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# Are *Education* and *Training* Synonyms?

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I have seen numerous discussion threads on language and the words *education* and *training*. Is terminology just semantics or does it matter? Dictionary.com lists training as a synonym of education. I thought education and training were close enough to be interchangeable and it was not worth arguing about, until I talked about it with my training unit manager and she said one of her professors explained it to her with one question:

Do you want your children to receive sex education or sex training?

It is a bit crude, but that question instantaneously provides a vision of the difference. Education is theoretical and training is experiential. In a comparison chart on the Key Differences website, education is a typical form of learning and training is a method of skill development (S. 2017). Of course, there are education components in training with topics such as law and use of force theories, but I still consider this all part of training.

Core differences concurs:

*The main difference between training and education is that training is the technique of acquiring new skills and knowledge to perform certain duties whereas education is the process of learning in the classroom to deepen knowledge and mindset.*

I avoid discussions on semantics because they are rarely productive, but I think this differentiation is important because we are in the business of training. We need to understand and be clear about our role of giving officers what they need to do the job. The discussion on what is needed to meet that goal is vital and it starts with clarity between education and training.

What information and theories do they need to inform their decisions and actions? Then how do they need to apply that information? This is my definition of training but there is another train of thought that all information

and content is education, and the application components are training. If there was a defined education requirement to enter policing, we would need to differentiate

the education component from the training. In North America the education requirement is a high school diploma, college certificate or university degree but there is not a specific program requirement; therefore, the recruits are not arriving with the same education. This is the reason education is incorporated into police training.



When designing training I look at what they need to do. Then work backwards to determine what information they need to know, how it needs to be applied, and whether it is applied to a single type of situation or various situations. If there are a range of situations, the objectives will include analysis and decision making. The information forms the content, and the application drives

# Synonyms...con't

the design of the exercises.

Assessments should also reflect the application. Often tests disproportionately focus on knowledge because it is the easiest to assess. This is a disservice to our training and the participants. Do not waste time with questions on rote memory for information they do not need to know to perform the job. For example, questions on statistics provided in the class. They do not need to quote the number of impaired driving charges laid in 2016, so why ask a question about it? The education component is not the point of the training.

Sometimes language is generally understood, and the arguments are nothing but semantics, but other times words matter. It is time to stop using the words training and education as interchangeable. If you are discussing a course at a post-secondary institution or one that is focused on knowledge and mindset, it is education. If it is a course that prepares a person to do a job, it is training.

Resource

S, Surbhi. 2017. "Difference Between Training And Education (With Comparison Chart) - Key Differences". Key Differences. <https://keydifferences.com/difference-between-training-and-education.html>

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### About the Author

Kerry Avery is the owner of [Odin Training Solutions Inc.](#) Kerry has a Master's degree in Education and over 18 years' experience designing training programs, with the last 12 years spent working with law enforcement to develop classroom, online and blended learning courses. In addition to course development, Kerry coaches and teaches law enforcement instructors on course design and facilitation. She has worked with agencies in Canada, the United States, and internationally with ICITAP in Central America and Ukraine. Kerry is the editor for the ILEETA Journal, and has presented at the ILEETA, IADLEST, and IACP conferences. She can be reached at [Kerry.Avery@shaw.ca](mailto:Kerry.Avery@shaw.ca).

