The success of failure: can we really build learning organisations in policing?

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Victoria Herrington

Introduction

Thank you for your warm welcome. It is an incredible honour to join you here in beautiful Edinburgh to deliver the 45th James Smart Memorial Lecture, and I sincerely hope you are not too disappointed to have flown me all the way from Australia only to find me speaking with an English accent!

For many – myself included – Australia can seem a long way away, both geographically and in terms of its relevance to the Scottish experience. But I believe there are many benefits to thinking about policing here and there, and much we can learn from each other.

Today I want to talk about the challenge of building learning organisations in policing. Let me be clear: I have more questions than answers, and to skip to the end, I'm not sure where we are heading with this. Which in itself is characteristic of the challenge of police leadership, of course. Most of the time we actually don't know where we going in leadership, and one of our greatest hurdles in policing is being able to admit that to ourselves, and to those who are expecting us to show them the way (Fausing, Jeppesen, Jonsson, Lewandowski, and Bligh 2013; Walton, 2005). Harvard leadership scholar Ron Heifetz calls it the art of disappointing people at a rate they can absorb (Heifetz and Linskey, 2002). Which is something I hope I can do over the next 40 minutes.

So apart from feeling disappointed, what else can you expect from the next 40 minutes. My aim is to sketch an impressionist landscape of learning organisations; to point out the more interesting features in that landscape; and allude to some of the choices we have. My perspective is naturally Australian, my examples are inevitably Australian, but my intention is to provoke a shared conversation about how our profession evolves. In doing so I hope to meet the vision of the James Smart Lecture Series as a means to *promote the widening and deepening of police thought*.

Where am I coming from?

I should also give you some broader context about my perspective. I work at the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM), which is sited on Sydney's glorious Harbour in the suburb of Manly, which has the strap line *"Seven miles from Sydney, 1000 miles from care"*. It's actually about an hour from the airport in a cab; traffic dependent. It is a very special place to

work and provides a physical and metaphysical retreat for police and public safety leaders from around Australia, New Zealand, and our region. We also have great reciprocal relationships with our colleagues in Canada, the US, and of course the UK. We have worked building leadership capacity in the Middle East and the Pacific, and last year we connected with more than 7000 people digitally; 800 organisations globally; and conducted 145 learning activities involving more than 3000 participants. The AIPM - and I should warn you that one of my distinctly Australian habits is speaking in fluent acronym - is set up as a national common police service. We report to a Board of Control comprising the nine police commissioners of Australia and New Zealand, who represent 88,000 members dispersed across 8 million square kilometres. These members serve a combined population of almost 30 million people.

The purpose of the AIPM is to develop individual and organisational leadership capacity. Our work to that end is as a facilitator of knowledge – tacit and codified; as an explorer of policing's intellectual frontiers; and to support the profession, through education and professional development. We posture ourselves as thought-provocateurs; as a place to explore "dangerous" ideas; and as the stewards and purveyors of the stories that challenge us. It is with that predisposition that I offer some thoughts about learning organisations today.

What is a learning organisation?

Let's talk about definitions. The term "learning organisation" has been banded around with enthusiasm since Peter Senge's seminal book – the fifth discipline – in the 90s. Senge rather romantically characterised learning organisations as places "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspiration is set free, and people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990, p. 3).

Back in the real world of governance, structures, and accountability mechanisms, there remained ambiguity about that actually meant for business. How does it operate, what does it do, and what does one looks like when it is working? David Garvin (1993) recognised this and tried to define more concretely a learning organisation as one that was "skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights" (p. 3). The key components of this definition are that there is an active management of the knowledge process, and that subsequent learning translates into new ways of operating (Garvin, 1993). Consequential organisational transformation is, then, an important part of what it means to be a learning organisation (Blackman and Henderson, n.d.). Which is perhaps why universities – skilled as they are at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge – would not, I think it is fair to say, be routinely characterised as learning organisations. It is more than just recruiting smart people and leaving them alone to do smart things.

