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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE:
AN EXAMINATION OF MANAGEMENT PREPAREDNESS

According to Shezi (1977), South Africa has been in the process of radical transformation. Within this environment government organizations must rethink their strategies, redesign their structures and adjust their management practices in order to anticipate frequent changes and to respond proactively to meet anticipated demands.

As an organization, the South African Police Service must then be able to transform itself to affect, forecast and activate rather than merely respond to environmental forces. The strategic management process provides such a mechanism. It represents a logical, systematic, and objective approach for determining the future direction of the South African Police Service. There is no proven plan of action for achieving the organization's desired outcomes within a dynamic environment without a strategy. A successful strategy and the equally successful implementation of the strategy are the most reliable signs of good management (Haines, 2000).

This study is part of a larger project, carried out at top management levels of the South African Police Service in the Free State Province of South Africa, to develop a practical strategic management model as a guideline for assisting the South African Police Service to effectively carry out the strategic management process. As part of this larger project, this study reports the findings of a self-evaluation of workshop participants regarding management capacity within the South African Police Service to carry out strategic management.

Results of the self-analysis of management capacity within the South African Police Service indicate that Police Service management does not have a common understanding of strategic management and the systematic process that is necessary for its implementation. Although the South African Police Service is attempting to implement and carry out strategic management, a number of serious shortcomings are identified that must first be addressed by top management of the Service to develop personnel capacity before the implementation of a strategic management process can actually be initiated.

INTRODUCTION

On the 27th of April 1994 the Republic of South Africa held its first inclusive democratic election following a 350-year history of colonial rule, and later apartheid, in which the majority population was excluded from participation in national governance. The transformation included not only the broader right of suffrage but a transformation of the philosophy and principles of public sector service delivery as well. This service delivery is carried out by organisations which Bennett (1997:109) has observed are "… comprise[d] of a social system plus a technical system. As social systems, organisations are affected by socio-economic and psychological forces; as technical systems they are influenced by technological and environmental change." Democratic transformation has certainly included the impact of socio-economic and psychological forces as well as environmental change. Consequently existing public sector organisations, such as the South African Police Service (SAPS), have had to adapt in order to meet the new challenges. In order to meet these challenges, South

African public organizations have adopted the philosophy and processes of strategic management. Thomson & Strickland (1998:4) have pointed out that the creation of a successful strategy, as well as its successful implementation, are the most trustworthy signs of good management.

BACKGROUND

The former South African Police tended toward being a hyper- bureaucracy, with a rigid hierarchical structure, operating as a closed social system where change was not the order of the day. Decision-making was highly centralized and top-down, resulting in communication time-delays. As a consequence, grass roots members often did not know what decisions were made and consequently what to do or not to do. Swift decision-making, in order to adapt to a fluid environment, was almost non-existent.

The fast changing environment of the new dispensation (post-1994) forced the newly reconstituted South African Police Service (SAPS) to look at itself and asked the question, are we in line with what the community expects of us and are we correctly positioned for our future survival?

Organisations do not develop in a vacuum. They must attract a wide variety of resources, drawing in capital, partners, suppliers, and customers to create co-operative and supportive networks. Consequently, in rapidly changing "business" environments, public managers are required to anticipate and/or respond quickly to changing customer preferences and the repositioning of competitors in order to introduce the "right" products and services on a timely basis. It is literally for managers to be doing the right things for the right reasons.

Organisations need to ask the question, why be efficient in certain activities (doing things right) if the things done right are not the right things? To be effective ultimately means to gather all available relevant information and options and to select the best, preferred, course of action.

It is against this background that organisations need to take into consideration that organisational change and renewal is a process of acknowledging that what they might have done in the past, and the way in which they did it, may not be appropriate anymore and needs to change.

Building a new world of work, and in the process regrouping and rearranging organisations and what they are doing to get on the right track, creating new enthusiasm, energy and belief amongst the people, with a sense of direction and purpose, is now the order of the day (Senge, 1999:14).

