

Police organization in the Republic of Croatia – problems in decision making

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Introduction

During the last few years of my police work I had a chance to speak and share opinion with my work associates about the police system in Croatia. My colleagues sometimes shared my opinion and sometimes they did not about the quality of police organization. Everyone's conclusion was that some sort of change in the police organization has to be made; organization of the police must follow and embrace modern standards in organization and conduct.

Almost each person had the same opinion about police management and decision making. Their opinion was that management is not efficient; decision making is based on chain of command and not on finding good solutions; members of the management team do not have education or creativity to be qualified managers; form is more important than the quality of work.

Furthermore it was pointed out that there is no quality communication, only one way communication from managers to officers. All this results in depressed police officers with lots of overtime.

Croatian police was one of the most important factors, together with the Croatian army, in defending Croatia during the last war. Decision making and entire management was established in the way to be the most efficient during war times. Twelve years after, we can still see some elements of management that have remained ever since then.

There were some changes in the organization in 2000 regarding rationalization but in recent times new departments and divisions have been established. It must be pointed out that efficient management education does not exist. Managers are educated only through short courses and their own experience. A control mechanism does not exist. In past times the role of the police manager was defined only with defining the rules of conduct and giving orders. Now, bigger attention is put on adjusting the police organization to needs of the local community and care for police officers.

In the program guidelines of the Ministry of Interior for the period from 2003 to 2007 it is pointed out that a demanding effort awaits Croatian police in order to create and conduct education programs for management on all management levels since this is the most important condition

for stable transformation of the police system in Croatia in general.

In this paper attention will be put on a segment of decision making since my opinion is that this part of police organization in Croatia needs improvement and standardization using modern standards. Decision making plays a vital role in every police organization. We recognize two levels of decision making in police organizations; crisis management and strategic management. Focus will be put on strategic management.

It is important to follow steps in decision making and gather information, discuss these information, review, consider and weigh alternatives and outgoing assessment. In police work decisions are very often made based on limited information and personal intuition. For police officers with extensive work experience personal intuition can be used in decision making process (*Burke & Miller, 1999*).

Police organization plays a vital role in the quality of life of every community member. It is required that police managers make quick judgments and decisions that can influence lives of police officers and citizens that they have a duty to protect.

This research was made to identify problems in decision making in Croatian police and to find and propose solutions, education and a system of decision making that can be most usable in this environment. This topic is important to the future and present police managers but until now it has not been a subject of any research.

Methodology

This study was made as a result of the interview with police officers and members of the police management team with work experience in the different lines of police work. The interview was based on informal conversation about police organization, problems in police and possible solutions of problems.

Twenty people were interviewed; ten police officers and five members of the police management in Croatia and five employees of four different law enforcement agencies in the world (United States of America, Bundeskriminalamt, Slovakia, United Kingdom). All interviewed individuals

were asked the same questions. Each interview took about one hour and after the interview a conversation summary and important facts from the interview were written down.

The second important issue that was studied in this thesis was the organization of the Police in the Republic of Croatia. All organization units in the Ministry of Interior were presented. Highlight was on organization units in the Police. Each unit tasks and functions were examined. Chain of command and decision making was determined.

After observing facts recognized in interview a further review of foreign experiences was made. After comparing system of police organization in Croatia with other police systems in the world (United States of America, Bundeskriminalamt, Slovakia, United Kingdom) the focus was on decision making.

Evaluation of the interview was undertaken. Problems in decision making process in Croatian Police were documented. Then the attention was put on organizational behaviour, management and decision making. Terms were defined and studied. Categories of decisions and decision making process were presented. Decision making styles were also a subject of this thesis. In the end concentration was put on problems in quality decision making, group decision making and evading of risks in decision making.

Results of the interview

As it was already mentioned the basis for this thesis was the interview. Persons interviewed were employees of law enforcement agencies. Each of them was asked the same questions. Results of the interview were studied in the following chapter. The following questions were included in the interview and here are the most frequent answers:

1. Are you familiar with the term organization?

Each person that was interviewed was familiar with the term organization. They understood function of the organization in general. Interviewed people also understood and described structure, function and frames of the Institution in which they are working.

