Outline of the General Procedures That Use the Holistic Approach as Applied at the Mexican State Juvenile Rehabilitation School

This article describes the holistic approach used at the Mexican State Juvenile Rehabilitation School. This integration of therapeutic, rehabilitative measures with pedagogy and labor is unusual in Latin America.

By Silvia Patiño Román

Introduction

For years, behavioral scientists have been studying juveniles' antisocial behavior. One philosophical approach has held that problem behavior was the result of causes of juveniles' deviant behavior. Confusion arose of having moral values of the community; on the other hand, juveniles were assumed to exhibit antisocial behavior because they were not being taught the moral values. For many, the solution to juvenile delinquency problems took concrete form in the Juvenile Rehabilitation Law of 1968, which mandated the creation of the Guardianship Authority and a rehabilitation school.

Antecedents to the Juvenile Program

The express purpose of the Guardianship Authority and rehabilitation school was to rehabilitate juveniles from the day of admission, to give them opportunities for personal development and socialization, and to abandon all means of punishment. In 1971, the first institution with a decidedly experimental focus was established in Ciudad Netzahualcóyotl, a township with a critically high incidence of juvenile delinquency. In this institution, each juvenile's personal history was to be studied, with an emphasis on individualized therapy. All types of treatment must be constantly examined and reviewed according to their rehabilitative success or failure. In 1972, the Juvenile Rehabilitation School began restructuring all its programs along these lines.

Basic Premises of the Juvenile Program

Implementation of this juvenile offender treatment program is based on the following ideological premises:

- The child is a developing and unfinished being, with whom every contact must be educational.
- Adolescence embodies the last chance for the child to overcome infantile attitudes and to become aware of the values that constitute mature behavior.
- All forms of aberrant behavior are the result of multiple motivations that cannot be fully understood and defined.
- Each child's perception of the world must be established in a diagnostic profile using the direct biographical approach.
- Daily observation of a child's activities, attitudes, and interpersonal relations is more revealing than a psychological test in evaluating progress toward rehabilitation.
- Institutional ideology must be fundamentally educational, never punitive.
- Children are mentally ill, regardless of the type of mental illness, must be treated by specialists in mental institutions. Basic problems must be treated before rehabilitation even occurs.
- The most concentrated rehabilitation efforts should be aimed at juveniles showing the highest aptitude and rehabilitation indices, without neglecting those with negative or optimistic progres.
- Rehabilitation efforts must be continued with an even greater commitment in the postrelease stage to ensure juveniles' successful social readjustment.
- All institutional staff members must exchange ideas and suggestions continuously as a means of providing the best possible treatment.
- All therapeutic activities must undergo periodic evaluation, with a view to eliminating those that are ineffective and to replicating those that are successful.
- If possible, the best results, flexible procedures must be based on daily observation and clinical investigation of the inmates, on their work and classroom results, and on the children's own reports.

Summary of Procedures at the Rehabilitation School for Juveniles

The Guardianship Council's objectives for the school emphasize an individual approach to juveniles from the day of admission, technical and humanistic contact between inmates and the institution staff, and rehabilitation as an individual; peridic evaluation interviews are used to ensure the proper therapy was chosen. After final diagnosis, admission to sports and recreational activities is permitted. Orientation and group therapy sessions monitored by specialised technical personnel take place from admission to release. Inmates are allowed to leave with family members every 8 weeks (or every 6 weeks for those with exceptional records in all activities). Youngsters without family connections are individually planned programs based on the inmates' profiles.
invited out by auxiliary personnel connected with the institution. Social work interviews the inmates' families and friends. If they have achieved optimum improvement are released with paternal control and continued family interviews; complete release occurs after 8 weeks of observation if no serious problems have come up.

Ergotherapy. Workshops include carpentry, printing, silversmithing, sewing, cooking, and office work. The workshops' objectives are to promote identification with the juvenile, by a work situation in which they can see their efforts take concrete shape, so that they can develop a sense of achievement and a feeling of security.

Based upon a diagnostic profile compiled jointly by psychologists, psychiatrists, and specialized social workers, the workshops' philosophies and stages are placed at a production stage suitable to their mental and material situations and limitations. This is done to avoid counterproductive feelings of frustration by setting realistic work goals and apprenticeship requirements. The juveniles are constantly supervised and monitored during training, and their progress is charted by multiple scores. These are preceded to higher production stages as their proficiency increases, until they reach the maximum rehabilitation level. At the top levels, the juveniles must be paid for their work. At all times, the juveniles' progress is evaluated on the basis of their stages as their proficiency increases, until they reach the absolute or general criteria. Rehabilitation is then further reinforced by post-release orientation and counseling interviews.

Education. Preliminary (exploratory) tests are administered to determine the juveniles' proficiency levels. New inmates are placed at the appropriate school level, with the program advancing only when made necessary by the students' classes. Each teacher is informed of the youngster's total diagnostic profile and individual treatment plan and is urged to foster feelings of self-reliance, security, and competence, as well as proficiency in the subjects taught. Behavioral problems must be reported to the classroom teacher for joint discussions in the youth's treatment routine. Faculty members are encouraged to compare notes on their students so that the "problem child" can be identified in these reports.

Each student's monthly report card must contain remarks on general progress to contribute to the ongoing total profile. The achievement show improvement over a period of 2 years (1972 to 1973) as the specialized training of the correctional staff is improved; however, none of the inmates achieved maximum in all indicators and areas evaluation. Reading and writing instructors must give special attention to the program of shared communal life and intensive tuition school and the difficulties involved in following up the classification of antisocial juveniles must always be educational, aimed at developing their potential. The staff was aided by insufficient personnel and a poorly trained administrative staff. The staff was handicapped by insufficient personnel and a poorly trained administrative staff.

The program of shared communal life and intensive tuition school and the difficulties involved in following up the classification of antisocial juveniles must always be educational, aimed at developing their potential. The staff was aided by insufficient personnel and a poorly trained administrative staff.

The program of shared communal life and intensive tuition school and the difficulties involved in following up the classification of antisocial juveniles must always be educational, aimed at developing their potential. The staff was aided by insufficient personnel and a poorly trained administrative staff.

The program of shared communal life and intensive tuition school and the difficulties involved in following up the classification of antisocial juveniles must always be educational, aimed at developing their potential. The staff was aided by insufficient personnel and a poorly trained administrative staff.

The program of shared communal life and intensive tuition school and the difficulties involved in following up the classification of antisocial juveniles must always be educational, aimed at developing their potential. The staff was aided by insufficient personnel and a poorly trained administrative staff.