CONCEPTUALISING STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Strategy

The strategy of an organisation is the process in which it makes use of certain policies, procedures and resources in order to achieve the main objectives of the organisation (Van der Waldt and Knipe, 1998:4). They further highlight the fact that it is important for public sector organisations to analyse the concept, which according to them indicates that public organisations, such as the SAPS, need a suitable plan or method in order to achieve the aim of the organisation irrespective of change. They further indicate that any organisation, in formulating its strategy, should be able to identify the following four aspects:

2

- The mission or over all aim of the organisation;
- the transformation technology used by the organisation;
- the strategic and operational planning to achieve the aims and;
- strategic control.

Smith (1994:13) points out that an organisation should not stop its planning at the point where a vision of the future has emerged. He further stresses the fact that the concern for action, which many writers such as Kroon (1995:135), Hannagan (2002:3) and Van der Waldt & Du Toit (1998:285) have shared, has lead them to drop the term strategic planning and adopt instead the phrase strategic management.

A "strategy" is also known as the organisation's "game plan" and managers often refer to it as their large-scale, future-oriented, plan for interacting with the competitive environment to achieve the organisation's objectives (Byars, 1992:5). A well-defined strategy provides a framework for how to achieve a winning objective. Similarly it provides a framework for managerial decisions but does not detail all future deployments of resources such as finances, people and material. Thus, a strategy reflects an organisation's awareness of how, when, and where it will compete, against whom it should compete, and for what purpose it should compete (Craig & Grand, 1995:16).

Bourgeois, Duhaime & Stimpert (1999:16) point out that the phrases strategy and strategic are used frequently - perhaps too frequently - in organisations. They suggest that a way for the public sector manager to clarify these terms is to distinguish between decisions and actions that are "strategic" and those that are "tactical." SAPS managers must make a variety of decisions every day. Some of these decisions respond to routine issues, tactical, while others have the potential to affect the well being, or direction, of the organisation in a much more fundamental way. These critical, direction-setting, decisions are "strategic" decisions.

According to Craig & Grand (1995:14-15) and Bourgeois, Duhaime and Stimpert (1999:16) strategic decisions:
- not only shape and define an organisation they also have the potential to affect the bottom-line financial health of an organisation and/or business and even the survival of the organisation. As a result, strategic management is a fundamentally important activity.
- involve significant reallocations of resources. Strategic decisions have the potential to change the purpose and direction of an organisation and, therefore, lead to major changes in the definition, scale, and scope of the organisation.
- tend to involve more than one functional department. Strategic decision-making usually cuts across functional departments.

Strategic decision-making thus requires the attention of senior managers (officers and senior officers in the case of the SAPS) who must often mediate interdepartmental disagreements and rivalries.

Strategic management
David (2001:5) defines strategic management as the art and science of the organisation in formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-functional decisions that will enable them to achieve their objectives.

Smith (1994:15) defines strategic management as an approach that is based on the complexities of the total business environment.

Thompson (1993:5-6) defines strategic management according to three criteria:

- First, there must be a strategy, establishing a clear direction of the organisation and a means of getting there, which requires the creation of strong competitive position;
- Second, in order to create effective performance within the organisation will it be necessary to implement excellence in the operationalisation of such strategies;
- Third, in order to ensure that the organisation will be able to respond to pressures for change, as well as improved and renewed strategies, innovation needs to be encouraged amongst members.

Wheelen & Hunger (1992:7) agree with the above definition but point out that strategic management also includes management decisions and actions that determine the long run performance of the organisation. This includes strategy formulation, implementation, evaluation and control. They further postulate (1992:6) that strategic management also emphasises the monitoring and evaluation of environmental opportunities and constraints in light of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses.

