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Good State – Good Police: Focus on Efficiency (Conceptual Frameworks, International Outlook)

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Abstract

The results of modern scientific research now play a more important role than the quantitative indicators produced mainly during police work, and most indicators of quality – e.g. "public satisfaction" or trust in the police have become scientifically more and more acceptable. From the 1990s besides the "utilatirist" efficiency narratives there is a need for "procedural truth" and the inclusion of social equality elements. In addition, no valid data can be obtained without taking into account local sociocultural and criminological characteristics. In order to ensure effective operation and sustainable development, it is necessary to develop and continuously operate a measurement and evaluation system which – focusing on specific areas – provides us with feedback on the content and changes of police. The Faculty of Law Enforcement at The National University of Public Service considers it as a major and an important task of its institutes, departments, research centres and future doctoral school to contribute towards the development of the modern police's operational framework which is based on an interdisciplinary approach and an objective research-based knowledge. The efficiency of the police – as one of the biggest governmental organizations – is closely linked to the concept of good state. The current Hungarian regulation on the questions of the efficiency of the police does not have a developed methodology or it is out-of-date due to its statistical approach. Taking all these into account, the scientific development of police efficiency cannot be avoided, and the revision of its criteria based on international trends is timely. This study besides providing an overview of the relevant definitions also gives a short overview of the international scientific literature on the measurement of police performance.

Keywords: performance measuring, efficiency, good state, indicators, police, crime geography

The social dimension of the "efficiency" of the police

In essence "efficiency orthodoxy" is the rational and practical use of resources and costs in order to produce the required product or service. Its axiom is that every production branch, process and service must be rationalized, while expenditure is minimized and profit maximized in order to achieve this. The question is whether the police as security provider exploits all the opportunities which determine its organization and operation socially and politically (i.e. uses the conditions optimally, that is rationalizes) in its own social medium (among its service users) in order to increase satisfaction and trust (or profit) (Vári, 2016: 582.). When setting out the interpretative framework for good police, defining the aims of police activity is important as efficiency can only be assessed in the dimension of achieving these targets. These constitutionally defined aims are as follows: compliance with the law, ensuring the rule of law and protecting human rights. For this reason, traditional market tools are unsuitable for measuring the quality and efficiency of the police. In order to consider measuring efficiency at all, devising indicators which demonstrate the protective capabilities of the police in a way that is consistent with the social objectives of law enforcement is necessary. Therefore, instead of the organizational aims of the police, its social objectives have been the focus of this research. The organizational aims can be regarded as the quality indicators of internal efficiency. Compliance with the performance expectations set by the organization (within the framework of bureaucracy), however, can *easily* contradict interpretations of effectiveness set by other areas of justice and mainly by society (Vári, 2015). Thus, in line with the concept of the good state, devising indicators that show the quality of the social (and not organizational) functioning and impacts of the police is decisive. "The police will not receive an objective picture of the development of its social role while it assesses its own performance using a standard it sets itself." (Tihanyi, 2013: 8.). In this regard, quality indicators mean factors indicating the results and effectiveness of the implementation of the social objectives.

Conceptual premises

The quality characteristics of police work appear in the performance assessment system of police forces. The indicators in this system are both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative indicators include the number of police actions and indicators characterizing crime. These cannot be regarded as actual indicators of quality due to the absence of the benchmark necessary for this. Different local characteristics require different organizational, staffing and technical conditions to enable police forces working in different geographical areas to deliver service of at least approximately the same standard. For this reason, converting the indicators of organizational performance assessment into qualitative indicators or replacing them accordingly is treated as a key criterion. Quality indicators are suitable to show the input values that need to be changed in order to shift the output values in a positive direction.

According to relevant literature, it seems evident that the definitions of public order and public safety as the basic interpretative framework of police functions are fairly unclear (Finszter, 2014a: 160.). Of the existing and familiar definitions, the interpretation of public safety in Team Consult's 1991 report fits in with the qualitative indicators in the Good State – Good Police project. This states that public safety means the part of the intangible