Senge (1990) - as you know - set out five "disciplines" that underpinned practice in a learning organisation:

- Personal mastery – which is the personal ownership of - and motivation to - clarify, reflect on, and learn from life
- Mental models – and recognition of the impact that internal assumptions and biases have on our ability to balance advocacy with curiosity
- A shared vision – and fostering of genuine commitment to a shared picture of the future, rather than forcing compliance on others with a top down view
- Team learning – and the ability to enter into a genuine "thinking together" allowing the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts; And at the antithesis of that I am sure we have all sat through meetings in which the collective IQ of the group is much lower than the individual IQ of the members! And finally,
- Systems thinking – which characterises the ability to see the individual and the organisation in the context of the system as a whole; recognition that today's problems are the result of yesterday's solutions; and to see the ability to pull the least obvious of levers in order to make progress on issues. It recognises implicitly the complexity of the challenges we face.

Organisational structures and traditions are just "suggestions" for a systems thinker. It is about reaching beyond these boundaries. It is about thinking about issues in novel ways and from different perspectives. And it is about seeing a problem for what it is - which is a symptom of the system - and about working to understand how we can intervene to create a different outcome.

Returning to practical Garvin (1993), he augmented his definition by suggesting several "building blocks" of activity that give form to the work of the learning organisation. Garvin noted that organisations that were good at learning were particularly proficient at:

- Systematic problem solving – which includes using scientific tools to move past a reliance on "gut feel", bias and assumption to make decisions. Its about organisations routinely asking, "how do we know that is true?"
- Experimentation – which is the systematic searching for and testing of new knowledge. This relies on a steady flow of new ideas, an appetite and incentive for calculated risk taking, and at its heart a recognition that failure is part and parcel of the learning process.
- Learning from the past – which is to again laud the productivity in failure. Although the extent to which formal and informal organisation reward systems recognise this is debatable. Meaning what we actually learn from past failures might not be what we could or should learn.
- Learning from others – which is to ensure a steady flow of new ideas into the organisation, through "borrowing" ideas from other industries, listening sincerely (rather than defensively) to one's customers, or engaging in study tours and sabbaticals. And,
- Transferring knowledge – which is the mechanisms by which knowledge is shared. Most organisations have much better communication mechanisms than they believe. Just start a salacious rumour and see how long it takes to come back. Which is to say that transfer of knowledge is not, and should not, always be formal. But it needs to be conscious and managed. Recognising and leveraging our informal knowledge brokers is certainly part of our leadership work.

Senge's disciplines are personal disciplines insofar as they relate to how individuals interact and learn from each other. Garvin's activities are organisational insofar as they describe the actions that must be encouraged, managed and rewarded in our organisations.

We can map these (somewhat redundantly) on a matrix to illustrate the comprehensiveness with which organisations need to think about learning.

Table 1: Senge x Garvin: Making sense of learning organisations.

	Personal Mastery	Mental Models	Shared Vision	Team Learning	Systems Thinking
Systematic problem solving	X	X	X	X	x
Experimentation	X	X	X	X	x
Learning from the past	X	X	X	X	x
Learning from others	X	X	X	X	x
Transferring knowledge	X	x	X	X	x

Garvin's activities give form to Senge's practices. But doing one set, without ensuring it maps across to the other set, is not going to get the us to the place "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspiration is set free" (Senge, 1993, p. 3)

Here our thinking about learning organisations intersects with the literature on double-loop learning, which differentiates two types of learning: how to do things better (single loop learning); and reflecting on what it is we should be doing in the first place (double loop learning) (Argyris, 1993). Double loop learning gets us to observe and question the underlying "theories of action" that drive our decisions to act a certain way. It allows us to explore the tension between doing things better and doing better things; In our policing context, between "what works" and "what really matters" (Van Dijk, Hoogewoning and Punch, 2015).

Double loop learning is also about action. It is one thing to have these insights and revelations, but they mean nothing unless we change our behaviour as a result. To this end there are parallels too with the reflective practitioner, based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Hughes and Heycox, 2011; Kolb, 1984). Here a practitioner is only truly reflective if she or he make sense of why they behave in a given way and then commit to trying new things in the future.

Both these things share a spirit with systems thinking too, in that the question we ask ourselves to prompt double loop learning and reflection is "what is really going on here?" There is more

than a hint of this type of thinking in problem orientated policing (POP), of course, so we are in many ways already well versed in the mechanics of double loop learning in policing. And reflective practice is the mainstay of many recruit training programs, as well as our own leadership development offerings at the AIPM. What I wonder about with POP, with Double Loop Learning, with reflection and with Systems Thinking, however, is how capable are we really in policing to move beyond our police thinking. To move beyond seeing everything through a police lens. And by doing so to avoid falling into the trap of thinking we are engaging in deep questioning of our assumptions and beliefs, when in fact we are continuing to see every problem as a nail because all we have in our tool kit is a hammer.

