how to "*master driving a patrol car*" and "*preparing for and conducting a mission*" were highlighted. Also, several of the participants pointed to how tactical training contributed to creating a joint platform for police officers, regardless of working location, affiliation, rank, or experience.

4.2. Learning

Several respondents pointed out that they mainly have had positive learning experiences from IP4 training. However, some reported that the perceived learning was not optimal, as they often, to the point of boredom, found themselves repeating necessary well-familiar procedures to help less experienced or less motivated participants get up to the expected basic skill level. Upon elaborating, the participants believed the lack of skills or motivation had to do with the training frequency rate, which they deemed too seldom. One respondent stated:

> "The difficulty level is low because it takes so long between each time we train that we forget a lot and have to start over again with the basics. Since we have so little training time, there is not any time to develop more advanced skills."

With limited training time available, most agreed that there was always room for making mistakes and that there was perceived learning in making own mistakes and watching others do the same. None of the participants had ever experienced that making mistakes during training had influenced their daily work negatively. One argued:

> "We are here to learn, so in my experience, there has never been a top-down attitude from instructors or colleagues. Instead, it focuses on learning from your mistakes to not make the same mistakes all over again."

Several respondents positively highlighted the instructors' skillset and sufficient attention to discussion and evaluations as a training success factor. The instructor's ability to give constructive individual feedback, and at the same, put it in a joint context, was perceived as well developed and optimistic among the respondents. Also highlighted was the instructor's abilities to incorporate both foreseen and unforeseen elements into the training scenarios. Most felt it was a standard integrated part they had learned to anticipate in IP4 training. Several pointed to how "*cold start*" training was a learning methodology they often encountered. A "cold start" means that the training scenario is initiated directly upon arrival without introduction or instructions. The goal is to observe practical problem solving and then use the chosen approach to base for later evaluations and discussions.

Upon facing new unforeseen scenarios during training, most felt that the instructors and colleagues gave room and encouraged alternative thinking and improvising. Some even felt that there had become more tolerance for trying out alternative learning strategies over the last few years. However, it was also pointed out by several that there were clear limitations. For example, frivolous behavior was quickly reprimanded by the instructors, especially if it got in the way of other "*more serious problem-solving attempts*" or was deemed "*dangerous to people or equipmen*t."

4.3. Utility

Overall, most respondents felt they had primarily positive learning experiences from the IP4 training, thus finding it useful for real-life activities and daily work. Some were exclusively positive, arguing, "*To the greatest extent*," while others were more reserved and pointed out how "*New knowledge is added all the time, so it is a developing process, where we learn while we go along.*" No one expressed negative remarks towards the utility value of the training.

Upon asked which learning activities had the highest perceived utility value, the majority pointed to the overall combination and variation of activities. One stated, "*I enjoy that we get to experience a variety of things during training. The problem is the time available*". None of the respondents could pinpoint anything specific when asked whether they learned something perceived to have low or no utility value. Another highlighted utility success factor among the respondents was how the training gave a clear sense of realism. Several pointed to how the use of, e.g., color-based training ammunition and improvised acting from the markers contributed to an increased sense of realism. Several of the participants addressed how they viewed realism as the key to success in training.

Whether the respondents perceived that their colleagues took IP4 training seriously, leading to good attendance, several pointed to how varying motivation sometimes got in the way of optimal utility outcomes. Some took it "*very seriously, while others considered it more of a mandatory pain.*"

5. Discussion

This study focused on Norwegian police tactics and maintenance training (IP4 training). The aim was to investigate to what extent there was a relationship between training participation and perceived levels of learning and utility. Overall findings show an existing but not optimal relationship, resulting in similar findings in earlier studies (Berlin & Carlström, 2015; Magnussen et al., 2018; Sørensen et al., 2018). Previously, it was identified that the terms drill and exercise are often used interchangeably in the crisis management literature (Perry, 2004). However, in IP4 training, we found a more or less unified understanding of "tactical training," indicating a mutual understanding of the content and aim of the course. This aim also seems to match the ambitions outlined by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security (2005).

Upon reviewing our elements of learning and utility, we found that several respondents pointed to how they often, to the point of boredom, found themselves repeating basic well-familiar procedures to help less experienced or less motivated participants get up to the expected basic skill level. Such repetition suggests that the training was primarily dominated by drill, whose goal is to repeat discipline-specific key elements (Berlin & Carlström, 2015). On one side, this perception of drill among the participants is here a good thing, as the learning activities support the overall goal of the course related to developing and maintaining the basic tactical skills needed to keep an IP4 approval. On the other side, if the training gets

too drill-dominated, it might lead to a feeling of monotony, which may leave the participants too stuck in standardized and stagnant patterns (Sorensen et al., 2018).