infrastructure of modern society which enables individuals and communities to achieve their goals that are valuable for society (Team Consult, 1991). Accordingly, safety, like other forms of infrastructure, is an investment-intensive area. How the finite economic room for manoeuvre is exploited is the responsibility of the current government. Police tools which are able to produce results that can be measured objectively and sustained in the long term, and which positively influence the subjective sense of security of the population need to be applied (TIHANYI, 2015: 160.). In this approach public safety means the medium in which individuals have the right to freely develop their personality in a way which is in the interests of society. Géza Finszter differentiates between two interpretations of the concept of public safety based on normative and tangible approaches. In the normative definition his starting point is that creating public safety is, as a regulatory subject of constitutional law, a state objective, whose implementation is primarily the responsibility of the government. To this he adds the state obligation arising from the constitutional right of freedom and personal safety. This means that the state must ensure security for its citizens by means of public administration. Thus the normative concept of public safety is in part a state objective, an interpretation corresponding with effective constitutional legislation. Its implementation is the responsibility of the executive. The tangible notion of public safety, on the other hand, is identical with the public safety that exists at an everyday level and can be experienced or whose absence causes adversity.

The police is not a factory producing security but an entity and authority overseeing legal order, thus in its performance the triple requirements of legitimacy, professionalism and service are dominant. However, the degree to which these requirements are met cannot be estimated through statistical data. In this case, quality – the quality of the rule of law – and not quantity is considered. In constitutional democracies, law enforcement must find a balance between legitimacy and effectiveness. The values of the rule of law cannot be protected by defying the law (FINSZTER, 2009: 179.). Public safety is a measurable social phenomenon: the objective state of the security of persons and property is reflected by criminal statistics, while public opinion of public safety reflects a subjective sense of security. Undeniably, the main custodian of public safety is the police. This statement is particularly true in the light of the fact that domestic society expects the police to create public safety and holds the police accountable for it (BARABÁS et al., 2008). If public safety is the output of the system, its quality can be evaluated in every aspect of reality in the light of both effectiveness and efficiency.

Thus public safety constitutes an output result of the police both in terms of the public image of it and the general and collective feeling about it. The efficiency of criminal statistics, and thus of the entire police organization, becomes interpretable in this regard. Naturally, due to its cooperative nature, the state of public safety is influenced by numerous factors apart from the work of the police. Thus it is impossible to draw up a clinical formula about the quality of police work based solely on data characterizing public safety. However, despite all these deficiencies and flaws, no better approach is available. When the state of public safety is seen as the work of the police, essentially a negative approach is applied since the police influences the result or product from which its own performance originates in many cases but, apart from these, a number of (crime geography) factors are also involved which are independent of the police and in whose development the police plays no, or only a very small, recognized role.

Measuring police performance: an international outlook

Measuring police performance has grown into an increasingly important research area in many countries. However, there is no academic consensus regarding the form or method applied during measuring efficiency. Furthermore, which of the various indicators should be used in order to promote better performance is likewise contested. However, there is full agreement that measuring efficiency is potentially an excellent political and professional tool, and may have a significant impact on the work of the police and its perception. International literature on this published from the 1970s onwards can be categorized based on a number of methodological aspects, mainly dependent on whether the researchers give priority to quantitative or qualitative, and objective or subjective factors. Measuring efficiency is, nevertheless, a rather sensitive issue as, due to a flawed concept or law enforcement philosophy, police organizations may easily fall into the trap of placing the emphasis on simply and routinely collected administrative indicators whereas these may be insufficient and have less contextual value. Thus the most important starting point for research is to correctly define performance indicators. A negative side effect can be distorting statistics in order to achieve the performance targets and requirements. As regards the choice of indicators, international research results have identified an interesting paradox: the more favourable an indicator is the less accessible it is, and often it can only be produced expensively. Simple indicators that can be produced cheaply from routinely collected administrative data – such as indicators of crime, the effectiveness of investigation or crime clear-up as well as response times – are typically less informative as regards the actual performance and tend to have negative side effects. More informative indicators – such as satisfaction with the police, fair processes (treatment by the police) and the latency of some crime categories – are much harder and more costly to identify and often require surveys specifically designed for the purpose.

COLLIER (2001) starts from the hypothesis that human rights and legal procedures in general may be harmed by the endeavours of the police to meet performance measurement goals. He draws the conclusion that greater autonomy should be granted at a local level and a model based on qualitative indicators would be more favourable. FEILZER (2009) warns of the dangers of relying on the *British Crime Survey (BCS)*, which is used in the United Kingdom and essentially applies quantitative sources, as part of police performance measurement. She primarily focuses on methodological issues and, in particular, on the lack of validity and reliability of the measurement questions. The document examines the use made of BCS data in the performance measurement of local police forces. The research attempted to address the concerns expressed by members of the North Wales Police regarding the validity and reliability of the data in this method of measuring efficiency.