The reason I wonder this is because of a tendency, I think, to see the things we are called on to deal with in policing as falling into one of two categories:

- Someone else's problem that we are getting dragged into because they are not doing their job properly, or
- Something we can fix by throwing more bodies at it.

Let's explore a couple of examples.

Let's take the high number of mental health incidents that police officers are called to. There is some evidence that as much as 30% of all calls to police involve some sort of mental health element, and there has long been discussion on how police can extricate themselves from the more time-consuming elements of this (Herrington and Pope, 2013). The received wisdom is that police engagement with people with a mental illness, especially when there is no crime involved, is the result of health, social services, or some "other" department not doing their job effectively. Not caring for people effectively in the community. There is certainly some truth to this of course. So the resulting police solution is to clearly demarcate the police response. So even recent laudable work in NSW looking at police dealing more intelligently with persons with a mental illness in crisis, there is a heavy dose of *…get the person to hospital as quickly as we can and then its over to health – who frankly have to pull their socks up*. (Herrington, 2012)

There is some sense in this approach from a police perspective, but it is not a systems thinking approach. We continue to see our role in the same way we have always seen our role. Albeit more streamlined or with better communication with our partners. We tend not to ask if there is another way we can view this challenge.

A second issue highly salient to Australian policing at the moment is the low level of female retention and advancement in policing, against a backdrop of investigations into hyper-masculine cultures, stories of gendered bullying, harassment and discrimination in the workplace (McLeod, 2018). We routinely categorise this as the fault of the women, of course. They are not putting themselves forward for promotion, and without more women how can we expect the culture to change! We fix the problem by throwing more bodies at it. Female bodies.

Our solution is to create leadership pathways for women, all women selection panels, and to set targets or quotas for management positions (McLeod and Herrington, 2017). But we still recruit women the same way we always have. We still promote people based on the same criterion of suitability and success. And beyond some 'arm-wavy' argument about women being good for organisational productivity, or optics for our communities, we do not articulate why we want more women in the police service and as such why we should think about the issue differently. *We don't ask ourselves, what is really going on here*?

The pressure to be police-y is immense. It was always thus, and unless we learn to question some of those underlying assumptions, and shape the views of other stakeholders to buy us the space to be able to do that, it always will be. Being held captive to the set of tools that we currently have available to us holds our organisations back from experimenting with different ways to influence the system, and from transforming in meaningful ways.

We can't arrest our way out of this problem

I have a series of favourite clichés I enjoy hearing sports personalities and pundits say when they are interviewed on the telly: *It's a game of two halves; he's giving 110%; you couldn't write a script like this (see also* http://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/0/the-football-buzzwords-clichs-and-stock-phrases-that-need-to-die/*)* Our favourite police cliché is *"we can't arrest our way out of this problem".* And while perhaps never a truer word was spoken, I'm always impressed that we continue - in one way or another - to try.

Ok, so that might not be entirely fair, but we continue to address complex problems by doing police-y things. "Probably", I hear you say, "because we are the police!" But let's think about the net result of continuing to see problems through police eyes, instead of seeing problems as patterns in the system; as seeing issues in terms of their connection to social disorder, instead of as an emergent property of the system of which we are a part. Does that limit our ability to see other points of view? Does that limit our ability to truly question our underlying assumptions? Does that limit our ability to learn, and in learning to recognise and deal with the dynamic complexity of modern life?

Let me give you two examples:

On the front page of the local rag the day I was writing this was an article about *one-punch attacks*. Essentially one person throws a single punch at another person, usually while drunk on a night out, with tragic consequences. Following a number of high profile attacks like this in Sydney, the then Premier in 2014 introduced a number of measures including mandatory eight-year sentences for such attacks, and a series of lock out measures meaning you could not gain entry to a bar after 1.30am, and you could not be served a drink after 3am. There was a statistically significant reduction in assaults in these areas following these legislative changes (Menéndez, Weatherburn, Kypri and Fitzgerald, 2015) although some evidence of displacement into surrounding areas has also emerged (Donnelley, Poynton and Weatherburn, 2017). What is

interesting is that while not a police decision to enact these changes, it is a characteristically police-y response. Crime problem? Technical fix. Rise in attacks? Let's try and arrest our way out.