The strategic management process, then, is a process of organisational analysis where the present situation and future direction and or way of the organisation's profile and external environment are examined to set objectives, develop strategies achieve the objectives, as well as to monitor and assess the organisation's performance and the results that the strategies bring forth.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT VERSUS STRATEGIC PLANNING

An analysis of selected strategic management literature reveals that strategic management is viewed from two opposed perspectives. The first perspective entails a broad term that presents strategic management as the total management of an organisation. This implies that strategic planning is merely a tool or portion of strategic management (Pearce & Robinson 2003:3) and Thompson & Strickland (1998:3-5) Van Der Waldt & Du Toit (1998:285). The second perspective views strategic management as a complete organisational management process in order to determine the long–term vision and objectives of the organisation and how to implement them (Bean, 1993: 5-7). Smith (1994:13) and Hannagan (2002:3) state that the literature of strategic management and planning is a terminological minefield. They also refer to different organisations that use the same terms to describe different things, or different terms to describe the same thing.

Van der Waldt & Du Toit (1998:283) state that strategic management entails the implementation of strategies developed to give new direction to an organisation in the midst of a change or transitional process. It enables the organisation to fulfil its responsibilities in a rapidly changing environment. Strategic management according to Wheelen & Hunger (1992:6-9) and Kroon (1995:135-140) refers to the overall process, which includes not only strategic planning, but also organising, leading and controlling strategy-related decisions and actions in the organisation.

The top management of the SAPS (consisting of the National Commissioner, Deputy National Commissioners, Divisional Commissioners and Provincial Commissioners in their joint capacity) need to do continuous planning in a changing environment in order to develop and implement a suitable plan that will lead to the fulfilment of the changing needs of the various communities within the Republic of South Africa and this procedure is also known as strategic management. The process consists of two parts, namely strategic strategy formulation and strategy implementation (Kroon, 1995:136).

4

The change in terminology since the 1950's, from strategic planning to strategic management, reflects changes in planning styles. The greatest concerns expressed about strategic planning can be summarised as follows (Smith 1994:13-14):

- planning appears to have become an end in itself;
- planning systems became centralised and bureaucratic;
- plans belonged to planners rather than to managers;
- planning was done once a year, and completed plans gathered dust on shelves;
- plans tended to be overtaken by events, forecasts were inaccurate, and strategies had to be changed;
- original plans seemed a waste of time, having little influence on ultimate decisions;
- centralised planning introduced inflexibility. Obtaining authority to initiate change can be a slow and cumbersome process; and
- planning still relies too much on extrapolation of the past and does not encourage radical thinking.

Overall it appears from the literature that strategic planning is viewed as a tool of strategic management and forms an important component of it. Strategic planning enables an organisation's managers to evaluate, select and implement alternatives for rendering effective service (Mercer, in Van der Waldt & Du Toit, 1998:283). This latter approach is in line with the first approach that stated that strategic management is the total management of an organisation, the approach followed in this study.

LEVELS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Pearce & Robinson (2003:7), Smit & Cronje, (1992:118-119), Harrison & St. John (1998:171) and Wheelen & Hunger (1992:172-174) divide decision-making into three levels namely:

- The corporate;
- the business; and
- the functional levels.

This separation of decision-making can also be applied to the SAPS. The nature and functions of the SAPS is an outcome of the adjusted in-house structures of these decision-making levels.

Corporate decision-making level
In the SAPS the "corporate level" consists of the National Commissioner and his/her deputy national commissioners, and the various functional groupings of provincial commissioners and divisional commissioners. The national (top management) decision-making level is primarily responsible for policy-making as well as for formulating strategies, long-term planning and guidance. Unlike that in private enterprises, however, this level is also responsible for final approval of many "business" decisions.

The following are some factors that can be considered in the corporate decision-making process within the SAPS that can be a unique and often extended process.

- The demands for transparency;
- accountability; and
- representation within the organisation.

The development of alternative courses of action that specify the means by which the organisational mission and objectives are to be accomplished is a key part of strategy formulation. Corporate strategy spells out to the organisation the overall direction in terms of its general orientation toward growth and the management of its various "business" units and or departments to achieve a balanced set of products and services.

5

It is the pattern of decisions regarding the nature of business in which the SAPS, for example, should be involved, the flow of financial and other resources to and from its divisions and or departments, the relationship of the organisation to key groups in its environment, and the approach an organisation takes to achieve its mission and objectives.

