CHAPTER 3

ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Introduction

In Part I, we talked of the need to vocationalise, or professionalise, the police system and of the debate on how best to achieve this, through general education conducted by universities or through specific training conducted by police academies. We also reviewed the function of policing, questioning whether its role is as a service to the community or as a force for control of the public. At the outcome of this discussion, we concluded that regardless of whether education is promoted through university or police academy, it is the educational *process* which is the crucial issue. Too often police training programmes have been modelled on educational processes which are appropriate for children's learning needs, but models of adult education (andragogy) are required to gain officers' commitment and motivation, to incorporate their past experiences, and to reduce their previously established prejudices and biases.

Here in Part II, this study goes on to look at a number of international comparisons in police education. While

international comparisons have been widely used as a research methodology in the field of social sciences, it has not been until recently that they have emerged as a method of analysis in police studies (Mawby,1999), and they have been even less common as an approach to studying police education/training. David Bayley has been one of the pioneers of international comparisons in police studies and he argues firmly that carrying out international police comparisons is important as it: extends knowledge of alternative possibilities, develops more powerful insights into human behaviour, increases the likelihood of successful reform, and helps us to gain a perspective of ourselves as human beings (Bayley, 1999).

This study began with a personal curiosity in comparing police education in three countries whose criminal justice systems originated from that of the British Police Force. However, this curiosity has since grown into a practical interest to understand the relationship between inter-related concepts of history, culture, and society and their role in the development of appropriate models of proactive police education. The basis of the study reviews the extent to which models of adult education are being implemented among police higher education programmes in various countries, and what alternative strategies are

required to promote the implementation culturally appropriate adaptations of Knowles' educational model.

The study focuses on an international comparison of the education of officers in three countries: Hong Kong, Canada, and Singapore, and uses *hermeneutics* as a methodology to analyse the interrelationship between the educational process and the history and culture of the various countries.

International comparison is, according to May (1997) "an 'evolving' topic, yet one with a long and rich history" (p.179). Comparative analysis lies at the foundation of modern sociology, and many famous studies such as the classic analysis of suicide by Durkheim (1952), the study of capitalism and the rise of bureaucracy by Weber (1930), and the functionalist studies of primitive societies by Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and Malinowski (1926) involved "drawing parallels across societies and teasing out the constants and variables of social interaction" (Mawby, 1990). From this perspective, comparative analysis involves looking at a topic not from one angle, or even from two angles, but rather from a multitude of different angles to establish a clearer impression of the nature of the issue (Higgins, 1981), hence one of the greatest

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benefits of comparative research is its strong potential for theory development (May, 1997).

In contemporary times, as links between national boundaries are becoming greater and old social bonds are giving way to a process of "detraditionalisation", it is less possible to speak of a 'society' (Heelas et al. 1996). Mass communications and the strength of multinational companies has resulted in a "globalisation" of modern society. Nevertheless, the growing complications and diversities of social and political life have counterbalanced the growing desire to seek universal explanations across different contexts, and it is this ambivalence that has rendered comparative research of importance (May, 1997).

Approaches to carrying out comparative research have taken on a number of perspectives. For example, Mawby (1990) talks of the *pragmatist* and *theorist* approaches. The *pragmatist* approach is based on the assumption that successful experiences in one country can be studied and devolved to other locations. However, Mawby (1990) argues that such studies tend to be ahistorical and atheoretical, resulting in unfortunate experiences when imposed on other cultures. Instead Mawby (1990) argues the need for a more

theoretical approach in comparative analysis which takes into account the social, cultural and political structure of the host country.

May (1997), on the other hand, discusses four perspectives of comparative empirical research: the *import mirror* view, the *difference* view, the *theory development* view, and the *prediction* view. The import mirror view is based on the theory that by analysing practices in other countries, we are able to question the basis for our own practices. On the other hand, the difference view (Esping-Andersen, 1990) highlights the importance of revealing comparisons between nations in order to determine which macro-factors influence change in all countries while which micro-factors (including economic, cultural and political factors) are particular to each setting (May, 1997). The third perspective, the theory development view, stresses the importance of comparative research in strengthening social theories by making conceptual differences clearer, and showing how traditionally some theories have been developed at such a level of abstraction that they fail to show conceptual differences which occur as a result of different cultures (O'Reilly, 1996). Finally, the fourth perspective, is that which stresses the value of comparative research as a tool for the prediction of

programme outcomes. What this perspective argues is that through comparative research particular policies and practices can be better understood, and their effects in other social and cultural contexts can be predicted (May, 1997).