Sure, the police in this scenario are as much the victims of police-y thinking among legislators, government, community, as they are the prisoners of their own way of viewing the world. But as police officers experiencing the pointy end of the night time economy I wonder what thought they gave to the impact that large drinking venues had on this issue? That club hopping was a "sport" in these areas? And that licensing regulations had made smaller venues less profitable (Lee, 2016). Had they done this, had they identified less police-y levers, and had they then worked to shape the views of stakeholders to give this a go, we might have made a different type of progress on this issue.

Second, you may know that same sex marriage was signed into law in Australia on 8th December, legalising - among other things – the formal recognition of love between same sex couples. Finally, I might add. But not so long ago same-sex intimacy was an offence. And as recently as 1997 a defence of "gay panic" was successfully used in mitigating circumstances in a murder case, where the murderer claimed he was provoked by the unwanted advances of a friend. What is interesting is that in a relatively short period of time, our framing of an issue has shifted from a problem of *social disorder* to a recognition of it as a celebrated part of *social variance*. Mardi Gras is a huge event in the Sydney calendar. Politicians march alongside the Aboriginal transgender women from the Tiwi Island – the *Sistagirls*; alongside the famous *Dykes on Bikes* motorcycle club; and alongside proud LGBTIQ police officers, who not so many years ago, would only have attended such a parade in a very different capacity.

Clearly, then, our disorder lens, and with it our problem-solving bias, is governed by our assumptions fixed in space and time. Todays solution may be tomorrow's problem; but todays problem may also be tomorrow's opportunity to leverage new ways of operating. Does all this really matter, if - to quote David Bayley - police are "to government as the edge is to the knife"? (Bayley, 1985, p. 189) Perhaps it is not our job to think critically about what does and does not constitute social disorder? And what does or does not constitute police work. Perhaps we should simply do the government's bidding. Perhaps we should simply enforce laws. Should policing be any more than that? Is it a slippery slope to a police state? One reason why we might want policing – and indeed other public services – to operate beyond the boundaries of their current lane is because of VUCA.

It's crazy out there!

Australian's love to speak in acronym, and one of the most popular acronyms in my circle is VUCA. VUCA stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous.

It emanated out of the US Military assessment of the new type of war-fighting post-Cold-War (Whiteman, 1998), and its spirit is also captured in the writings of Klaus Schwab (2017) on the fourth industrial revolution.

Schwab (2017) charts our social journey through the industrial ages. From the first industrial revolution that liberated society from reliance on animal power; the second revolution that made mass production possible; the third revolution in the 60s that brought digital capabilities to billions of people; to being on the cusp of the fourth industrial revolution that will, excitingly and terrifyingly, be characterized by technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds. Schwab argues that we are entering a time of challenges about what it means to be human.

Why is this important? The fourth industrial revolution is emblematic of the futures that are possible in a VUCA environment, and with that the problems and issues that we as societies will have to navigate. These issues will include new crimes, new opportunities for social control, new ways of social organisation, new seats of power and new geopolitical shifts. For example, if - as Schwab has suggested - Asian countries may be ideally placed to capitalise on the fourth industrial revolution because of their relatively young population - digital natives we might say - we may see a shift in global power and with that a very different landscape for transnational law enforcement cooperation. Let's think about how today's "solutions" may contribute to tomorrow's "problems". So in Schwab's "Asian renaissance" our tried and tested alliance of the Five Eye's (the close intelligence sharing network of the US, Canada, the UK, Australia and NZ) may hinder, not help, our public safety work. Our citizens may need to be protected in different ways. And we may find ourselves a source country for exploitations in ways we have not yet imagined.

Recognising the long arc and what might be effective leverage points along the way is, I think, what we mean by systems thinking. The implication for policing and our policing lens is that we don't tend to start to think about these things until they are issues of social disorder. By which point the horse has already bolted and there is little value in closing the stable door.