2. Do you know what Organizational Behaviour is?

Only seven of twenty people could explain what Organizational Behaviour really is. Five of them were employees of foreign agencies and two were employees of the Croatian Police where they work as members of the management team.

3. What is Decision Making?

Again, only seven people gave a valid answer to this question. Five of them were from foreign agencies and two from Croatian Police management. Those people were then asked where they got information about decision making.

Members of the Croatian Police management team answered that they heard it on a course held by foreign law enforcement agencies lecturers. Employees of the foreign agencies answered that education about decision making is a standard education in their agencies.

4. What do you think about the organization of Institution in which you work?

All interviewed employees of Croatian Police agree that Institution is very well organized. All functions of the Institution are covered with organizational units within the Institution. Structure of the Institution is very complex. Opinion of the foreign law enforcement officers was that they work in Institution which is very well organized and in line with modern standards of police management.

5. Do you use decision making process when you deal with problems?

Two members of the Croatian Police and five employees of foreign law enforcement agencies interviewed stated that they use decision making process. Foreign interviewees stated that decision making process is a very important factor in their everyday police work.

6. Does management of your Organization support Group Decision Making?

Opinion of the Croatian side was that management supports Group Decision Making. However, that type of decision making seems to be used in wrong situations and for the wrong reason. Foreign law enforcement agencies employees answered that group decision making is very popular in their Institution and management encourages its use.

7. Do you have problems in your Institution regarding organizational aspects and can you point them out?

Most of interviewed Croatian police employees stated that problems exist. Few of problem stated were: there is too much work to be done and not enough time, we work too much overtime, ordered measures don't give valuable results, people in the management don't have knowledge, experience and creativity to do their job. Again, foreign enforcement agencies employees assumed that problems in their Institution regarding organizational aspects do exist. However, they don't think the reason for that comes from lousy management but that it is caused by ever-changing and developing criminal activity.

8. Do you have problems with Decision Making in your Organization and what are they?

All the persons interviewed stated that they have problems concerning Decision Making. Some of the problems are serious and some are not. Foreign enforcement

agencies employees. opinion was that Decision Making policies in their Institutions do exist and managers are following approved guidelines. Sometimes there are problems with making Non-programmed decisions since there are no guidelines or policy for dealing with them. Then they depend on decision making process. Interviewees from Croatia defined more serious issues concerning Decision Making.

Next statements describe problems in Decision Making:

- Managers do not enough time to evaluate information.
- Managers do not know exactly what information they need.
- Managers do not follow steps of decision making process.
- Managers often have only one alternative.
- Managers don't use group decision making.
- Managers do not include experts in decision making process.
- Managers do not evaluate information properly.
- Managers enforce implementation of some decisions that cannot be applied.
- Decision making has to be modernized, only one way communication is not proper for modern standards of decision making.
- Employees are not satisfied with manager's decisions but they cannot influence decision making.

Discussion

Results chapter gave an overview of opinions and valuable information about the Decision Making in law enforcement agencies in Croatia and in several foreign countries.

Interviewees from Croatia were familiar with basic term like organization, organization behaviour, decision making but they not fully understand importance of these terms in police management. Only small part of Croatian interviewees has some knowledge of subject of decision making. However, those interviewees agree that problems in police management do exist. Answers gave precise information what problems trouble police employees the most.

Foreign experience is a valid guideline how things should be organized. First, police employees have proper education concerning decision making. Second, they embrace modern standards of police work and management. Decision Making policies and guidelines are used as valuable help in decision making. Process of decision making is basic procedure for dealing with every problem. In that way it is much easier to cope with every day police tasks.

Different techniques are used when dealing with decision making and involvement of employees in decision making is widely used. All that work as a benefit to a quality of police work in general.