Higgins (1981) offers perhaps the most practical review of the different benefits of comparative research. With regards the policing system, Higgins (1981) refers to the value of highlighting the constants in the system, and the variables which change in each society. In other words, she challenges the assumption that things are always done in a particular way (Mawby, 1990). From this perspective, our comparative study of policing education should focus on analysing: a) what are the *constant* components of Knowles' educational model described in Chapter 7, and b) what are the cultural, economic and political *variables* which affect these components, and how. This requires:

- Drawing comparisons to highlight similarities and differences between particular features
- Analysing and explaining similarities and differences in terms of wider historical, cultural and political differences among countries

- Reviewing how countries' police educational programmes have developed from the perspective of pedagogical/andragogical models

- Predicting to what extent Knowles' model may or may not be appropriate to the various countries

- Based on constants and variables analysed, attempting to draw policy recommendations that could inform practice regarding policing education.

This perspective of viewing police education programmes within the broader historical and political context is what makes *hermeneutics* an appropriate methodology for our international comparison.

INTERPRETATION, COMPARISON AND HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is described as the science of interpretation and its focus is on the understanding meanings through communication, rather than on the search for facts or truth through verifiable observations. *Hermes* was the winged-footed messenger of the Greek gods, whose role it was to explain to man the decisions of the gods, and vice verse (Froyland, 1991). While the word 'hermeneutics' has been around for approximately two and a half centuries, modern hermeneutics came into use in the seventeenth

century as a means of analysing biblical studies and Scripture. Since then, hermeneutics as a methodology has been extended to include not only the interpretation of texts, but also human practices, events and situations. Its aim is to 'read' these in ways that increase understanding (Crofty, 1998) and help recover the 'original meaning', reflecting the societies and cultures where they were developed, which often may differ greatly from those of the researcher who aims to understand them (Anderson, *et al*, 1986).

As an interpretist methodology, hermeneutics has highlighted the centrality of language, showing its importance in every aspect of human life, and particularly the role it has played in helping mankind to articulate reality in ways that others can understand, and be influenced by their comments (Crofty, 1998). Whereas medieval philosophers thought that the way things are, affects the way we see things, and this gets expressed in terms of language, hermeneutic interpretists believe the reverse to be true. Language and communication shapes how we see things, and hence they argue that 'reality' is not a fixed notion based on scientific evidence as in the case of positivism, but rather is a *subjective* interpretation of how language shapes the things we see and believe.

"Ricoeur's famous phrase 'the symbol gives rise to thought' expresses the basic premise of hermeneutics: that the symbols of myth, religion, art and ideology all carry messages which may be uncovered by philosophical interpretation. Hermeneutics is defined accordingly as a method of deciphering indirect meaning, a reflective practice of unmasking hidden meanings beneath apparent ones."
    (Kearney, 1991; p.277)

The complexity of hermeneutics was highlighted with the discovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts by two Egyptian farmers in 1945. These Greek texts presented very different facts regarding the Christian church to those which we have grown accustomed. The questions then were who wrote these texts, why, for what readership, and why were they concealed for so many years? Answering these questions required gaining an understanding of the past by what existed – and it was this fusion of past and present that provided the central question for *hermeneutics* (Anderson, *et al.*, 1986)

At the root of hermeneutics was notion that while our understanding of natural sciences could be enhanced through positivist theories based on objective knowledge and one fixed view, or truth regarding reality, this model of knowledge "left no room for the idea that history and social life were *human creations*, and that the essence of

