

TECHNOLOGY IN POLICING

by Technology In Policing Technology In Policing

Submission date: 16-Apr-2018 05:11PM (UTC-0400)

Submission ID: 947974793

File name: technology_and_policing.doc (38.5K)

Word count: 2059

Character count: 10961

Name

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Technology and Policing

Introduction

As technology advances, its impacts on policing has been advanced. Technology has shaped modern technology systems by making work easier as well as improving quality of service delivery in policing institutions. In law enforcement for instance, the use of modern technology has become a tool of effectiveness. For instance, the availability of DNA, and surveillance systems has made work easier in dealing with crime. While technology has improved effectiveness in police service, it is important to note that with technology comes various challenges that need to be addressed to improve fairness and effectiveness. "While many may think that technology is beneficial, it is important to note that with technology may come some challenges and consequences." (Delice, 2009) This paper therefore seeks to discuss the impact of technology in the policing system, addressing its benefits and challenges while providing a solution for the challenges

Incorporation of technology

By the late ninety's, the policing systems had started using technology and incorporated it in their systems. More than half of the police systems incorporated technology in their day to day activities. Many institutions felt that the use of technology had caused a significant difference in the running of the affairs of policing institutions. For customers for instance, they felt technology had made service delivery easier and faster. Technology has therefore made the work environment favorable making available information that is crucial in ensuring proper working in policing institutions. For those people who worked in the police forces before and after introduction of technology, it is easier for them to point out specifically the areas that technology

has helped improve. “These improvements mainly worked to streamline communication as well as relationships among the people in the police institutions.” (In Forrest, 2017)

Technology impact on police practices

Technology has helped the police force in improvement of their task performance. For instance, technology has helped improve record keeping in policing institutions. Through record management systems. These systems have helped in the process of entering data, storage, retrieval and analysis of the records. These records range from reports on incidents, service calls, investigations etc. the information in the management systems is input by officers in charge of receiving reports, as well as the supervisors within the body. The system is effective because each of the reports may be categorized differently, and sort into groups to enable accessibility as and when required. With the components of law enforcement broken down in the system, it is easy to access information based on the stages where a certain case has reached. “The record management system may vary based on the characteristics of an entity.” (Delice, 2009)

Follow up on offences has also been eased by introduction of technology. While the institutions may receive numerous reports, it is easy to track a specific report and follow up on its stages. In other cases, it is also easy to know if there are criminals who have been reported more than once. Technologies such as figure print readers are able to access the criminal records of an individual in the past. This would form a basis for evidence in the future in case they repeat the same crime. With technology, the police are able to solve crimes by addressing the problems in place rather than just punishing the crime. Technology has helped improve the intelligence systems of policing and this is beneficial as it helps curb the occurrence of some crimes. “The

police are able to get information beforehand and prevent the occurrence of crimes.” (Snow, 2007)

Technology impact on accountability

Based on the internal requirements of various entities, technology has helped in improvement of accountability. This has been achieved by laying down control systems in the policing environment that help monitor the system both internally and externally. For instance, the introduction of DNA machines have helped in improving accountability to ensure that the right people are tracked down with regard to a certain crime. This ensures that conviction of crimes is done to the right persons. The process of recording offences is monitored and involves various parties to ensure the right thing is done. “With the improvement of technology systems, it is easy to not only track the activities of the criminals but also those of the police as they track criminals and handle crimes.” (Foster, 2005)

With the systems in place, there are fewer chances of a police getting an opportunity to accept bribes in exchange for freedom of a criminal. The incorporation of technology in the policing system has helped increase the sequence of reports from police officers. For instance, when a police is on duty, it is easy for them to file various reports in the office without necessarily being there physically. The frequency of reporting has in turn helped improve accountability in the various dockets that the police are in charge. With technology, the supervisors in the policing systems are able to scrutinize the work of their juniors within a short period of time. This is because information is available when needed. With this in place, the police officers have managed to keep the records under them up to date to ensure that their performance is good (In Forrest, 2017)

Accountability has been improved as the information shared is genuine. Since different parties can access information relating to a certain matter, it would be hard for a police to manipulate information to favor them. This has also improved efficiency by laying down procedures to be followed in attending to the cases within the system. It is hard for an officer to take a shortcut in handling a case as it has to pass through all procedures within the system. With this procedures in place, the police are kept on their toes to ensure that their responsibilities are attended to on time. Technology has helped monitor the activities of police officers thereby improving their characters in service delivery. "Scrutiny of the services by the people in charge has helped ensure that work is done well." (Pattavina, 2005)

Technology impact on paperwork

In the police unit, just like other organizations, they spent a lot of time recording information and compiling reports on paper. The organizations would use resources to enable management of paper to ensure effective storage of records. With paperwork, there came complaints on time wastage, loss of data as well as lack of accountability as the managers blamed paperwork as a reason for not being able to meet the requirements for accountability in their systems.