The internet of things is a good example of this. With estimates of 50% of crime occurring online (National Crime Agency, 2016), and law enforcement agencies the world over playing catch up with 10 year old boys sitting in their bedrooms (Curtis, 2016), our opportunity to see the system at play, assess the likely outcomes, to position ourselves outside our lanes and leverage a different result, has been missed. And even if you have reservations about the police leveraging beyond their operational remit, which we should talk more about (Ernst and Chrobot-Mason, 2011), we have still been unable to see this challenge coming, or to do anything about it from a proactive or preparatory point of view. I wonder whether this is in part because of a set of deeply held assumptions about what it means to be a police officer.

Which leads me to think that part of what we are talking about in creating learning organisations not only the human intellectual capital and personal mastery to see beyond events, recognise patterns, and commit to double-loop learning; we are also saying something about an organisation's _will_ to see the long game and transform to position itself effectively.

Here the learning organisation literature intersects neatly with yet another body of work on organisational agility. Let's return to our evocation of VUCA in war-fighting by Whiteman. Whiteman (1998) draws on the work of organisational transformation scholar Oscar Mink, who suggested that in dealing with VUCA*"…it becomes necessary to structure organizations in such a way that will meet the challenges presented by the environment."* (Mink, 1993, p. 55). At first blush this is a statement of the blindingly obvious. But I think it bears closer examination as we consider the structural suitability of policing to learn and adapt in the face of VUCA. Which is to say our police organisations' ability to be true learning organisations

There is much that links the essence of learning organisations and organisational agility. Agile organisations are characterised by an ability to sense subtle changes in the internal and external environment to make countless small adaptations in response (Nold and Michel, 2016; Harraf, Wanasika, Tate and Talbott, 2015). Organisational agility rests on an ability among its people to sense early warning signs of shifts in the internal or external environment, identify and distil relevant information, and for the organisation to react quickly to make an impact (Nold and Michel, 2016, p. 344). In terms of learning leading to organisational transformation, agility and learning go hand in hand. Organisational agility rests on organisational flexibility and adaptability (Felipe, Roldan, and Leal-Rodriguez, 2016), but is powered by its people's thoughts and behaviour (Pantouvakis and Bouranta, 2017). Organisations must provide an enabling environment that encourages people to contribute their unique skills, expertise and experience, their tacit knowledge, and must be alive to the need to transform as a result. They must have cultures that value different ways of thinking. They must have systems that recognise complexity, experimentation, and an ability to shift from the subsequent learning. And they must have leadership that recognises its role as being to facilitate this, and instead of imposing a set of ideas from the top down, be able to give others in the organisation the freedom - and the cover - to feel their way into a new way of operating.

So if I can offer a revised definitional "mash-up" from the intersecting work we've explored so far. I suggest that when we are talking about learning organisations, we are looking for organisations that employ *learningful practitioners, wrapped in the cultures, systems and leadership that enable, encourage, and enact new ways of thinking, innovation and creative potential.*

Now, I don't know about you, but that doesn't sound like any police organisation I know. And I'm not the only one feeling sceptical. Filstad and Gottschalk (2013) were similarly negative in their assessment of the Norwegian Police. Although I think we would both agree that not currently being a learning organisation does not mean it is impossible to get there. So, to quote 90s indie duo *Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine*, let's at least *dream the impossible dream.*

What will it take us to get there?

In fact, whether by accident or design there is plenty of *learningful* activity going on in policing, for example:

- The evidence based policing movement and research into what works, for whom and why
- In academic-practitioner consortiums such as SIPR, or in bilateral relationships between police and universities, including in Australia one force handing its data over to a university explicitly to fish for patterns and explanations.
- In post-hoc reviews of successes and failures to identify organisational learnings, (and less helpfully, typically, also who was to blame)
- And in much of the professionalisation work being done by the College of Policing.

These are all changes that provide opportunity for learning and transformation. If that opportunity is taken.

I want to hover in the work of the College for just a moment. I have been reflecting on my observations of the College over the last few years. Which I confess have gone from *incredulous* to *impressed*. Much of what the College is doing, or encouraging, or eliciting seems to be in the service of building learning organisations. Although I am not sure that they would recognise or characterise it in that way. Their knowledge work has the potential at least to encourage policing to do things better AND to think about doing better things; standards are developing out of a knowledge base, not out of a set of historical assumptions about why we do what we do; ownership of professional development is being transferred to the individual from the organisation; and the education qualifications framework provides a mechanism to encourage and "value" this development, with the hope that this will lead to different ways of thinking about police work. The direct entry schemes, the advanced practitioner program, and Police Now all have the potential to attract and retain smart people and to value their different contribution to the profession explicitly. And the Leadership Review and subsequent changes in thinking about the role of formal leaders in the police has the potential to shift systems and cultures to enable our smart people to contribute ideas and set directions, instead of just being told what to do.