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all social forms was that they expressed human creativity. In their eyes, the study of human history had to be based on the fact that humans are free, intentional and purposive *creators* whose lives are bounded by a reality that has meaning for them." (Anderson, *et al.*, 1986; p.64). Consequently, from the perspective of hermeneutics, generalising positivist research methodologies to all spheres of knowledge is unacceptable. Man is subjective and spiritual, and his actions and events are expressions of this spirituality, and such expression cannot be "measured" based on fixed concepts or truths. As such, hermeneutics has advocated for a less systematic and controlled form of research based on the sharing of communication between people and communities in an attempt to understand their expressions and actions – a process which is subsequently closely related to history and culture. As Rundell (1995) states:

"Through hermeneutics, interpretation has become part of our cultural self-understanding that only as historically and culturally located beings can we articulate ourselves in relation to others and the world in general."
(Rundell, 1995; p. 10)

Early researchers like Friedrich Scheleiermacher (1768-1834) and later the eminent Wilhelm Dilthey, stressed the importance of this relationship between *life* and *history*,

highlighting the role of understanding meaning within the context of the history and culture of those involved. It was perhaps Dilthy who did most to stress the significance of history in human activity and what he referred to as the *rise of historical consciousness*. For him, hermeneutics represented not just one methodology for gaining understanding and remedying the failure of other approaches to take account of the history embedded in our lives, on the contrary it was essential to any understanding. According to Dilthy, 'people's lived experiences are incarnate in language, literature, behaviour, art, religion, law – in short, in their every cultural institution and structure' (Crofty, 1998; p. 95). Consequently, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of others we must immerse ourselves in their lives, their texts their means of communications, and so forth, since it is believed that much of their historical and cultural background remains implicit in their communications and are hidden in their words and expressions.

Nevertheless, Dilthy recognised that all such interpretations must take into account the point of view of both the 'communicator' and the interpreter. In other words, they should not be seen just as a product of the communicator's time and culture, nor simply should they be

assumed to be our contemporaries (Anderson, *et al.*, 1986), but on the contrary we should attempt to understand them in relation to ourselves. In summary, the goal of hermeneutics is to *build understanding* not to *seek causal relationships*.

From the hermeneutic perspective, gaining this deeper understanding involves moving from the language of the communicator to the understanding of their cultural/historical setting and back again, in order to build up a clearer understanding of how and why that language came to be. As such it involves, what has come to be known as the development of a *hermeneutic circle*, or in the classical interpretation: the understanding of the whole through the grasping of its parts (Okrent, 1988).

From a different angle, Martin Heidegger viewed hermeneutics, and consequently the hermeneutic circle, as a far more phenomenological process, suggesting that we should first attempt to present objects before trying to make sense of them and in this way reduce our tendency to interpret ideas from the start (Crofty, 1998). He suggested that the crucial feature for man was his existence in the world - '*Dasein*' or 'being there' in a concrete situation (Anderson, *et al.*, 1986). He

therefore placed less emphasis on the need to search for culturally derived meanings and instead talked of the need to look at the here and now, or the real situations in which we find ourselves:

"….'to be there' and 'there' is the world: the concrete, literal, actual daily world. To be human is to be immersed, implanted, rooted in the earth, in the quotidian matter and matter-of-factness of the world"
(Steiner, in Froyland, 1991; p.59)

From Heidegger's perspective of phenomenological hermeneutics, to understand something you need to begin with ideas; since understanding is the development of what is already understood (Crofty, 1998). In other words, it requires uncovering what we already known, and making explicit what is implicit.

While Gadamer draws heavily on the work of Heidegger, he is best known for his efforts to distinguish what he refers to as substantive and generic understanding (Froyland, 1991). From his perspective, hermeneutics should aim to bridge the gap between familiar knowledge which is taken for granted in our every day world, and meanings which we cannot grasp or which are particularly difficult for us to understand and assimilate (Anderson, et al, 1986), forming what he refers to as generic

knowledge. All too often, he argued, researchers have sought to obtain substantive knowledge when genetic understanding would be more useful:

"In other words, it is when one cannot see the point of what someone else is saying or doing that one is forced to explore the conditions under which that person says or does it: what this person might mean, given who he or she is, the circumstances of the time and so on."