One of the most positive highlighted parts of the training was the instructor's engagement and skillset. Their ability to include both foreseen and unforeseen elements as part of training and give constructive individual and joint evaluations was deemed a success factor. A clear majority of the respondents expressed great trust and satisfaction in their instructors, and most instructors showed the ability to provide constructive feedback and, at the same time, turn individual mistakes into collective learning points. Constructive feedback, or verbal persuasion in Bandura's (1986) terms, is partly used to convince people that they possess skills that will enable them to achieve what they set themselves as goals. The positive instructor feedback thus suggests that the trainers are doing just that.

While overall positive feedback from the respondents, we see that the IP4 training program could profit from more focus on learning optimization. In addition to drilling, the training could benefit from focusing more on the trainee's individual personal and professional experiences. By focusing even more on a student-centered teaching approach, the training would help maintain necessary tactical skills and contribute to enhanced learning, better motivation, and increased utility value (Biggs & Tang, 2015). Thus, a strengthened focus on constructive alignment between activities, feedback and objectives (Biggs & Tang, 2011) could help students achieve the course's learning outcomes. However, such a learning approach requires instructor skills and planning. It also requires changing the focus from what the instructor wants to teach what the police officers should learn. A more individual customized constructive alignment could further contribute to more variation and allow for more improvisation among officers at the same skill level. As trying out alternative strategies to supplement basic drilling has shown to have a positive effect on learning, it could also be used as a tool to develop the participant's ability to tackle both foreseen and unforeseen incidents (Torgersen, 2018), which is considered an essential skill for police officers in everyday policing and crisis.

Overall, we see that the training program focuses on the Kolb cycle's first three phases. The fourth, which involves active experimentation, seems less in focus. In this phase, the primary purpose is to develop an expanded joint competence, where the operators, both individually and as a team, utilize learning from previous phases. Experimentation is done to articulate and raise awareness surrounding new ways of problem-solving and considered relevant for the development and delivery of decision patterns with significance for specific actions and solutions in given situations. More focus on Kolb's fourth phase could, in this form of police training, form the base for more flexible and transparent handling of new and unforeseen events – which existing training, experiences and established procedures do not cover to the same extent.

In closing, we note a documented overall satisfaction with the training program. However, we also see that the participants will not express an equally precise opinion about the cycle's fourth phase. They somewhat lack the experiences needed to assess complex, foreseen and unforeseen future events. In our opinion, such skill development needs to be integrated into the training program, as we argue the need to include further comparative reflections and assessments of the handling of both old and new events. Such an inclusion would enable a more precise assessment of the overall training program and contribute to increased perceived utility, as the participants could, every time they meet, continuously integrate and build on their own experiences. Over time, that would result in a positive outcome on the learning content in the fourth phase. A pedagogical method for optimizing Kolb's fourth phase in training programs is, among other things, to utilize systematic, holis-

tic briefs during and after exercises adapted to the purpose and learning goals of this phase (Torgersen et al., 2020). However, to optimize learning and utility, the instructors continuously depend on positive feedback and commitment. As findings indicated, several respondents pointed to how lacking motivation from a few sometimes got in the way of optimal learning processes. Overall, negative feedback should thus be avoided, as it has been shown to decrease an individual's self-efficacy (Cox, 1998).

5.1. Practical implications
Increased perceived learning levels and utility could be stimulated by focusing on constructive alignment, improvisation, and more focus on the trainee's individual personal and professional experiences. Combining individual drilling with foreseen and unforeseen exercise features, police tactics, and maintenance training could be further addressed in training (Torgersen, 2018).

5.2. Limitations
The data in this study came from police officers taking part in one advanced emergency response (IP3) qualifying training course during the fall of 2019. Similar studies have to be performed among multiple course participants over time to confirm this study's results. The choice of using focus groups could also be connected with some limitations, as it could lead to participants not voicing their opinions freely nor sharing their honest opinions.

6. Conclusion and recommendations
Findings indicated a positive, thus not optimal, relationship between participation in IP4 training and perceived levels of learning and utility. The instructor's engagement, involvement, and competencies were highlighted as contributing success factors. Also, findings showed that the IP4 participants perceived consecutively and afterward evaluations as essential learning tools. Several participants pointed to how they often, to the point of boredom, found themselves repeating basic well-familiar procedures to help less experienced or less motivated participants get up to the expected basic skill level. Such repetition suggests that drilling procedures largely dominated the training. Based on the findings, a greater focus on variation and constructive alignment during training is recommended.

Further, we see a value in suggesting an increase in the amount of yearly training. More training would improve basic knowledge, allowing the instructors to focus more on progressive development and learning. We also recommend that similar studies be performed on other police training types, with an additional focus on learning content and pedagogical facilitation to develop new competence areas, cf. phase four in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle model. We would also suggest examining possible differences in demographic factors such as age, professional experience and past training capabilities, contributing to more in-depth knowledge.

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