In the public sector decisions need to be made about which new or additional products will fit in with the existing service range, how existing service activities should be altered to keep pace with the changing environment and how change and renewal in general will be implemented in the organisation.

Operational decision-making level
The operational decision-making level consists of managers (for example, area commissioners) who are responsible for ensuring the achievement of the objectives and the direction indicated by the corporate level, within their specific areas. Apart from the formulation of strategies and objectives for the division or department concerned, this also involves the implementation, monitoring and coordination of strategies.

Functional decision-making level
At the lowest level of the decision-making hierarchy is the functional decision-making level where middle-level managers (station and unit commanders, for example) must develop annual objectives and short-term strategies for their specific units and or stations (usually based on the annual budget).

The development of functional strategies for the SAPS involves the determination of the actions that need to be taken within each functional area in order to move it from its present position to its desired position. This is to maximise resource allocations to different functional areas within the provinces. Each functional-area strategy is dependent on the strategies developed at the corporate and business unit levels and the resources provided from these levels. Functional departments and/or units develop strategies where all resources and competencies are pulled together to improve organisational performance (Byars, 1992:130; Wheelen & Hunger, 1992:19).

Traditionally, strategies have been formulated most often at the level of top management. In police forces over the world, for example the Belgian Rijkswacht, specific departments are responsible exclusively for strategic planning. However, at present in the SAPS, there are increasing demands that strategies should no longer be formulated by top management and implemented top down. Responsibility rather should be given to departments and/or units to take part in the formulation of strategies and the implementation of the identified strategies. However departments and or units need to be aware of the bigger picture in which the SAPS is a role-player and must not over emphasize their own goals.

According to Pearce & Robinson (2003:257) and Joyce (1999:97) participatory strategy formulation is important for organisations in order to achieve their objectives. Consequently participatory strategy formulation for the SAPS will not only increase the chances that station commissioners and unit commanders will identify and solve problems, but also that subordinates will also share in the decision-making process and offer less resistance to change.

MANAGERIAL TASKS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Thompson & Strickland (1998:3) point out that the strategy-making/strategy-implementation processes consist of five interrelated managerial tasks:

6

- Forming a strategic vision for the organisation.
- Setting objectives in order change the strategic vision into specific performance outcomes that the organisation needs to achieve.
- Developing a well-defined strategy in order to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Implementing and executing the chosen strategy efficiently and effectively.
- Evaluating performance and initiating corrective adjustments in vision, long-term direction, objectives, strategy, or implementation in light of actual experience, changing conditions, new ideas and new opportunities.

Together, these five managerial tasks define what the term strategic management means.

THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS

An analysis of strategic management literature such as Byars (1992:5), Kroon (1995: 140-149), Wheelen & Hunger (1992: 7-15), Thompson & Strickland (1998:2-25), Pearce & Robinson (2003:11-17), Hussey (1994:29-49) and Van der Waldt & Knipe (1998:24) reveals that the strategic management process consists of three phases namely:
- strategy formulation;
- strategy implementation; and
- strategy evaluation and control.

Strategy formulation
This phase consists of developing long term plans to guide the organisation towards effective management of environmental opportunities and threats, in line with corporate strengths and weaknesses. It includes:
- formulating an organisational vision;
- establishing the organisation's mission and social responsibility;
- determining the institutional mandate;
- setting organisational objectives;
- conducting an external and internal analyses;
- developing strategies; and
- implementing policy.

Formulating a vision. "A Strategic vision is a roadmap of an organisation's future - the direction it is headed, the position the organisation intends to stake out, and the capabilities it plans to develop" (Thompson & Strickland, 1998:5).

Establishing the organisation's mission and social responsibility. An organisation's mission, whether written down or just apparent from the organisation's pattern of decisions and actions over time, provides an important vehicle for communicating ideals and a sense of direction and purpose to internal and external stakeholders (Hill & Jones, 1998:39-40) and David (2001:9-10). It can also help guide public managers when making resource allocation decisions. In general, the organisational mission is what the organisation is and its reason for existence whereas vision is a future-looking view of what the organisation wants to become.