(Warnke, 1987; p.8)

With this theory Gadamar introduces a significantly new concept to that of Heidegger's individual interpretation, placing emphasis on understanding the thoughts of all the individuals which make up the whole, and taking into account their circumstances and conditions. From this perspective, Gadamar is concerned with 'prejudices' but not in terms of the negative connotations which they are generally viewed today:

"Self-reflection and autobiography – Dilthy's starting points are not primary and are therefore not an adequate basis for the hermeneutical problem, because through them history is made private once more. In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being.*"

(Gadamar, 1989, p.276; in Croft, 1998)

Thus for Gadamar the starting point is not 'self-awareness' or 'self-reflection' as in the case of other hermeneutic researchers. As he stresses, 'history does not belong to us, we belong to history', and hence we must constantly move from an analysis of history to its implications in terms of self awareness, and from our self awareness back to the implications of this for history:

"…the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally. The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding. The failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding has failed."
(Gadamer, 1989, p. 291; in Crofty, 1998)

From this perspective, hermeneutics involves extending understanding in ever widening circles by moving from whole to part and part to whole.

In recent years, the classical approaches of Dilthy, Heidegger and Gadamer have come under fire from a group of contemporary philosophers who have argued in favour of what has been referred to as 'depth hermeneutics' or 'critical hermeneutics'. This debate has been led by Jurgen Habermas, who has argued that Gadamer's theories failed to confront and deal with the existence of

'alienated consciousness' put forward by Marx. According to Habermas, our traditions and the forms of communication and language which we adopt from the past, cannot be viewed in isolation of the oppression and exploitation that affects our world. Forms of communication and tradition both shape and are shaped by our economic conditions, and any attempt to arrive at an understanding of social action must take into account our position within the world and must involve a process of 'emancipation' from our present forms of domination and repression. Thus critical hermeneutics is a theory of *praxis*, rather than of abstract reason (Anderson, *et. al,* 1986). "(It) can only occur when the spiral of interpretive understanding that Gadamer described is linked to a critical evaluation of the constraints on knowledge and all cognitive processes; when hermeneutics is revitalised by praxis (Anderson, *et al,* 1986).

According to Habermas, the combination of classical hermeneutics together with the theory of praxis, enables the 'participant' in the research to liberate themselves from their *false consciousness* and distorted communication, so that they can arrive at a new understanding of the socio-historical processes which

restrict the way they define their needs and wants and the means they have for satisfying these.

Thus whereas classical theorists have argued that the aim of hermeneutics should be to achieve 'unity of understanding' through an interpretation of history and life, Habermas has argued that such unity of understanding is impossible, and that understanding should be built on the basis rationale, free critical self-analysis. Hermeneutics, from this perspective should aim to remove myths and liberate mankind from domination. This requires a process of dialogue and testing to reveal the barriers to self-understanding and requires not only subjective but also objective knowledge. As Froyland succinctly summarises it, hermeneutics involves:

"...a continuing task in which understanding of the whole is built up from an understanding of all the parts and understanding of each of the parts is developed in the context of the whole.....hermeneutics is a philososhical activity or *praxis* that seeks to enable an understanding of what is distant in time or culture, or hidden in a peculiar context."
(Froyland, 1991; p.61)

As we will see in the next chapter, its theories and concepts offer useful insights and guidance in the design of our study into police education in communities with

different historical, cultural and socio-political backgrounds.

THE ROLE OF HERMENEUTICS IN UNDERSTANDING THE POLICY OF POLICE EDUCATION

As argued in the previous section, hermeneutics offers a new and forceful philosophical paradigm which questions some of the underlying assumptions of empirical-analytical approach used in understanding natural sciences. Moreover, increasingly it has been argued that as a methodology, hermeneutics provides a highly productive means for reviewing and analysing social policy (Wildavsky, 1979; Bernstein, 1983; Froyland, 1991). The question which then emerges, is how can its teachings be applied to further our understanding and analysis of the policy of police education in different socio-cultural contexts?