Several models have been proposed as alternative ways of measuring police efficiency. One is the processing method of *Data Envelopment Analysis* (DEA), which allows "objective" input and output measures to be taken as a basis. The most effective comparison of this type was conducted by Drake and Simper (DRAKE–SIMPER, 2005), contrasting 43 police forces from the aspect of the geography of crime using DEA. This allowed the examination of the impacts of environmental factors from the viewpoint of the effectiveness and efficiency of measures. The authors found that environmental factors had a substantial impact on the relative performance rankings of the police forces. For instance, the performance ranking of the North Wales Police changed when factors such as average population, the

number of single-parent households and the sparseness of the population were also considered, moving up from 30th to 1st place.

According to Moore and Braga (2004), reducing crime in the community's interests cannot be achieved by increasing the number of arrests, detentions and arraignments. The authors believe that there are many other factors that can have a substantial influence on reducing crime by exercising a greater impact on society. Charbonneau and Riccucci (2008) outline the importance of the factors of social equality in measuring police performance, suggesting indicators of this nature, including the evaluation of fair treatment, which is similar to the definition of procedural justice. In relation to trust placed in the police, one piece of research has confirmed that public confidence in the police is primarily dependent on demographic, attitudinal and contextual factors. The authors (Jang et al., 2010) point out that a number of predictive aspects show the development of confidence. Such are the homicide rate and the legitimacy and social mainstreaming of democratic values. In countries where the homicide rate is high, confidence in the police tends to be low. Analyzing the institutions of democracy, it was found that public confidence is positively linked to these. Significant predictors were also found based on individual variables, such as age and education. A positive relationship was found between conservative values, personal satisfaction and confidence in the police. In line with the attitudinal and social contextual predictors, in general lower confidence in the police could be expected in deviant subcultures.

Rogge and Verschelde (2009) conducted comprehensive, empirical research using complex indicators and a non-parametric mathematical method in order to measure citizen satisfaction with local police services and in relation to regions. More precisely, the authors of the study proposed an approach using the previously mentioned, popular DEA approach by applying the *Benefit-of-the-Doubt* model. The chief advantage of this approach is that it weights the impacts of the functions and tasks performed by the local police in citizen satisfaction using an endogenous method with composite scores, thereby enabling the numerical calculation of the different values and approaches for a fuller interpretation of "good local policing" among police services. The methodology provides a good illustration of citizen satisfaction data also in the broader assessment of the local police and the regions. The DEA model, using a non-parametric assessment methodology, highlights the strong and weak points of police functions determining citizen satisfaction and the development of the performance values both at a micro (local police) and macro level (region). The researchers found that the average macro satisfaction score was 91.94% in Belgium. This clearly indicates that most Belgian citizens are generally satisfied with the work of the local police services. Nevertheless, the remarkable advantage of the model is that it was able to identify the basic functions of the local police that were considered to be the most important by the public, pinpointing the indicators which essentially explain the weakening or strengthening of citizen satisfaction in relation to practising the various police functions. The results have shown that an urban environment in itself does not strengthen the level of satisfaction regarding the participating local police service, and that regional differences have a much greater significance than originally thought. This was the first piece of research to measure citizen satisfaction with multidimensional scores and then to use the results in the evaluation of the efficiency of the local police forces. The research employed a method that took account of the individual circumstances of the local police forces by weighting them in an endogenous manner and assigning independent values to them.

Timothy Shilston, Chief Superintendent of Northumbria Police in the United Kingdom, introduced the *Black Box* method as a qualitative-based assessment. In his model, he used the terminology and methodology of air crash investigation. The study (SHILSTON, 2011) finds that this method would enable the police to examine events chronologically, in other words looking at the whole of the process of generating statistical data. Through the conscious assessment of qualitative indicators in order to measure its own activity, the police's role in the development of output statistical data could be detected throughout the process, from reporting to the solution, i.e. the outcome. The author reaches the conclusion that the quantitative measurements of police performance were flawed, and they needed to be replaced or at least supplemented by qualitative methods. He devised a process which analyzes the start of the performance and aids development both at the level of the individual and the organization. The method offers tools which can be applied in order to put reforms into practice and to provide a better standard of service as well as to increase public confidence in the police. The main workload of the process is registering data and keeping detailed records of them. Most police organizations in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the world have at their disposal a similarly detailed and full information database of all incidents reported and the measures taken. This database offers a rich source for the team responsible to gain information in order to make a major advance towards offering higher standard services. Regrettably, as the author admits, this opportunity almost always remains unexploited. In June 2009 Northumbria Police came 8th among the 43 police forces in England and Wales as regards public confidence, and 48.8% of those questioned expressed their confidence in policing. The same survey conducted exactly 1 year later placed the same organization in 1st place. At that time the police organization achieved a confidence index of 58.8%. The Black Box research revealed that in order to ensure the optimal operation and performance of the functions of the police, instead of police chiefs devising the best solutions and most practical reforms, the requirements of the users of the police services should be taken into consideration (SHILSTON, 2011).