Determining the institutional mandate. Joyce (1999:67) states that South African organisations are more and more subjected to political and administrative policy and regulations. For an organisation to have meaningful and successful strategic management it needs to be clear on what it is authorised to do. Members of the organisation must be aware of and familiar with, relevant legislation, ordinances, sections, provisions and contracts determining the formal mandate of the organisation. Before the strategic

7

management process can be initiated, the organisation should get clarity on its role within the socio-political transformation processes.

Too many organisations think they are more constrained than they actually are and, indeed, make the fundamental error of assuming that their mandates and missions are the same. They might be, but planners should not commence their activities with that assumption.

According to Van der Waldt & Knipe (1998:16), the reason why it is necessary to obtain institutional mandates is to inform key decision-makers of what is intended, highlight the benefits, and obtain approval.

<u>Setting organisational objectives.</u> Objectives for organisations are the long-term results that they seek to achieve in operationalising their missions. Public sector organisations pursue a variety of different objectives. The differences of the public and private sectors are that business organisations objectives are mainly expressed in financial terms, for example the desire to attain a particular return on capital employed or growth in earnings per share whereas public organisations set non-financial objectives such as concern for employee welfare or to be at the leading edge of service delivery.

<u>Conducting an External and Internal Analysis.</u> According to Wright, Kroll & Parnell (1998:24-30) and Kroon (1995:143-145) an organisation's external environment consists of all the conditions and forces that affect its strategic options as well as defines its competitive situation. The analysis of the external environment can be done by means of environmental scanning, competitive analysis and scenarios. It consists of an analysis and or study of the changes and trends in thefollowing environments:

- international environment;
- political environment;
- economic environment;
- social environment;
- technological environment;
- physical environment;
- institutional environment; and
- the market environment.

When performing internal analysis or diagnosis organisations do an investigation, or conduct an audit, of the current quantity and quality of the organisation's financial, human, and physical resources. It should also assess the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation/s management and organisational structure. The organisation assesses its past successes and is usually concerned with the organisation's current capabilities in an attempt to identify the organisation's future capabilities and or potential (Harrison & St. John, 1998:46).

The challenge for top management of the SAPS is to understand the complexity of South Africa as a country, its unique environment and the international dimension of every macro-environment. The analysis of the environment takes place with the aim to identify opportunities, threats, key success factors and the competitive advantage of the "business". An opportunity is a favourable or unexploited situation in one or more of the management environments that can be utilised proactively by top management to the advantage of the organization. A threat is an unfavourable situation in one or more of the management environments that, without proactive management, could lead to damage for the organisation.

<u>Developing strategies.</u> Simultaneous assessment of the external environment and the organisation's profile enables an organisation to identify a range of possibly appealing

8

interactive opportunities. These opportunities are possible avenues for improved service delivery. However, they must be screened through the criterion of the organisation's mission to generate a set of possible and desired opportunities. This screening process results in the selection of options from which a strategic choice is made. The process is meant to provide the combination of long-term objectives and generic and grand strategies that optimally position the organisation in its external environment to achieve the organisation's mission.

According to Thompson & Strickland (1998:135) many organisations adopt one or more generic strategies to demonstrate their service delivery approach to the community they serve. This is a holistic statement of the organisation's strategic orientation. Grand strategies provide the basic direction for strategic actions.

Implementing strategies. According to Byars (1992:5-7), Wheelen & Hunger (1992: 17), Thompson & Strickland (1998:15-17) and Joyce (1999:66-67) the second phase of the strategic management process is the implementation of the chosen strategy or strategies. In this phase it is important for the organization to undertake an assessment in order to establish what will be needed for the implementation of the formulated strategy and to reach the set performance criteria. They further point out that managing the process of implementing and executing strategy within the organisation (SAPS) needs to be mainly a proactive administrative responsibility that includes the following primary aspects:

- Establish capabilities necessary to carry out the strategy successfully.
- Develop budgets to allocate the needed resources into those internal activities critical to strategic success.
- Establishing strategy-supportive policies and operating procedures that will guide managers and members exactly according to expectations created by the set strategy.
- Motivate managers and members in ways that encourage them to pursue the identified objectives actively and, if needed, adjust their responsibility to improve the requirements of successful strategy implementation.
- Reward the achievement of managers and members.
- Create an organisational culture and work climate conducive to successful strategy implementation and execution.
- Establish information, communication, and operating systems that enable the managers and members to carry out their strategic roles effectively day to day.
- Introduce best practices and programs for continuous improvement.
- Top management needs to apply the internal leadership that is essential to drive implementation forward and to keep improving on how the strategy is being executed.