To answer this question it is worthwhile returning to some of the fundamental issues raised in the previous section, highlighting how these are relevant in terms of helping chief officers to assess policy for police education:

- *Hermeneutics is essentially a practical exercise and its aim is to solve real life problems.* Hermeneutics involves the sharing of meaning between communities and persons in an effort to answer a current problem in a particular context and as such is "more focussed on the problem in hand than on applying a particular discipline or method" (Froyland, 1991). It begins with a question or problem and this remains the focus of the research – rather than the development of basic research, or knowledge for knowledge's sake, problem solving remains the key objective of the research. For example, policy on police education is generally made by decision makers on the basis of their perceptions regarding present and future needs, an understanding of these perceptions and of the pressures placed upon them by others within their socio-economic context is important in understanding of police education policy.

- *Critical hermeneutics stress that individuals within a study should be 'participants' not simply 'researchers' and 'subjects'.* The aim of the research should not merely be to gain an understanding of people's interpretations of their world, but it should go beyond this to use knowledge and understanding in an effort to answer real problems. As such, the analyst includes

all those individuals who are likely to have and share knowledge to reach a conclusion, or help achieve a solution. "Intelligence is interactive" (Wildavsky, 1987), and hence through dialogue it is possible to build up an understanding of the whole through its parts, and this communication of the parts is carried out within the context of the whole (Froyland, 1991). Practical discourse is essential in terms of building up an understanding of different policies of police education. Plurality of opinion between officers, chiefs, academics, etc., are a means to discover common ground and reconcile differences, as Pitman and Shumer (1982, p.47) state: "Democratic politics is an encounter among people with different interests, perspectives, and opinions – an encounter in which they reconsider and mutually revise opinions and interests, both individual and common."

- *Hermeneutics offers a more holistic approach to research than empirical-analytical methodologies.* Policy making requires analysis of "where one wants to go" depending on whether one is able to get there.

- *Hermeneutics is the fusion of past and present knowledge, attitudes and opinions, and depends on the*

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history, context and power structure of the individuals and communities. Policies are made on the basis of present and future needs.

- *The hermeneutic circle implies that findings are partial and temporary, and appropriate to one period in time.* Policies too share this similarity as changes in various factors must bring about changes in policy. Academic studies are often too costly and time consuming, not appropriate afterwards, this lets you step in and out of hermeneutic circle and write another report later.

- *Findings of a hermeneutic study are judged according to whether they make sense, and whether they answer the original problem, not according to objective validity.*

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

In the previous two sections it has been argued that hermeneutics is not only a credible methodology, but also that it is a viable approach for policy analysis. As such, it has been chosen as the theoretical perspective for the present study into the educational processes used by different academies across a number of countries.

Defining the Problem

Comparative policy analysis requires starting with a clear definition of the problem at hand, since any ambiguity can 'dilute the lessons that might be learnt from the exercise' (Mawby, 1990; p. 10). By summarising previous chapters, we can highlight the key problems of the study as:

- Over the past decades, the professionalisation of police services has become an increasing issue with growing numbers of officers entering lengthy and costly training/educational programmes

- Lack of clarity regarding the expectations of police education has meant that the findings of evaluations on higher education programmes for police officers are unclear and there is much dispute regarding whether benefits outweigh gains

- Changing cultural and socio-economic climates within many countries have created new circumstances, which have in turn altered the daily functions of the police environment resulting in a lack of clarity in training/education objectives

- While there is much talk of the need to change the largely bureaucratic, rigid organisational structures of police academies and to introduce more flexible,

systems of management, to date policies and strategies continue to reinforce traditional structures and practices.

- Lack of radical change has been furthered by the production of pre-packaged educational programmes based on a set of competencies defined by senior police staff who themselves were educated within the classical police system and who consequently are likely to have traditional notions of the roles and functions of policing

- The predominantly pedagogical models of education used have meant that the contents of educational programmes have been based on needs defined by academics or senior officers and have rarely reflected the felt needs of the majority of the officers. In recent years it has been argued that andragogical models of education may provide more appropriate strategies but there has been little research on the question.

- Andragogical principals are based on the promotion of readiness to learn and self-directed problem-solving study, and encourage individuals to take the initiative to diagnose learning needs and formulate learning goals. The process has often been taken to imply learning in isolation, but in practice andragogical learning takes place in association with various groups

of helpers (Knowles, 1975) in an effort to achieve a clearer understanding of the various felt needs and to reconcile their differences so as to define appropriate learning needs and programme contents.

