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International Summaries

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The Staff of the Treatment-Oriented Correctional System: Function, Selection, Training, Continuing Education

Correctional staff training is a subject of considerable interest in the United States. West Germany has developed a program combining classroom instruction, testing, and practical experience for all professional levels, with specialized training for correctional administrators.

Heike Jung, Hans-Georg Mey, Heinz Mueller-Dietz, and Karl Peter Rothhaus, editors

Introduction

In 1974, the West Germany Federal Union for Prisoner Assistance commissioned the Standing Committee on Criminal Law and Corrections to develop a concept for training and continuing education of corrections staff. Despite general acknowledgment of the need for a training plan and discussions of the subject in literature, no total education concept had been formulated up to then that took into consideration the intimate connection of training to the personnel and decisionmaking structure of correctional institutions. The following proposals are based on the committee's work from 1974 to 1978.

Because the primary goal of imprisonment is prevention of recidivism, with protection of society as a secondary goal, treatment of offenders is necessary. According to modern methods of social psychiatry, treatment should consist of structured, goal-oriented interaction within groups. In practice, treatment must be conducted in a controlled, scientific fashion, with a therapeutic, problem-free environment as a prerequisite. Limitations on treatment are imposed by external pressures: inadequate motivation among inmates; security considerations, which restrict use of certain treatment procedures; and the lack of time frames geared exclusively to treatment demands.

Successful correctional treatment requires a communications structure emphasizing staff-prisoner cooperation and inmates' participation in their own treatment planning as well as in the institutional communications process. Replacement of institutions' hierarchical structure, for example, through use of conferences to decide treatment questions, assures cooperation. To facilitate smooth communications and decisionmaking, institutional capacity should be limited to a maximum of 250 persons, with no more than 10 in each autonomous living group. Staff members must possess special qualifications and the ability to cooperate, to communicate, to learn, to innovate, and to empathize, as well as to tolerate frustration.

The position of corrections officers is complicated by the role conflict between treatment and security, which affects their relationships both to inmates and to other staff not involved in the conflict. The frequency and the intensity of the officers' contact to inmates, as well as their relatively large numbers compared to other positions, make the attitude and behavior of this group vital elements in the institution's atmosphere. Because of the pressure to make rapid, often crucial decisions and to be resourceful, highly qualified corrections officers are essential.

Selection of Corrections Officers

The criteria for selection of applicants depend on the role of the corrections officer, which cannot be defined exactly because it is in transition. However, in addition to an adequate general education and learning ability, candidates must have experience both in life and in work outside the institutional environment.

Recruiting depends on the state of the job market, professional status, and salaries. Because the general

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public still holds a negative view of the guards' "lock-up functions," public relations work and advertising must provide accurate, comprehensive information to attract suitable candidates.

Qualified applicants must be selected according to a standardized procedure. Experience supports use of standing selection commissions composed of experts in psychology, social work, pedagogy, and corrections, as well as officials from training schools and placement offices. A single independent selections committee for each state should be appointed to serve at the corrections school.

The selection process should be standardized to permit evaluation while maintaining flexibility. The multidimensional procedure should extend to analyzing biography, observing behavior, and testing achievement. Results should be discussed in conference prior to a personal interview with the candidate. Constant re-assessment of procedures should include comparison of predictions of suitability with later professional success or failure.

Training of Corrections Officers

Training is intended to aid prospective officers in developing communications skills and the ability to meet professional demands. To accomplish these goals, training must encompass theory and practice, either integrated into a one-phase model or separated into a two-phase system, as described here. The emphasis on interrelationships between theory and practice is crucial to both models. Experience recommends a 2-year program, which is especially suitable at the state level.

Contents and methods. Training is divided into basic and specialized functions. Specialty training with little attention to security matters is necessary, for example, as preparation for health official or juvenile officer duties, or for service in social therapeutic institutions; if not covered by the basic curriculum, specialized functions must be the subject of continuing education programs.

Basic training should include courses in social sciences (regarding development of and changes in social behavior; deviant behavior; methods of social control) and law (development and effects of legal norms; the criminal law system), as well as sports and use of force. The interaction between norms and social reality should be explored by integrating social science and law courses. Motivation of candidates, essential for successful training, is also best achieved by their learning from concrete examples.

Special methods are required for the learning situation. At the beginning of theoretical training, introductory seminars employing principles of group dynamics awaken motivation. In later stages, group learning forms such as role playing, and modern methods such as programmed learning and audiovisual aids, should be employed.