According to Byars, Rue & Zahra (1996:7) it is important for the organisation that all the role-players in the strategy implementation process should have the necessary authority, that they are competent and are committed to the process.

STRATEGY EVALUATION AND CONTROL

The final phase of successful strategic management is the establishment of procedures for the effective evaluation and control of strategies throughout the implementation phase (Lumpkin, 2003:291). Strategy evaluation and control involves the following activities:

- Establishing standards of performance for the overall organisation as well as for individual departments, units or functional areas.
- Monitoring progress in the carrying out of the organisation's strategy. This requires assessing and measuring the performance of the implementation of the strategies followed by different departments and or units throughout the organisation.

9

- The organisation needs to initiate corrective actions to ensure continued commitment to the implementation of the strategy by the members of the organisation.

Thus, strategic control refers to processes that lead to adjustments in strategic direction, strategies, or the implementation plan when necessary. Through strategic control, feedback, corrective information to management is provided, such as the organisational mission is no longer appropriate, that organisational strategies are not achieving desired outcomes, or that the mission and strategies are appropriate, but they have not been well executed.

Actions should also be able to withstand the test of public investigation and legislative and judicial supervision. The evaluation of success and impact of strategies will be assessed in different ways by competing political decision-makers because of the public nature of decision-making in the public sector. It is important to remember that political decision-makers from the opposition may be critical, even in the case of successful strategies.

Developing a Strategic Planning and Management Capacity for the SAPS in the Free State Province

Never before have so many demands been made on the South African Police Service and never before has the need for effective and efficient policing been as needed as it is now. In the current rapidly changing environment and uncertain surroundings, effective and efficient police service management can be served through strategic management. Strategic management for the SAPS was traditionally regarded as unnecessary and, therefore, the concept of strategic management is relatively new. The fast development and promotion of strategic management in police services around the world is a result of the major importance of strategic management for providing effective services to the respective communities.

The SAPS cannot face an unpredictable and mysterious future without well-organised and/or disciplined strategic management and hope to survive. And, well-organized and disciplined strategic management requires that managers have the proper skills, knowledge and abilities to carry out strategic planning and management.

In order to develop and/or increase present knowledge and skills, and thus to increase the abilities of SAPS managers in the Free State Province of South Africa, senior management in the Free State SAPS contracted with the then Technikon South Africa to present a strategic planning workshop for the Provincial Office during November, 2001. The purpose of the workshop was to provide technical knowledge to senior management on conducting and implementing strategic planning within the Province by the SAPS. However, during the course of the workshop a number of issues and problems arose that needed to be addressed before skills based training could be initiated.

METHOD

The analyses/observations that follow report on qualitative data obtained during a three day strategic planning workshop conducted for senior management in the Free State Provincial Head Office of the South African Police Service in November, 2001.

In order to establish a foundation for strategic planning the participants were involved in a process of environmental scanning through conducting an assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization and external environmental opportunities and threats to/for the organization (SWOT analysis), a central activity of the strategic planning process.

The first phase involved the identification and assessment of external environmental threats and opportunities. Participants were asked to identify factors/trends in the

10

external environment with a profound impact on the organization. The initial identification of the opportunities and threats is elicited without regard to the seriousness nor immediacy of the threat or opportunity to/for the organization. After identifying opportunities and threats, the participants were then asked to assess the elements with regard to the potential impact of the element on/to the organization (high, medium, low) and the time frame within which this element will impact (immediately, short-term, mid-term) on the organization. These external environments were defined as political, economic, social, technological and other.