There are similar efforts in other jurisdictions, of course, all at varying stages of development. So on one assessment we might say that we are inching toward a more *learningful profession*. But this work is not characterised as 'building learning organisations' and as such it isn't zipped together as a coherent whole. On the one hand this may not be a problem. In fact, labelling this activity as such might be counterproductive. Although on the other hand, I wonder how, if we do not recognise these efforts as moving toward learning organisations, we will recognise the need to trip into double loop learning and measure our success in relation to this? Will we recognise and enact systems thinking? And will we recognise the importance of transforming ourselves, our organisation, as a result. Can we be a learning organisation if we do not have the conscious shift toward being one? Or will we end up with a piecemeal approach to some of Senge's disciplines, and some of Garvin's activities, and not quite get there as a result?

Can we build learning organisations in policing?

So we are back where we started. Asking the question whether we can build learning organisations in policing. In dodging the question one more time I think my response has to start with a recognition that we may not want to. This is a choice we have to make. We may be quite comfortable operating in our lane, playing the policing equivalent of hitting the hamster on the head - Whac-a-Mole - at the arcade, and dealing with symptom after symptom. We are structured for that. We have gotten better and more effective over time at that. And it may be all that our societies and our politicians want from us. We might be happy to continue with a *learning organisation-lite* approach. The *diet* version. Limited to improving our abilities to encourage and harness critical thinking and problem solving within our current settings. Systems thinking with a firm single loop learning police-y lens.

All of which is completely valid.

Although - if I have done my job correctly today - I think you would agree that this is not reflective of the *spirit* of a learning organisation. And I would question mark whether such settings adequately prepare us for VUCA, allow us to operate in an environment of complex problems, strategically positions us for the fourth industrial revolution, and for the social and political expectations of the future. So if we want the profession to advance further down this learning organisation / agility pathway, or if we want to give greater consciousness to the learningful efforts we are engaging in so far, then what can we do?

All signs point to leadership

All signs point to the importance of leadership. But given I work for an Institute dedicated to leadership development, I would say that, wouldn't I. I could spend another 40 minutes talking about all the things that hold us back from becoming learning organisations. Unpacking the things we might do to remedy them.

- Our addiction to success and allergy to failure, for example;
- our need to "act" and "do" instead of observe and think;
- our authorising environment and high levels of accountability demanded - in part - because of the way we have breached trust in the past;
- an anti-intellectual culture where credibility rests heavily on doing it tough on the street;
- our human need to fit in with the pack;
- our tendency to inhibit difference in thinking and our leaders' irrational fear of even courteous insubordination;
- and of course our tendency - developed over a lifetime inside and outside of policing - to depend on our leaders for direction, protection, and to create a

sense of order for us (Gino and Staats, 2015; Grint, Holt and Neyroud, 2017; Fausing et al., 2013; Walton, 2005; Grint, 2010).

In short, we could explore how for policing, it's a long way to the start line to become an integrated learning organisation. But because I am generally an optimist (and because it is December and the season of good-will), I want to finish by talking more generally and positively about the kinds of things we can do to nudge ourselves in the right direction. From a leadership perspective I think much of this rests on a reinterpretation of what we mean by leadership in policing. From which we can start to evolve the systems, processes, and cultures that enable us to choose to engage on systems thinking, double loop learning, and with that, create learning organisations.

I'm talking about the difference between leaders and leader*ship*.

Traditionally when we talk about leadership we mean the characteristics and behaviours of an individual in a position of authority. They might be transformational in their approach, they might adopt a servant leadership approach, or they might be transactional or dictatorial. In all cases leadership is conceptualised as the way one individual gets other people to do what it is that they want them to do. Leadership is the 'property' of the individual. Others are bought along for the ride. A different way to think about leadership is to consider it an 'outcome of the system'. It emerges from individuals interacting with each other and producing new ways of operating. It is the 'property' of the group (Flynn and Herrington, 2015). Leadership in this sense is a group process of shared responsibility and mutual influence in which team members lead each other toward their goals. Power and influence are not centralised in the hands of a single individual who acts in the clear role of a dominant superior and there is a reliance on informal influence exerted up, down, and across, by others in the team.

