Chapter 3. Managing the Process of Change

To be successful, any organisation has to be in a constant state of change. Change is especially problematic for police leaders. Whilst elected governments and police organisations are accountable to society, only governments have a mandate to introduce or amend laws, or implement or encourage social change by other means. Police, who are the servants of both government and people, must operate only within the law and enforce it with fairness and discretion. Furthermore, they must be aware of, and respond sensitively and intelligently to, various aspects of social change. They need to be tolerant of diverse radical and alternative causes and lifestyles that challenge the values of the majority of mainstream society. As society and its values and laws change, the police must respond appropriately. In management terms this puts the police at a disadvantage, because they have to respond to social phenomena whilst having little control over them or the direction they take. They are always a step behind.

Consequently, an effective police leader is one who has the skills and awareness to predict or anticipate future events that are likely to affect policing and cause change. Thus, he or she is able to overcome uncertainty by developing strategies that will meet the challenges of a changing world.

(4) THE CAUSES OF CHANGE

Change is one of the most critical aspects of effective management. Apart from its frequency in most organisations, the nature of change is becoming more complex and the impact of change is often more extensive. Many of the change situations in which a police manager can be involved are incremental rather than fundamental, and although there is some commonality there are also differences in how these types of situations should be managed. It is important therefore, to be aware that as change situations differ considerably, the response should vary with the situation. There is no single formula that will be successful in all situations.

To remain successful, the structure of the organisation and the way it operates must reflect the nature of the environment in which it is operating. Furthermore, change also operates within the organisation. For example, existing technology may not be capable of being adapted to modern methods of criminal investigation or higher workloads. The skills of the workforce may be outdated and not capable of addressing changing crime trends.

Managing the Process of Change

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As an open system, any police organisation is open to change stimuli from political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors arising around the organisation’s activities. These factors, known collectively by the acronym PESTEL, provide a useful environmental scanning tool for predicting events and outcomes that may affect the organisation. An example of how scanning can be effected is demonstrated as follows:

**Political:** A new government may declare a change in its relationship with police. It may demand more centralised/decentralised control. This may affect the authority and role of police leaders.

A change of government or policy may cause protest and tensions resulting in public demonstrations and disorder. For example, a common cause of violence and unrest in parts of Africa and Latin America has been caused through national and local government forcibly removing street traders from city centres.

**Economic:** Financial restraints on public sector services may limit resources available to the police. For example, the purchase of new vehicles may have to be delayed, or training may have to be cancelled or deferred. The government may demand greater output and improved service from existing resources.

There are also social implications. For example, wealthier minority groups having a monopoly on retailing and sale of food and other essential items at the expense of poorer indigenous people is a common economic destabilising factor in many countries, particularly in Africa.

**Sociological:** Community expectations may change owing to social change or increasing demands for individual rights. For example there may be greater demands for women’s rights, or for more effective police responses to domestic violence, or for the relaxing of enforcement against certain classes of controlled drugs.

**Technological:** Technological changes may render police equipment obsolete. This may limit the quantity and quality of management information and adversely affect quality of service to citizens. Police organisations cannot ignore developments that give them an advantage in improving quality of service or investigating crime. Additionally, it is only very rarely that a new