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NEW CHALLENGES IN CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

by Robert Suvaal

”Kids don’t learn from people they don’t like” (Carkhuff)

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by Robert Suvaal, Senior Policy Adviser of the Juveniles Sector of the Agency of Correctional Institutions in the Netherlands

1. Introduction & preview

It is really an honour to be here and to be able to inform you on the situation concerning correctional or prison education in my country, the Netherlands.

I was asked to talk about prison education for adults and for young people. I decided to focus mainly on the sector of juvenile offenders. This will allow me to be more to the point in my information and as a consequence you will be able to follow me more easily. Besides both sectors, the adult sector and the sector for juvenile offenders have the same mission and more or less the same vision and they show the same new trends. The differences are gradual, not fundamental, i.e. they differ in degree, not in essential. Now and then I shall make a brief sidestep to the adult sector to emphasize the differences but the red line in my talk will be the other sector, the one of juvenile offenders.

I started my career as a teacher in mainstream education, outside the prison system I mean. After that I worked in the adult penal sector for about 25 years and now I work in the juveniles sector since about 5 years. I always worked in the field of education, vocational education & training and into-employment programmes. As such I was an inspector, after that an adviser and now I am a policy official.

I have a rather wide international experience due to activities in the Council of Europe, the European Prison Education Association (EPEA), the Correctional Education Association (CEA) and the European Offender Employment Forum (EOEF). My international activities started in the Council of Europe when I was a member of the Committee of Experts that produced the report "Education in prison" (1989), a report consisting of recommendations and an explanatory memorandum, written on the base of an adult education approach. It was interesting to be able to get familiar with all kinds of points of view, approaches, experiences and research all over the world and to be able to compare them.

My talk will consist of:

- Introduction and preview (this one).
- The Dutch Prison Service (general information).
- The sector of juvenile offenders (general information)
- Education, training and into-employment programmes in the juveniles sector.
- Interesting trends and experiences in the relationship between education, training, into-employment programmes and social integration.
- A brief summary.

2. The Dutch Prison Service

The National Agency of Correctional Institutions (DJI, in Dutch abbreviations) is an organisation to carry out sentences and measures under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice.

DJI has three sectors:

- The sector of prisons and remand centers for adults.
- The sector of custodial and treatment institutions for juveniles.
- The sector of institutions for mentally disturbed delinquents.

All three sectors have a central sector direction (headquarter) and a field (the institutions belonging to the sector).

All prisons and remand centers for adults are state institutions. In my country the privatization of these institutions is for the time being no issue. One has the opinion that carrying out sentences or measures is the responsibility of the state which opinion I subscribe to very much. Nevertheless both other sectors have state and private institutions but these private institutions are different from the ones we know for example in the USA and in the United Kingdom.

These private institutions in the Netherlands are set up long time ago by foundations or associations having an ideological mission. They are funded fully by the state and their work is under full control of DJI.

The mission statement of DJI is: "The National Agency of Correctional Institutions contributes to a safe society through the enforcement of custodial sentences and other penal measures, and by offering the persons entrusted to our care the opportunity of a socially acceptable way of life."

3. *The sector of juvenile offenders*

The juveniles sector consists of 16 institutions. The overall management of the sector is the responsibility of the sector direction at headquarters. The sector direction has approximately 28 full time staff.

Today the 16 institutions house approximately 2000 youngsters (about 1450 boys and 450 girls). They can be distinguished - as said before - in state and private institutions, but also in custodial and in treatment institutions. The custodial institutions are closed institutions, the treatment institutions are closed or open. In most treatment institutions there is a non-official kind of units called semi-closed (or semi-open). They make a category about halfway between closed and open. The juveniles are housed in units of mostly 10 places.

The staff - clients ratio in the juveniles sector is about 1,5 : 1.

In terms of judicial status there are four categories of juveniles and young offenders in these institutions:

- ❑ Young people suspected of committing a crime are held in pre-trial detention as long as they have not yet been convicted by a juvenile court. They stay in a custodial institution.
- ❑ Young people convicted by a juvenile court are serving out their detention. They stay in a custodial institution too.
- ❑ Young people put under an institutional placement by a juvenile court. They stay in a treatment institution. Those put under an institutional order are admitted to institutions for an initial period of two years. That period can be extended by two years for juveniles who have committed a violent crime or sexual offence. Following that, institutional placement orders can be extended by an additional two years if the offender was suffering from a developmental deficiency or a psychiatric disorder.
- ❑ Young people placed under a supervision order and temporarily removed from their parents care by special order of a juvenile court. Nota bene: notice that this category of youngsters has a civil law status whilst they stay in treatment institutions together with categories of juveniles that have a criminal law status. Since about a year there is an interesting discussion about this issue.