Situation in Croatia is a bit different. First of all, quality education about modern police management in Croatian is still very low. That results in use of management methods

that are obsolete and inefficient. Some members of the management team were educated through courses organized by foreign agencies and they got important knowledge in connection with decision making.

Decision making would benefit even more if that kind of education could be provided for each police officer.

Furthermore, it must be point out that police system in the Republic of Croatia is very complex and large organization that employees more than 20,000 people. Changes in the organization can influence results and efficiency of the police work only if they are implemented on a large number of people employed. That is why implementation of changes is quite long-lasting and compounded process.

Finally, some important issues concerning decision making process and group decision making, have to be mentioned. There are no clear policies when dealing with decision making in Croatian police. Decision making process is not used or is not used enough. When decision making process is used steps of the process are not followed. Information needed for decision making process is not sufficient or valid. Managers sometimes cannot even identify a problem.

Evaluation of the information sometimes is not done properly. Alternatives sometime don't exist or implementation of inadequate alternative is enforced. Managers don't use group decision making and they do not use experts help in decision making process. Employees are sometimes not satisfied with manager's decisions since they cannot influence decision making.

Conclusion and proposed measures

Decision making makes a very important part of people's lives. People make a lot of decision every day. Some of them are important and some of them are not. Sometimes decisions are good and sometimes not. Usually people's decisions influence only their lives and their closest ones.

But in the large and important organizations, like the Ministry of Interior is, that is not a case. One wrong decision can influence lives of tens of persons. It can be a question of life and death. Complexity and dimensions of Croatian Police Organization is an assurance that this system will work every day. More than 20000 police officers come to work every day to apply their police tasks. Important decisions that direct everyday work of police officers are made by managers.

In chapter .Decision Making in Organizations. all of the most important subjects of Decision Making were studied. Special attention was on Group Decision Making as one of the best type of Decision Making in modern organizations.

Interview of employees of Police Organizations in Croatia and four different foreign law enforcement agencies gave an answer about decision making in those organizations. After interviewing foreign law enforcement officers conclusion is that organization where those people work pay much respect to decision making. Employees are

educated and deeply aware of importance of the decision making. Guidelines and policies for decision making are made. Officers and managers use decision making process and use of group decision making is encouraged. In that way Organization embraces modern standards in Decision Making and improved its efficiency.

Situation in Croatia is a bit more complicated. Education standards police officers and managers do not include studying of modern types of Decision Making. Only present, one way communication and one man decision making, is comprehensively studied. It seems that managers are trying to be leaders. Good characteristics of Group Decision Making are not exploited in the way that they should be. As a solution of the stated problems these measures should be applied:

- Education of the management and police officers in a subject of the Decision Making has to be implemented,
- Foreign practice and knowledge on a subject of the Decision Making have to be exploited,
- Decision Making Policies have to be developed,
- Implementation of modern standards of decision making have to be encouraged (group decision making, involvement of employees in decision making).

This work has answered one important question concerning decision making in Croatian Police; .Are people that work in Croatian Police satisfied with present standards in Decision Making? Answer was that a lot has to be done to

improve today's situation. After studying materials connected to Decision Making and reviewing of foreign practice some solutions were introduced. But to answer all the questions and to find all the right solutions, more comprehensive study has to be made. This thesis can be used as a basic for further research.

It would be good to give more importance to foreign experience and try to adjust it and implement in Croatian environment. For that purpose it would be most appropriate to use experiment on one organizational unit of Croatian Police, for example one police station. Managers and police officers would be educated and encouraged to use modern types of Decision Making. After examination period survey would be taken. This survey would have to give answers about what do managers and police officers think concerning decision making. Again problems in decision making, if they exist, should be quoted. It would be useful if method some method for examining efficiency could be use. This will give more comprehensive study and valuable information how to fully implement modern standards in Croatian Police Organization.

REFERENCE

Burke, L. A. & Miller, M. K., (1999): Taking the mystery out of intuitive decision making, The Academy of Management Executive, November 1999.