Information technology has therefore come in as a tool to provide solutions in management of paperwork within the police systems. First it has helped reduce redundancy that is needed in recording, for instance, filling a case may need recording up to three times or more. It has made availability of information to parties in charge easy, the parties can retrieve information easily from the system. Technology has also helped to reduce the number of papers used in order to attend to reports in the system. The introduction of digital systems of recording

data has helped reduce paperwork therefore cutting down on the costs of management of paperwork in the long run. It has also helped in the preservation of record for future reference, with regard to this, the police are able to track records of an individual for previous period. Systems have helped to ensure continuity in the police service as it is easy for another person to take over in case one falls out (Foster, 2005)

With the reduction of paperwork, there is a reduction in the time spent on manual recording. This has helped to create more time for the police to concentrate on fieldwork and has enabled the reduction of crime. The outcome of less time being spent on manual recording is that the managers as well as the supervisors in charge are able to follow up on cases and demand for more information when need arises. This has helped to ensure that information shared is complete and enough for effective decision making with regard to specific cases. Where police officers have embraced the aspect of saving time and used that time to do other beneficial activities, the system has been beneficial. "With paperless record keeping has also come less loss of data whether maliciously or genuinely and this has ensured that cases are handled completely without excuses of lack of record on the cases." (Delice, 2009)

Technology impact on police culture

With introduction of technology has come an admirable way of conducting activities within the police systems. This is because the systems have helped set the limits and procedures within which the people in service operate. It has helped improve police experience as they have access to knowledgeable content and can learn skills that are beneficial to their operations. The success in dealing with crime is dependent on information. Therefore, accessibility of the needed information with regard to a case at hand at any given time has become an important resource in

the policing system. The police are now able to enter and retrieve data as need arises. Technology has helped create a culture of being up to date with computer skills in order to attend to the issues with regard to crime effectively. "It has therefore created a culture of interest on the matters of technology within police systems and this has made them more intelligent." (De, Ponsaers, Vijver, Bruggerman, Deelman, 2011)

Technology has contributed to reforms in the policing system by getting rid of the aspects in the system that made working hard and reinforcing those aspects that would help improve performance within the system. With introduction of technology in the policing systems comes a growth in confidence by the members of the public in the ability of the police system to attend to crimes. This has helped reduce the instances of the public taking matters in their own hands when it comes to handling crimes. They have belief in the systems and trust that when they report crimes, they will be addressed (Pattavina, 2005)

While technology has worked to improve police service, it is important to note that technology also comes with its shortcoming. Improvement of technology has also come with challenges as crime has become advanced. There has been an increase in cybercrimes such as the hacking of systems. In such cases therefore there is compromising of information within the system where sometimes systems end up being ineffective. With technology comes maintenance costs that need to be applied to ensure safety and effectiveness of the system. Technology has not managed to completely deal with the use of paper in keeping records. "Therefore in some instances, the organizations run parallel systems to help maintain quality of services and this has brought an additional cost to the entities involved." (In Forrest, 2017)

Conclusion

In conclusion, while technology has its merits and demerits, the merits are relatively many compared to the demerits. It is, therefore, the work of the managers to ensure that they secure their systems to ensure that access to information in the systems is restricted to authorized personnel. They should have passwords to access records. The management also needs to keep in check the time saved when using new forms of technology and use the time effectively to advance policing. It is important for the management to ensure they address issues of concern in the use of technology while reinforcing the areas that are beneficial. Offering training opportunities to members of the policing institution to ensure they are up to date with the trends in the technological environment. With the benefits ranging from reduced workload to proper maintenance of reports for future references as well as improved policing systems accountability. "The benefits outweigh the demerits, therefore, reinforcing the importance of technology." (Delice, 2009)

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