The vision of the juveniles sector is: "The juveniles institutions make use of the opportunities and the realistic wishes of the juveniles concerning the contents of a systematic reintegration. They take over the parental care, as much as possible in a dialogue with the parents, the guardians and/or family guardians. They activate the social network of the juveniles to prevent a relapse in the former behaviour."

The juveniles sector is devoted to the principle of sentence planning or route planning, i.e. the stay of juveniles in a judicial institution and immediately after that is subject to a planning aimed at individual goals in the field of social integration.

Most young people that stay in our institutions are between 12 and 18 years old. Some are older, up to 23 years. They belong to the category of young people put under an institutional placement by a juvenile court. Some of them have committed heavy crimes and they have to be treated for developmental lacks or disturbances during a rather long time. The maximum time for treatment is 6 years. So if they are placed at 17 years it is possible they have to stay till 23 years.

The legal framework for the juveniles institutions is the new Youth Custodial Institutions Act that came into force on September 1st, 2001. It contains all issues that are important for the care and treatment of juveniles in our institutions. The law has been worked out in rules and policies.

Since the law came into force there is a new mode for carrying out the last part of sentences and measures. It is called STP (schooling and training programmes). Briefly described, a STP consists of extra-mural programmes. The participants sleep at home or at an other acceptable address. The participants of a STP are guided and supervised by the youth probation service. If they do not stick to the agreements made between them and the institution they are sent back into the institution.

4. Education, training and into-employment programmes in the juveniles sector

Education

All institutions for juveniles have daily programmes consisting mainly of education. All private institutions have an official school for special education belonging to the institution. This school comes under the ministry of Education. The state institutions have their own education units but per August 1st, 2002 the situation will change to the one that already exists for the private institutions. All special schools will then belong to a regional structure of expertise centers for special education thus allowing our schools to be part of the regular school system. All schools belonging to an institution for juveniles will be funded and inspected by the ministry of Education. That is why they can offer recognized certificates.

Further since about five years there is a platform for all schools (both categories) where the school directors and leaders of the education units make agreements about mutual attunement concerning intake and assessment, contents, methods, curricula and portfolios. This platform will be continued after August 1st, 2002. As the secretary of this platform and working together closely with the chair person of the platform I can stimulate this mutual attunement, that is important because of the rather frequent turn over of students, and I can discuss things like professional development with the members of the platform.

Education takes place in classes of 7 pupils and it has a very much practically-oriented character (i.e. learning by doing). Vocational education & training is more and more going to be training on the job. That is what is most effective for most members of the target group.

Training

Training is an important part of the daily programme especially in the treatment institutions. Training courses are based on learning theories and are aimed at concrete skills, changes in attitudes, emotional expression and social skills.

The Ministry of Justice has defined the following success factors for training programmes of (ex-) offenders:

- Theoretically funded programmes, i.e. description of:
 - target group;
 - goals and objectives;
 - methods, methodology;
 - duration and frequency;
 - criteria for entrance, e.g. nature of the offence, average learning style of the target group, motivation, personal traits (e.g. gender, ethnic background), procedure for exclusion;
 - programme accountability of treatment, guidance and specific methods;
 - founded by research and empirical support.
- Programme integrity:
 - correct implementation;
 - registration of data, like number of participants, numbers of finishers and dropouts;
 - supervision of programme integrity;
 - (self)evaluation and monitoring;
 - effectivity research by measuring (preferably by using control groups).
- Phased from intramural toward extramural.
- Adequate material and staff conditions.
- Formulation of indication.
- Aimed at the criminogenic risk factors of the individual offender.
- Intensive utilization for high risk offenders.
- Receptivity and motivation of the offender (nota bene: motivation is seen as a dynamic conception).
- After care as a necessary phase.
- Attention to the prevention of relapse.

The main used programmes in the juveniles sector are different kinds of social (or communicative) skills training, impuls control training, rational emotive training and cognitive skills training. Currently we are trying out the effectivity of Motivational Interviewing (MI). MI is: "A directive, client-centered counselling style for eliciting behaviour change by helping clients explore and resolve their ambivalence" (Miller & Rollnick). Compared with non-directive counselling MI is more focused and goal directed.

The examination and resolution of ambivalence is the central purpose and the counsellor is intentionally directive in pursuing this goal. MI is a method developed by Miller (USA) and Rollnick (Scotland) for helping drug and alcohol addicts. In this method based on the motivational theory of Prochaska and Di Clemente motivation is seen as a dynamic concept. Our first experiences with juvenile clients are positive.

