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Serbian Journal of Management 6 (2) (2011) 283 - 286

Serbian  
Journal  
of  
Management

## Short Communications

# FRAGMENTATION OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN AN ENTERPRISE

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*(Received 17 June 2011; accepted 25 July 2011)*

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### Abstract

The communiqué presents some methodological assumptions of research into organizational crisis management. The subject of research, both theoretical and empirical, is crisis management in an enterprise from the point of view of organizational learning. There are some paradoxes in crises and in using common practices during a crisis. These paradoxes constitute the research field for recomposition of various models of crisis management in enterprises.

*Keywords:* Crisis management, fragmentation, paradox, enterprise.

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### ABOUT THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Notions of crisis and crisis situation commonly referred to in the subject literature are usually used alternately. However, one must distinguish between situational and processional understanding of crisis phenomena. Any crisis phenomenon may be perceived as a particular situation reliant on a decision or a situation describable as a process. Crisis may be considered as an

event or as a process. The undersigned assumes that the two complementary perspectives are related to an exigency of situation management while using both of them alternately serves well to complement each other.

Fragmentation is metaphor. Accepting the thesis that crisis management, including the knowledge of crisis management, falls under fragmentation, implies an attempt to point out its symptoms.

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DOI: 10.5937/sjm1102283B

In general fragmentation means that some particular components cease to exist as components of a greater whole, are released and start their independent lives, or, with time, regroup themselves and recombine into another greater entity. Fragmentation may translate into continuity of previous structures in their fragments, different discerning and recognizable states, able to exist independently as well as requiring external reinforcement (Mikułowski Pomorski 2006). In such a syncretic state all elements exist side by side and do not influence each other.

Fragmentation manifests itself through ideas/concepts as well as facts. Management sciences should not be perceived as exceptional to those notions: they are neither monolithic nor immune to dispersed ideas provoking to looking for examples of organizational reality differentiation. Accepting the idea of fragmentation as a perception filter leads to the recognition of the plurality of scientific ideas and, also, to a focus on those threads usually omitted in the mainstream of the science and research areas.

Fragmentation may manifest itself in crisis management through, for example, the paradoxical nature of management systems, which may decrease the number of accidents but do not guarantee that accidents will not occur. A single occurrence of an accident on a large scale in organizations such as fire stations, airplane security systems, and nuclear plants would, in and of itself, lead to catastrophe (Laufer 2007). This paradox was reconciled in the model proposed by Jacques (Jacques 2010). The pre-crisis phase in this model was divided into two distinct parts - crisis preparedness and crisis prevention. Crisis preparedness includes, e.g., planning processes, systems and manuals,

documentation and traditional exercises and simulations. Activities characterized as crisis prevention include early warning systems, risk and issue management, social forecasting, environmental scanning and emergency response.

Concepts and models of management in organizational crisis appear as answers to questions about the features and behaviors which must relate to enterprises if they want to be effective. The abilities of the enterprise to cope with the crisis are associated with the development of processes and resources. To survive, directed programs of changes are necessary. Creating conditions enabling overcoming of crisis means accomplishing specific changes within the scope of power and management leadership, organizational culture, strategy creation process, organizational structure and activity systems, people.

Models of management in crisis constitute fragmented ways of thinking and acting. The study of the subject's literature allows to distinguish numerous directions of activity in management in crisis. These directions are often based on different assumptions, they also require application of different tools. Models grant structure to experience, and reduce ambiguity by filtrating events into recognizable patterns. Models suggest conflicting assumptions and counter assumptions. Each model represents some truth and they are in conflict. Each one is incomplete with respect to the truths of competing models.

Paradoxes may be understood as problems with two marginal solutions – one solution is true and simultaneously the other solution is true. There are paradoxes of crisis within its very nature. On the one hand it is possible to discover those hidden elements whose existence is unknown to the

organization until they finally emerge. On the other hand, due to the form in which this phenomenon manifests itself and its features, it may somehow hamper organizational learning – so important for the enterprise's regeneration. Crisis management is a cognitive effort whose possible success depends on the efficiency of organizational learning processes. But any crisis causes cognitive inertia, anxiety and fear in its participants (Roux-Dufort 2000; Batorski 2010).

During a crisis the management personnel tend to maintain a balance rather than seek changes. The organization engages in normalization processes, meaning that already known and applicable patterns and systems are applied and used (Roux-Dufort 2000). Downplaying and/or rationalizing the course of events is a natural tendency among the stakeholders of the organization if those events transgress their system of values or reference frameworks. Normalization mechanisms enable the participants to share and comprehend the crisis within common and stable frameworks, yet, paradoxically, they decrease learning potential. The main paradox consists in their capacity to boost the learning process and, simultaneously, to hamper it.

The paradox of normalization is a challenge for crisis managers. This paradox means that "The more we know about a crisis, the less likely we are to learn from it". Information is not analyzed in order to improve future actions. This is selected to construct winning arguments in a battle for political-bureaucratic survival (t'Hart, Heyse & Boin 2001).

Linking separate areas of research and innovative application is indispensable for an enterprise to achieve success. The true and practical help extendable for managers who

face a crisis within their enterprise depends on acquisition of information related inter alia to the following:

- methods of crisis management and organizational learning leading to crisis eradication and/or profiting from a crisis,
- organizational features and behavior enabling the merger of paradoxes in crisis management.

Some major, interrelated problems faced by managers may be formulated as follows:

- What are the possible consequences of the organizational crisis?
- What goals might be achieved thanks to the application of crisis management?
- What goals might be achieved following an organizational crisis?

Integration of various models of crisis management, that is: recomposition, may be a good starting point at shaping organization abilities to cope in the crisis. We recompose using old elements, received from the decomposed wholes, adding new, enriching the whole puzzle.

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