- The focus of this study is to demonstrate, using a hermeneutic methodology, a process of exploring the felt needs and of reconciling differences, resulting in the collection of data that can provide police policy with greater clarity regarding training needs and programme content.

Theoretical Perspective

Designing and planning policy for police education, requires more than a simple analysis of facts in order to make future predictions. Planning policy requires an understanding of perceptions and felt needs. Facts help to predict environmental changes, however, people are not simply conditioned or created by these changes. As interpretist schools of thought argue, our actions are not governed by cause and effect, but rather people are constantly involved in a process of interpretation and action, and it is this interpretation of events, actions and needs, that is crucial to any clear comprehension of policy.

"......human beings uniquely use complex systems of linguistic signs and cultural symbols to indicate to themselves and to others what they intend and mean to do. Such a viewpoint suggests that human activity is not behaviour (an adaptation to material conditions), but an expression of meaning that give (via language) to their conduct."
(Johnson, *et al.*, 1990; p. 14)

In other words, in analysing policies of police education, researchers should concentrate on understanding *how* people interpret their educational needs, and how these interpretations distort their perceptions of the "facts", rather than merely on *why* certain issues are relevant to educational programmes. Policy makers are not dealing with the notion of a 'static', 'universal' world, but instead with multiple, variable social realities (May, 1997), and as such, short-term partial answers that outline appropriate alternatives for different cultural circumstances are likely to be more beneficial, than the search for perfect "truths". Policing is constantly changing and hence so too are the needs and directions of police education. For this reason, hermeneutics offers a suitable approach for this study.

Hermeneutics acceptance of the researcher's 'engagement' in the study is particularly relevant in the process of understanding social policy and hence models of police education, since little written information exists

(Froyland, 1991). The previous literature reviews on this aspect indicate that since Froyland's comprehensive study using hermeneutics, the situation has changed little. Moreover, this 'engagement' is part of a condition for understanding (May, 1997). As Outhwaite puts it:

"..understanding is not a matter of trained, methodological, unprejudiced technique, but an encounter .... a confrontation with something radically different from ourselves"
<div align="right">(Outhwaite, 1991; p.24)</div>

The researcher therefore stands at the centre of the research process, as part of the procedure to use and challenge existing understanding in a way that is useful both to himself and the policy maker.

Clarifying the Context

The study involved an analysis of police education in a number of countries: Hong Kong, Canada, and Singapore, all of which were British colonies.

- *Hong Kong* – participants who were interviewed for the study were either members of the Royal Hong Kong Police. The sample of participants came from within the Hong Kong Police Training School and outside the training environment. Hong Kong is a highly policed

society, with approximately one officer for every 213 citizens, and with little signs of community policing (Mawby,1990).

- *Canada* - participants interviewed worked for the Ontario Police College, part of the Ontario Police Commission, an independent provincial force accountable to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Unlike Hong Kong, Ontario only has one officer for every 531 citizens (Statistics Canada, 1993), and its structure of policing rather than being affected simply by the British colonial system has also been influenced by French and American systems.

- *Singapore* - participants came from the Singapore Police Academy, which in August 1997 was joined with the Training Department to become the present TRACOM.

Outlining the Research Questions

Choosing and formulating an appropriate research question is central to any study (Sarantakos, 1998). However, there are many issues associated with the selection of this question (Patton, 1990), for example, how relevant it is to the topic, how researchable it is, are there

sufficient resources available to carry out the proposed study, how ethical is such a study, and what unit of study should be used? The main questions explored among the different groups were:

- How is policing perceived to change over the next 5 years? What will be the main cultural and societal influences? This question was asked in the context of the changing educational and training needs as influenced by the changes in policing over the next few years. Five years was chosen because during the initial interviews with senior officers , they indicated that most of the officers in all of the jurisdictions could not see beyond five years of policing due to various factors influencing their respective jurisdictions.

- How could training and education best support these changes? What should be the objectives of this education/training?

- What are the specific needs of the officers? How could these needs be met through education? What are the preferred processes of education?

- What organisational/structural changes would be required to support these educational changes?