Organization. According to an agreement among the states, the possibility must exist for all future corrections officers to attend training courses. Corrections schools are independent organizational units included in the general flow of information exchange with regulatory authorities and prisons. Schools must be located near correctional institutions so that theory can be linked to practice. Exact maximum and minimum school size should be determined by the number of slots needed to train mid-level corrections officers and by the number of faculty members required to cover all fields without becoming unmanageably large. Not only classrooms, but also single rooms for students, lounges, and sports facilities must be provided.

Personnel structure. Full-time staff are necessary to avoid dilettantism and to assure information exchange. Teachers should be rotated every 5 years so that they do not become too far removed from practice. The school and teachers are supervised by the state justice administration.

The instructors are responsible for teaching and examinations, as well as for specialized advice to correctional institutions and for continuing education of mid-level staff. To satisfy these requirements, teachers must be qualified and experienced in their fields as well as capable of interdisciplinary team teaching and of innovation. At regular intervals, teachers must spend time at a corrections academy to familiarize themselves with the latest developments in the corrections field and in adult education.

The school must be managed according to a collaborative system, with an instructional and an administrative director. Through a conference system, participation of teachers in pedagogical and organizational decisions, information exchange, and common establishment of standards is assured. To gear its tasks to the general directions of educational goals, the school must collaborate closely with other institutions of higher education.

Principles of training require representation of as many practical fields as possible, organization that meets didactic needs, and personal supervision for trainees. Central to the school's structure is the training director, who coordinates practical training, supervises trainees, selects teachers, contributes to practical education with concrete examples, introduces newly employed officers to the field, and has broad corrections experience but is approximately the same age as the trainees.

Theory and structure of training. The interconnections between theory and practice necessitate some institutionalization of methods. In addition to measures already mentioned, theory can be related to practice through regular visits of teachers to corrections institutions, teacher participation in treatment conferences, training director participation in seminars, and appointment of a coordinator for practical training (from among the members of the school conference) to help select training institutions and instructional directors.

The 2-year program is divided into the following sequence: exploration of the professional field (1 month), an introductory course for corrections officers as well as for mid-level workshop officers and administrators (6 months, beginning with a 2-week group dynamics seminar), practical training-I (5 months), an evaluation seminar for exchange of experiences (1 month), practical training-II (5 months), and a final course covering practical application of regulations and examination preparation (6 months).

Achievement evaluation. Although achievement testing is problematic for adults, especially those entering a second profession, tests are necessary to establish professional suitability according to set standards and to indicate to the trainee the competence level attained.

In addition to the final examination, tests are given in the introductory course and in the second practical training course to avoid the psychological pressure of a single evaluation at the end. Testing does not occur in the field exploration course, in the first practical training course, or in the evaluation seminar so that trainees may be introduced to practice without inhibiting factors.

The informal, limited tests in the introductory course determine suitability and level of knowledge, while those in the second practical training course assist in assessing trainees' behavior. Behavioral effectiveness can be ascertained only on the basis of long-term observation by an astute observer and through in-depth information; this is the task of the instructional director, who must use special evaluation forms and discuss results with individual trainees.

Continuous testing in the two phases mentioned is part of the total evaluation process, but the final examination must still make up 50 percent of the total because of the advantages of formalized, structured measurement instruments and because some trainees attain their highest levels of achievement toward the end of the training period. The final examination contains written and oral sections administered by a commission composed primarily of school instructors as well as of outside examiners familiar with the training materials and methods. Knowledge of materials covered in the training period is tested; capabilities in practice must also be considered.

Continuing Education of Correctional Officers

The goals of continuing education are reactivation of knowledge, exchange of professional experience, clarification of motivations for professional behavior, elimination of profession-related frustrations, dissemination of information on conflict resolution, and development of further qualifications. In addition to continuing education above the local level at the corrections school, systematic programs within institutions, as well as courses by professional associations and adult education programs, should be encouraged.

Continuing education is a professional obligation; for this reason, a systematic continuing education program must be provided. Moreover, voluntary advanced

courses permit corrections officers to pursue their professional interests and to improve their qualifications. Participation in interdisciplinary courses enables staff to practice various forms of cooperation. Prisoners should be included in treatment-oriented continuing education programs, as prisoner-guard communications is a goal of training.

Selection, Training, and Continuing Education for Other Types of Staff

Both general qualifications (e.g., communicative competence) and methods of selection are similar to those required for corrections officers, with some variation. Frequently, previous education has already prepared some corrections employees for a profession (medicine, social work); only limited additional training is needed to ensure their competence in all work areas. Individuals without professional qualifications must be certified for particular corrections professions.