This second interpretation of leadership is sometimes called shared leadership, and it is characteristic of the kind of work we need to do when we don't know what we are doing. Like, for example, when we are dealing with dynamic complexity. Like, for example, when we are operating in a VUCA environment. Like, for example when as leaders we are feeling less of the déjà vu and more of the vu jade! (Weick, 1993). And like, for example, we need to operate if we are going to create agile learningful organisations that can sense, respond and adapt to the system in which they sit.

This type of leadership, it may be no surprise to you, can be challenging for hierarchical organisations that are wedded to individual notions of leadership that revolve around power and control. And where individuals are rewarded for using that power and control effectively with even higher office. There is a vested interest in retaining command and control if you have gotten to the top that way yourself. And even more so if you know that it is going to be your head ceremonially put on a spike if the wheels come off. Yet shared leadership is associated with high performance and greater success in complex situations.

Command and control simply does cut it when you're dealing with complexity, because the interconnectedness and volatility involved would vex even the most accomplished of technical experts. "I say, you do" is only useful if you know what it is you need to say. In complex

environments we need more intellectual grunt than one person can provide, and we therefore need to work inside and outside of our organisations to create an environment in which people give of their ingenuity freely.

Conclusion

So where to from here? Well as I telegraphed at the start, I'm not really sure. Certainly, policing has some decisions to make. And if the profession chooses to embrace the learning organisation then I would suggest that there is a need for someone to hold that story arc, and keep the profession honest about the extent to which it is engaging in deep double loop thinking about assumptions, systems thinking about symptoms, and embracing novel ways of thinking about things. As I've said, I think we see pockets of this, and that is encouraging. But learning is easily derailed, so these are opportunities that need to be seized on lest they remain piecemeal, while the bureaucratic beast grumbles on regardless.

Perhaps there is a role here for collectives like SIPR. Perhaps for professional bodies such as the College of Policing. Perhaps it is for our respective governments. For me there is a role here for leaders. Of course. Because I think that if leaders could focus less on being leaders and more on creating leadership, we start moving toward the cultures and systems that we need to foster learning, transformation, and agility as a result.

I'm not so naive not to recognise that this is obviously much easier to say than to do. And I recognise also the sinking feeling that accompanies this for many senior leaders who think, "oh great, something else I've got to do!" Certainly, choosing such leadership will vex many of our people. It will involve disappointing those who have spent a lifetime schooled in the language of leader as all-knowing boss. Those who say "*just tell me what to do and I'll do it*". And those who find sanctuary in the formality of bureaucratic structures where there is a command order for everything, and arse-covering is the biggest game in town.

Such leadership may cause us to radically rethink how we staff our organisations. Whether we want to retain everyone for 30+ years. Whether everyone needs to go to the academy. Whether our police officers should look radically different from the way they look today. And it would almost inevitably lead us to start thinking very differently about our position in the system, with perhaps a conscious shift upstream to tackle complex problems as multi-agency flash teams, instead of retaining our organisational boundaries, funding, and police-y KPIs. Which in turn would undoubtedly vex our political stakeholders, and their community "investors", who despite our efforts to build organisational legitimacy, remain a bit suspicious of policing, its motives, and its ability to "reach". Which all starts to sound like an elephant we don't want to eat. Even if we do it one bite at a time.

So let me finish by relaying the advice a colleague gave me as I attempted to balance my idealism with a heavy dose of realism around this issue: Not every change we make has to be grand. It could be as simple as choosing to listen instead of providing advice in that encounter with a subordinate. Or choosing to invite different voices and left field thinking into that meeting. Or

choosing to own that next stuff up, and truly using it for its learning potential, instead of doing so only after we've put someone's head on a spike. In doing so we build trust, a sense of safety, and unleash the intellectual and creative energy required to generate and capitalise on new ways of thinking (Coyle, 2018; Nold and Michel, 2016). But we do have to choose to make that change. And given our start point – a long way behind the line – that will undoubtedly take courage.

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