 Upon completion of this first phase, the workshop participants were then asked to identify present strengths and weaknesses of the organization for addressing the previously identified opportunities and threats. This phase involved an analysis of organizational resources, the product/service of the organization, a client analysis, structure analysis and an analysis of the organizational culture. The organizational resource analysis included a number of sub-components including an identification and assessment of human resource capacities in the organization.

Following from the SWOT analysis participants were then asked to identify organizational limitations, and propose possible solutions, for implementing the strategic plan.

The discussion that follows presents findings/observations from the internal analysis of organizational human resources and limitations for the successful implementation of strategic planning within the Free State Province.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES FOR THE SAPS

As Kroon (1995:7-8) has stated, it will be the task of managers of the organisation, in this case the Free State executive management team of the SAPS, to lead organizational members effectively in the provision of products or services, in fulfilling needs, and in achieving the stated goals of the organisation. This creates a situation whereby an organisation without a strategy, based on a sound strategic management model, will likely find that there is not a well-established plan of action according to which results can be achieved.

During the course of the workshop it became clear that a major concern of senior management in the Province was the lack of a plan for the implementation of identified strategies at the National to operational levels in the Province.

An aspect that further complicated matters is the hierarchical command structure in the province. Information on the plan needs to reach Area offices and then filter down to station and unit levels within the province before they respond and send the needed information back to the provincial office. The problem is that there is no comprehensive strategic management model available for the SAPS in the Free State to established a strategic management process for the successful implementation of operational strategies.

The different management levels, from National to Provincial and down to the Area and station levels, each has its own interpretation of the vision, mission and objectives of the organization, as well as what the priorities might be and how these influence each station and/or unit. This becomes a major challenge for the effective implementation of the strategic management process.

A further challenge supported by the data is that management knowledge about the organisation's strategic management process and the content of the strategic plans differ. Managers within the province indicated confusion regarding the concepts of strategic

management, strategic planning and operational planning and used the concepts interchangeably, as if they mean the same thing.

The executive management team of the Free State Province also voiced concerned about the formulation of unclear operational objectives. The lack of clear operational objectives creates opportunities for internal conflict and non-performance. The combination of vague objectives and resource limitations presents managers with considerable flexibility in their performance. Within a strategic planning framework the most effective managers are those who have an unambiguous understanding of the organisation's goals and objectives.

Following from the Format for Structure Analysis, there is a problem for managers in considering long-term objectives while implementing short and medium-term strategies. This happens due to an absence of clarity on issues such as rank names (confusion between functional titles and ranks, eg. station commanders may have different ranks), the role of the provincial heads, the role of the so-called "super" police stations as well as the seniority and protocol of the police.

Managers also need management competencies. This encapsulates the necessary capabilities (knowledge, skills and attitude) of managers responsible for formulating the strategic plan. The executive management team pointed out that one of the limitations in the implementation of the strategic plan is the inability of managers to develop a proper strategic plan. They also lack the necessary know how to identify and cost resources needed to achieve their goals. Other challenges that were identified include:

* Usually too little time is made available for strategic management and planning. This is coupled with a fear of failure among managers who are delegated responsibility for strategic formulation and/or planning. There is usually insufficient time, personnel and finances allocated to the strategic management and/or planning process.
* There is usually insufficient knowledge among managers on how to do and apply strategic management within their respective departments. Generally, mangers do not appear able to articulate the strengths and/or weaknesses of their respective departments and thus struggle to formulate proper strategic plans.
* It often appears that there is a lack of involvement by top and senior management in strategic planning fostering the idea at grassroots levels that management is not committed to the strategic issues identified by the latter.
* Individuals in authority positions within the SAPS may do what is best for their particular specialised field and or department, rather than what is best for the entire organisation. All responsible persons in the organisation must understand how the needs of the organisation differ from the needs of single functional areas and/or departments. Managers must be involved in the organisation's overall strategic management process, thereby discovering how his or her function contributes to the achievement of organisation-wide goals.