Training for other staff. Candidates for workshop staff positions have already learned their professions; they need only concentrate on corrections subjects such as criminology, professional pedagogy, work psychology, and corrections administration. The 15-month training period encompasses a 1-month exploration of the field, a 6-month introductory course also attended by mid-level candidates to assure a common basic orientation, a 4-month practical training period, and a 4-month final course devoted to specialized knowledge in professional pedagogy, work psychology, and the nature of the work. Theoretical training is given in the corrections school, while practical experience is gained in the training institution under the supervision of the workshop officer and the instructional director.

Mid-level administrative officers must focus on general knowledge about corrections, as well as on law and administration. Their training period lasts 2 years: a 1-month exploration of the profession, a 6-month introductory course attended with prospective workshop officers and guards, a 5-month practical training period, and a 3-month study course for the final examination. The locations for theoretical and practical training are the same as for workshop officers.

High-level corrections officers and administrators must attend a special training program at the corrections academy with practical experience at training institutions; corrections management, especially administration and communication skills, is emphasized. The 3-year course of study consists of a 1-month exploration of the profession; an 8-month introductory course; a 9-month practical training period; a 1-month evaluation seminar; a second 9-month practical training period which includes an introduction to related fields and two specialized practicums (totaling 6 months) in labor, social sciences, or a similar area; and an 8-month course leading to a final examination geared to qualification requirements.

Individuals from other professions (medicine, psychology, social work) need intensive additional training in general corrections work (teamwork, communicative competence), management, administration, law, social

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work, and psychological diagnosis. The emphasis depends on the area of professional specialization and the diversity of functions in correctional institutions. Complementary knowledge and communication training enable trainees to empathize with other specialists and to cooperate more effectively. The 6-month training period consists of a 1-month exploration of the field at state training institutions and a 5-month course emphasizing theory at the corrections academy; the final examination is designed only to measure professional suitability.

Continuing education. Continuing education for other services follows the same pattern and organization as that for correctional officers, with concentration according to particular professional activities. Workshop officers and mid-level administrators are given advanced training at the corrections school; high-level officials may attend supplementary courses at the corrections academy. Course offerings of professional associations and adult education programs, as well as of higher education institutions, should also be considered.

The corrections academy. Corrections academies are run by the states on the basis of Federal contracts; the academies should be centrally located in the vicinity of a university or criminological research institute and of a correctional institution. To cover the training demand, 200 to 300 training slots should be available. Instructors are full-time employees with academic status and must have corrections experience, capability for interdisciplinary work, and research competence; they are responsible for training advanced-level corrections officers and administrators as well as corrections school teachers. The academy is run according to principles of interdisciplinary cooperation, with a three-person board of directors elected by the faculty to supervise the administrative director and with a teacher conference system for decisionmaking. Establishment of a criminological research center at the academy promotes high academic standards as well as development of practical applications for scientific knowledge and of cooperation with corrections institutions.

Future Perspectives

Conceptual approaches and tendencies. Growing recognition of the significant relationship between corrections goals and the organization of corrections institutions is evinced by the "wing concept," i.e., formation of small, semi-autonomous living groups within the prison that are conducive to treatment. According to a cooperative management arrangement, the staff is being given a greater role in decisions through such mechanisms as the treatment conference and autonomy for individual guards in planning their work.

To improve the selection process, practical competence is now a leading suitability criterion, while psychological tests have been introduced as the measurement instrument. The tendency in developing corrections schools is to use full-time instructors and adult education methods. On the theoretical level, social sciences are being given more weight. On the practical level, pedagogically oriented staff have been appointed as training directors to enhance the quality of practical training. Efforts to establish a corrections academy have been initiated, and a system of continuing education courses sponsored mainly by academies and professional associations is evolving.

Goals of future development. All areas of corrections must be reformed simultaneously so that improved training is not rendered meaningless by unmodified institutions. Prisons should be decentralized and organized in autonomous units to facilitate participation of staff, and in some cases prisoners, in decisionmaking; the cooperative management model with a conference system must be promoted. Principles underlying selection criteria for general corrections officers must be applied to other staff. An adequate conceptual basis must be established for training, with special attention to integration of theory and practice and with curriculum evaluation and revision. Continuing education courses should be planned and coordinated so that courses can be taken by all staff members at regular intervals rather than according to individual interests. Finally, the corrections academy must be founded at once, for only this type of institution can train teachers for the corrections schools and high-level staff while contributing original research.