Into-employment programmes

Since about 5 - 8 years we understand the need for explicit into-employment programmes consisting of contents and guidance. This is a conception not exclusively for prison or penal programmes, i.e. these programmes exist inside and outside the prison service.

The recently developed policy frame work for into-employment approaches within the juveniles sector has the following characteristics:

- ❑ The trajectory approach (planning of sentence in terms of a routing): an individual route planning that is followed by the participants. This planning is developed by the vocational career officer and the participant together. The programme consists of contents, objectives and a time table. Guidance of the planning is performed by the vocational career officer.
- ❑ An integral or multidisciplinary approach: the programmes are multidisciplinary; they spend attention to the strong and weak points of the participant, namely in the fields of a) education & work; b) housing and c) relationships & networking.
- ❑ Interchange-ability and reliability of data: a simple and reliable way of data management concerning the individual trajectory by which a transfer of data can take place efficiently and effectively. Besides the privacy of the participants has to be guaranteed.
- ❑ Tailor made character of programmes and guidance: a tailor made programme but also a tailor made method of working. Attention has to be given to personal characteristics, educational and occupational experience and level and to the social environment of the participant.
- ❑ Monitoring on the base of a model of total quality management: making use of such a model focussed on self-evaluation, improvement of quality, anchoring of quality and benchmarking. This monitoring has to take place in every phase of the trajectory.
- ❑ Fitting in the concept of output steering and output measuring: the method of working should make use of performance indicators and success determining factors which are deducted from the Mission & Vision documents of DJI and attuned to our stakeholders. In 2002 for the first time performance indicators and success determining factors will be part of the annual planning and control cycle (the budget planning and activities report cycle) of the institutions.
- ❑ Commitment of the members of the target groups: the participants, their social networks and councils of clients have to be committed to the planning, developing, realization and evaluation of the individual routes and programmes.
- ❑ Strategic partnerships: we strive after co-operation contracts or agreements between relevant judicial chain partners and social partners so that the necessary expertise and funding can be used in an optimal way for the planned trajectories. Partnerships should be described in terms of division of tasks (who does what?), responsibilities (who is responsible for what?) and competencies (who decides what?).

5. Interesting trends and experiences in the relationship between education, training, into-employment programmes and social integration

Education, training and into-employment programmes should be aimed at social integration in a multidisciplinary approach. We experienced that an integral approach is necessary to guarantee the best possible chances to success. The new Youth Custodial Institutions Act prescribes that a treatment or residential planning is made for each client within 6 weeks after the start of his/her stay in the institution. Planning of education, training and into-employment programmes are essential parts of the treatment or residential planning. The director of treatment (in treatment institutions) or the pedagogical director (in custodial institutions) is the co-ordinator of this multidisciplinary approach. The development and design of the treatment or residential planning starts by an intensive intake and assessment procedure. Education, training and into-employment approaches are important aspects of that procedure. This intake and assessment is very much integral and it consists of the following fields: social background, offending profile, health, educational background, occupational background, skills, perspective and additional needs (e.g. treatment, therapy).

As mentioned before we strive after effective and efficient partnerships in education, training and into-employment programmes but also in treatment and therapy.

An extra dimension is that the complete trajectory, also the STP part and the after care part, are subject to partners who are active in the interest of the clients. This is essential to make sure that release is not the sudden end of the passionate efforts of the judicial institutions. Transition can be prepared and guided. Portfolios (or similar instruments for the transfer of data) are necessary for this approach.

We need minimal thresholds between schools, workshops, employers, etcetera inside and outside the institutions. This is not only favorable to the realization of the individual trajectories but most of all it is facilitating long term attention to the efforts toward social integration whilst it makes clear that all relevant partners are responsible to help the client to be successful.

6. *A brief summary*

To conclude my talk I would like to summarize briefly the most essential points of our approaches that have proved to be successful in practice:

- ❑ To make use of sentence planning (the routing or trajectory approach). This routing changes from intramural toward extramural. STP and after care are very important parts of the routing.
- ❑ To start by an intensive and integral intake and assessment procedure.
- ❑ To develop an individual treatment or residential planning in which education, training and into-employment programmes are essential parts.
- ❑ To have individual programmes that are tailor made, integral and multidisciplinary.
- ❑ To have education taking place in small groups and being very much practically-oriented (learning by doing).
- ❑ To make use of portfolios to pass on the relevant data about the individual trajectories.
- ❑ To make use of strategic partnerships using contracts, covenants or agreements in which we describe the distribution of tasks, responsibilities and competencies.
- ❑ To make use of the conception of output steering and output measuring (performance indicators and success determining factors) to measure the results of our efforts.

Thanks very much for you attention!

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