CONCLUSIONS

Rapidly changing environments necessitate a proactive management approach from top management in police organisations. Changes in the political, economic, technological and social environments, as well as the need for improved performance, stress the importance of strategic management. The application of effective strategic management provides organisations with the capacity to capitalise on their internal strengths as they develop and also utilises external opportunities as they emerge. The organization can also recognise and defend against threats, and alleviate weaknesses before they become detrimental.

12

Although some of the difficulties in implementing strategic management concepts in public sector organisations are unlikely to disappear (e.g. the desire of elected representatives to be re-elected minimises an emphasis on long-term planning), other problems can be overcome. Public sector organisations can benefit significantly by analysing their environmental opportunities and threats and by formulating a vision, mission, strategies and objectives that allow them to fulfil the needs of the communities they serve. Organisations must then develop strategies that bring their strengths and weaknesses in line with the environment and allows them to create unique operating spheres. The basic principles of strategic management are most useful in increasing their ability to carry out their mission and realise organisational objectives.

To be effective in strategy implementation, there must be some broader form of management coordinating the contributions of the various functions, a guiding force that integrates the efforts of specialists throughout the organisation. Strategic management is central to capitalising on functional expertise, and in order for functional specialists to make the greatest possible contribution they must understand how their functions fit into a broader organisational strategy.

While the development of specific knowledge is necessary to accomplish objectives the actual understanding of this knowledge and its application significantly depends on the preparedness of those so charged with strategic planning and its implementation to develop the necessary skills.

Strategy implementation skills are not easily mastered. In fact, virtually all managers find implementation the most difficult aspect of their jobs - more difficult than strategic analysis or strategy formulation.

This raises the question as to whether the members of the SAPS have the necessary technical and managerial competence to accomplish the task? Do they also have the necessary technical and managerial competence to solve problems and coordinate solutions?

Miller (1998:xxiii) has pointed out the importance of under-standing differences between strategic management and general management functions.

Our observation suggest that although the SAPS management might have an adequate level of training in functional management there exists a challenge in the need for managers to be trained in strategic management and planning. Bourgeois, Duhaime & Stimpert (1999:17-18) have highlighted the fact that managerial thinking is very often constrained by mental models. They define mental models as the deeply inherent assumptions, understandings or representations of phenomena that influence how we understand the world and how we respond to it. Mental models tell us what is and is not important to us, what we like and do not like and what we should and should not notice. Mental models include our understanding of how things work and what we expect to happen next. When we encounter something novel, our minds quickly construct new mental models to help us understand this new phenomenon. Therefore managers' mental models of the situations they encounter determine whether a particular strategic issue or situation will be noticed and or observed, how it will be interpreted and understood, and how they as managers should respond to the situation.

Accordingly it is important for the SAPS to understand that managers have different mental models and this fact helps to explain why some managers notice important organisational issues while other managers do not, why some managers correctly

13

interpret these issues while others do not, and why some managers respond appropriately to issues while others do not. As a result, the linkages among organisational environments, managerial thinking, and strategic decision-making are keys to understanding performance differences across the organisation and how service delivery excellence is developed.

The observations reported in this paper are the result of the conduct of a SWOT analysis and an internal assessment of organizational limitations for implementing strategic planning at the provincial level of the South African Police Service of Free State Province during a strategic planning workshop, November, 2001. More specifically, the paper focuses on management preparedness in regard to strategic planning and strategic management. Or observations indicate that while managers, and the organisation, can benefit from such a process both the organization and managers must have the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities in place in order to maximally benefit from the training process. The participating managers themselves indicated a number of limitations related to competencies. Among these are a lack of skills to carry out costing of the plan, a lack of common understanding of strategic planning, different interpretations of strategic planning terminology and a low level of preparatory training supportive of developing skills in strategic planning and implementation. While the development of specific skills, knowledge and abilities related to the actual implementation of strategic planning and strategic management are necessary to eventual organisational success, it is also important for organisations to ensure an ongoing process that prepares managers to acquire the competencies to effect such training.

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14

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