Performance measurement in practice: police in England and Wales

The efficiency measurement method embracing the trio of effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy at present only works in England and Wales. The indicators measuring police performance are freely available to the public, allowing access to all the data to anyone through an online link. This fully ensures the principle of transparency, which is the main source of citizen confidence required for the functioning of the police. The measurement system relies on three pillars. The first is the range of data embodying effectiveness, which is comprised of mainly quantitative statistical data generated in connection with the operation of the police. These values are mostly per head of population, but strictly speaking per police force, and, in addition to generated data, also cover service-centred crime prevention activity. The second pillar is financial efficiency, i.e. how much these police services cost the public or how efficient a police force is in terms of costs. The third pillar is legitimacy, which covers public trust and satisfaction as well as their source, which is social equality. Based on a comparison of these three, the performance of a given police force can be assessed on a four-grade scale.

In this model the key area is supporting police work and increasing motivation in performance. Involving officers in decision-making processes where their concerns will be addressed while transparently showing the process of how their superiors reach a decision undoubtedly has a positive impact on their own performance of work in a fair and correct manner (College of Policing, 2015: 11.). According to research, *organizational justice* embraces a broader range in performance measurement than simply internal procedural justice, and includes distributive justice, i.e. the perception of how fair the allocation of resources, labour force and financial and intellectual rewards is within the organization. *Procedural justice* covers employees being informed of decisions, internal information flow, the system of career progression, and the respectful and dignified handling of employees by superiors. Of these two types of justice, research tends to show the impact of internal procedural justice to be more significant as regards attitude towards the environment (GREENBERG, 2011). An Oxford research project conducted at Durham Constabulary provided a convincing argument that organizational justice, which incorporates the aforementioned procedural justice exercised by managers and senior managers (inclusion in decision-making, providing information, treatment) and distributive justice, has a positive effect on organizational cohesion, resulting in more social and cooperative attitudes and forms of behaviour, which will then diffuse to the work culture of employees (BRADFORD–QUINTON, 2014). Another piece of research (BRADFORD et al., 2013) also revealed a statistically significant connection between organizational justice and employees identifying with the organization at the police, which also affected performance. The following findings were made:

- Officers who recognized that the organization was fair towards them were more likely to identify with the organization's aims.
- Unfairness showed a consistent connection with the development of a cynical and authoritarian subculture among officers.
- Officers who felt that they are enjoying the support of the public trusted their organization more.
- Officers who trusted their organization more supported procedural guarantees, legal processes and the application of proportional force more.

Unfairness and the absence of organizational justice in the police presents a major organizational risk. Research results indicate that the feeling of injustice in an employee is likely to lead to less inclination to provide quality service to the public. Such employees will gradually become cynical and less committed to the goals of ethical law enforcement. As regards decisions in their area of competence, there is a tendency to have their discretionary powers curtailed, which becomes apparent in police operations by avoiding legal measures, operating a selective mechanism for incidents, and strengthening procedural passivity, which can result in prolonging cases. Thus ethical, legitimate police operation is in a close context with organizational culture and the enforcement of internal procedural justice. This is known as a feedback loop. In other words, procedural justice within an organization carries greater public support but this may also appear in a negative aspect which affects the organization's performance. Bearing precisely these research results in mind, every year surveys targeting police legitimacy are conducted as part of efficiency measurement in English and Welsh police forces. By way of example, in 2015–16 this took place at 16 police forces.

Findings

In the light of international research and its application in practice, due care must be taken in the area of the development and reform of measuring police performance. When applying certain methods and technologies in practice, the best solution seems to be to measure performance using a variety of processes. It is advisable for the professional leadership to publish results in order to provide information aiding guidance rather than using them centrally and uniformly in the form of "strict" figures as organizational or performance requirements. Through this process, the benefits of each methodology can be extracted while minimizing the risk of negative side effects. This is particularly true of a series of traditional indicators (such as indicators of crime clear-up, investigation effectiveness, clarification or response times) which ideally can function as indirect and practical performance indicators when examining the efficiency of police activities.

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