- How should education aim to change the role/ functions of the officers?

Method

The method used for data collection was that of individual and focus group interviews with police recruits, superintendents and senior officers from the three countries. Bibliographical data was also collected on the cultural/historical development of police education/training, and the social, political and criminal context underpinning policing in each of these countries. The aim of the bibliographical study was to determine the basis for the pre-understandings, and to review whether there are some constant learning needs, or whether in fact policing, and hence police education, is a variable rather than a constant (Mawby, 1990), requiring regionally adapted programmes but based on similar underlying paradigms of education.

The methodology of focus groups is widely used among social scientists (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) and has been growing continually during the past decade (Morgan, 1996). It is described as a method of drawing together specially selected groups of persons with the aim of collecting information, brainstorming solutions and facilitating group discussion (Sarantakos, 1998). The aim

of the researcher is not to analyse the group per se, but rather establish a mechanism for forming opinions and to gain breadth or variation of opinions in a relatively short period (Dreher & Dreher, 1991). For example, in some of these countries, as in Singapore, where the Senior Commander was present at all times during interviews, it was suggested that the focus group setting created a more relaxed environment for discussion. The basic assumption being that the group environment, through mutual stimulation, encourages debate on critical issues, and allows views to be presented in real, emotional and often spontaneous forms (Sarantakos, 1998). Focus group leaders, or facilitators, can obtain this information through encouraging participants to describe issues, comparing the different points of view and this way promoting debate, and then encouraging them to make decisions and draw conclusions. In this study, the researcher used a *process* of warming the focus groups up, that is getting them to feel at ease with the situation, then provoking a degree of confrontation and debate, and finally relaxing the situation and drawing conclusions.

The contact making process began long before the research was formalised. This was done so as to familiarise the participants with the study and also because this helped

in reducing the costs of the entire study. Participants were allowed to decide if they wanted to participate in the study from the time of initial contact to the actual focus group meeting time. One shortcoming using this method was that the selection of the participants was done through contacting the senior officers at the various police services. The selection of the senior police officer who provided the logistical support for the study was done through visiting the various police services and presenting the research proposal to a group of interested officers. In all of the countries concerned except Singapore, the presentation was done at the Police Academy or Police Training College. Based on the presentation, the police service concerned decided to either participate or not participate in the study. Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore decided to participate. All of these police services assigned a senior officer to help the researcher with the progress of the study. This was the officer who also helped select the participants in the study and there was always close consultation with the researcher at every stage of the study.

The number and size of the focus groups in each country varied slightly, nevertheless every effort was made to ensure that the size was large enough to stimulate debate,

without being too large to be uncontrollable. Homogeneity of group sample was not considered a key factor, and in some instances was seen as a method of promoting discussion. As follow up interviews were conducted with various senior officers in all jurisdictions, this reduced the need for a consistent and random sample. The researcher indicated to the senior officer assigned to help with the progress of the study at each jurisdiction, the type of participants (mainly rank and experience related eg recruits versus super-intendants) needed to make the study effective. Below is an outline of the size and group composition of the interviews held in each country:

- *Hong Kong* – 6 focus groups were interviewed, consisting of a mixture of both senior and junior (less than 2 years experience) officers, and further individual interviews were held with superintendents and the principal. Each of the focus group interviews had between 9-12 participants.

- *Canada* – 3 focus groups each with 12 officers participated consisting of both senior and junior officers.Among the others interviewed were the non-police academics and the police personnel in the

training school, this is important to point out, since it was the only location where non-police and police personnel were working together in the educational programmes.

- *Singapore* – 1 focus group was interviewed which was made up of 12 officers, 2 academic staff members and the Senior Commander.

In all cases except Singapore, three focus group meetings were held over a period of three months considering the questions posed below. The focus group meetings were semi structured due to the time limitations (each meeting lasted for about 3 hours only) and participants who wanted to raise more issues were encouraged to speak to the researcher after the focus groups had met formally. This offer was taken up in many instances and participants often spoke about issues raised at earlier focus groups meetings at much later times to the researcher. The intention was to keep the meetings as informal as possible, so as to extract most up to date information and ideas from the participants. Before every meeting the researcher stressed to the participants the workings of focus groups and that the ownership of these meetings should lie with the participants and not the researcher.

It was also stressed that the information would be confidential and would not be linked to any particular participant. The importance of ownership was initially not well understood by the participants but towards the third focus group meeting, comments were made as to the importance of 'owning' the process by some group leaders. The focus group method outlined above sits well with the hermeneutic methodology approach.

The Questions to Consider

The researcher outlined the questions that should be considered by the participants well before the focus group meetings. In all cases, the questions were provided to the participants about 35 days before the meetings. As all those interviewed for the study including the senior officers participated in the focus groups, the questions were distributed to all participants about 35 days in advance before the first focus group meeting. Literature on the historical and cultural factors of the respective police services was also distributed during this time. All participants were also provided with current copies of training calendars and syllabus that included complete contents and synopsis of training topics for each respective jurisdiction. These documents consisted of

training programmes conducted for the entire service ie. recruit as well as continuos on the job officer training. Participants were also told to focus on the questions using training and educational needs as the pivotal focus point.

As the researcher was able to make a formal presentations to many of the participants or their senior officers in a formal setting before the first focus group meeting, the opportunity to present the methodology and relevance of the study was fulfilled at these presentations. This was a bonus especially as police services are structured in such formal ways that in all instances, the senior officers at these presentations had made arrangements for all participants to be briefed before the first focus group meetings. The researcher was also able to have informal interviews with many senior officers during the initial visit to make the formal presentation. It was during these informal interviews and many visits to the police academy library collection that the literature review and issues facing the respective police forces were sourced. This was extremely helpful, as during the formal interviews and focus group meetings, the researcher was able to indicate and present some factors that could guide the interviews and focus groups. The method is highly recommended as it

provides any researcher with the informal networks that help immensely when the formal research is being conducted.

The questions as presented to each of the participant were changed slightly by the participants themselves from the original version as outlined earlier. The final questions considered by the focus groups were as follows:

1) In your opinion, what are the changes facing general policing over the next five years? Take into consideration cultural, technological and societal factors.

2) How should training and education support these changes?

3) What are the specific needs of officers? How could these needs be met through training/education? What are the preferred processes and methods of training/education?

4) What organisational/structural changes if any would be required to support these changes?

The above questions are based on Froyland's study (1991) but take into consideration some of the factors of this study. Officers were briefed on the different processes

and methods of study available to be able to discuss question 3 and all officers were asked when supplied with the questions and literature, if they knew the current situation with regard to police training and education in their various police services. Twenty eight percent of officers indicated that they were out of touch and did not know of the current training/educational issues in their respective police services and this resulted in arranging a presentation to all participants by senior officers from their police training academies.

The focus groups were well briefed on the methodology and were also made aware of the scope of this study. The groups were also told that they could make changes to the questions presented to them if they felt that there were specific issues concerning their respective police service that might not be reflected well by these questions. The original questions that were presented by the researcher were modified slightly and resulted in the current set of questions as indicated above. In true hermeneutics fashion no lists were provided to the participants with the exception of a list of courses offered at Edith Cowan University. This was to stimulate discussion on the types of courses that the participants thought would be relevant to their situation and the reason why this list was

provided was simply because otherwise there was no understanding in jurisdictions where University based education was not applicable to officers of all ranks (ie Hong Kong and Singapore).

Limitations

Despite their substantial benefits, international comparisons hold the risk of becoming superficial, over simplistic and exceptionally uncritical unless well handled (Bayley, 199). One of the major problems is that they are frequently carried out by people foreign to the country, who visit for a short while, but who may lack an in-depth knowledge of the criminal system (Blazicek & Janeksela, 1978), the culture and even the local language, resulting in serious distortions of evidence (Killias, 1989). The problem of language was not a factor here since the investigator is fluent in all languages, and equally concern regarding the researcher's knowledge of the local culture and criminal system has been eliminated in two out of the three locations studied. Moreover, hermeneutics offers a methodology for dealing with these limitations, in that it accepts that the researcher becomes submerged in the hermeneutical circle and develops

from there, a "growing understanding", rather than a scientific "truth".