

DRAMA-CLUB AS INNOVATION IN EDUCATIONAL WORK WITH MINOR DELINQUENTS

Professional paper

Nebojša MACANOVIĆ¹

Abstract:

Number of minor felons is constantly increasing, especially in countries in transition like Bosnia and Herzegovina. Educational measures which are applied to minor delinquents often do not have enough influence, because measures are not based on needs and issues that delinquent have, but they are derived from administrative routine. Disrupted value system, morals erosion, entropy and wrong ideals in society contribute to minor delinquency expansion. In order to help these young people, during educational work, it is necessary to recognize their attitude, interest, talents and predispositions, to motivate them and to encourage them to face problems by themselves. One of education forms in educational-corrective work with underage felons is drama-club in correctional institution in Banja Luka, where stated aspects are main factors in decision of these young people to change their way of life.

Theatre show „I wanna go home“, where together act young delinquents, their educators and police officers is true story about destiny of young people who want new chance and new beginning in their life. The show raises many questions about society issues, but also states request that society must deal with these issues. Drama-club, as well as show itself, has influence to educational work with minor delinquents, because it shows their positive side, as well as their talents, efforts and willingness to show that they can and want to be better people.

Main goal of this paper is to demonstrate new experiences in educational work with underage felons, by involving them in drama-club, as innovative approach that showed great results in their social rehabilitation. Drama-club is educational innovation that combines several forms of treatment, which testify to their importance and role that it has in educational work with underage delinquents.

Key words:

drama-club, underage delinquents, rehabilitation, educational treatment

¹ Nebojša Macanović, PhD. Professor at Faculty of Political Sciences Banja Luka; e-mail: macanovicn@yahoo.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In Bosnia and Herzegovina many parallel processes are developing, which are characteristic for transition countries, and which have enormous direct and indirect influence on lives of children. Adjusting to free-market –economy conditions, followed by reform processes in government of law, parallel to reform of social sector, as well as unevenly developing civil sector, create situation where society cannot give adequate care for children. On the other side, poverty of people, change of value system with overpricing material values, and changed traditional role of family, increase risk factors related to children's health and their social behavior.

Monitoring of minor delinquency area in B&H system of justice, and it's parts that comprise subsystems of prevention, enforcement of justice and reintegration of delinquents who broke the law, there still cannot be noticed any improvements of system during after-war period (1992 – 1996).

This state of society and my personal experience in work with minor delinquents influenced to creating an image that time spent in correctional institution represents only one part of life which they "sleep-over", and all these delinquents, after leaving institution start from beginning, unadjusted to time and world we live in. They carry enormous amount of arrogance to catch up all lost time, and this puts them back to prison in most cases. Exactly this image influenced to creation of some elements in educational work, so that time spent in correctional institution is better used and adjusted to time we live in.

2. MINOR DELINQUENCY ISSUE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Minor delinquency is present in all worlds' societies. None of these societies have found absolute solution for this problem. And appearance of wars, political crises, economic crises and migration of population, are directly connected to subsistence and expansion of minor delinquency.

Deep total turbulence is present in all key areas of life: economy, politics, moral and general values system, educational system, family and identity of each person. Philosophy that is generally accepted in our society considers minor delinquency less dangerous, comparing to criminal behavior of adults. This is one of the reasons of lack of quality social response to it. Fact which confirms this is that poverty, unemployment and refugees lead to lack of interest of minor delinquency research (Nikolic, 2000).

In time of the strongest social transformation, old social and public problems catch up new problems and together with them form complex requests to protective functions of organized societies. One of these tendencies points that youngest people,

more than ever and more than other parts of population goes in circle of deviant behavior (Davidovic, 1983).

Children and youth represent most sensitive category of human population, and they are strongly affected with crisis of society, as it is case in B&H. Reaction to crisis of society is often reflected through accepting of values which are not socially acceptable. Consequence of this is criminal infection of youth and delinquent behavior that has trend of growth.

Situation in B&H, regarding minor delinquency, is very troublesome. Number of juvenile delinquents is constantly growing. And especially important fact is that more and more juvenile who commit crime, do that also as adult person. Also, uncoordinated legislative in two B&H entities, insufficient number of institutions for improvement of socialization process, low number of project for research of this field, and low number of experts who deal with these problems make this whole situation even worse. According to same source during 2010 2500 minor delinquents have been recorded, of which 40% are returnees. By looking in statistics separately by largest towns in B&H (Sarajevo, Mostar, Tuzla and Banja Luka), each ninth offender of all registered crimes is juvenile. The most often offenses are those against property (70%) and in significantly less number are those against life and body, and against public order. Fact that is very troublesome is that number of delinquents age younger than 12 is growing. And these children are not subject of criminal sanctions at all.

Juvenile crime is constantly growing, while society response to this issue is not changing, and is based on models of reaction from before the civil war ('90-tees) with fewer resources of institutions which work with these children. Reform processes in justice sector that brought changes in legislation, sill are not followed by investments or adjusting existing infrastructure for implementation of legal cures for minors who have problems with law. (Marković, 2007.)

There are six institutions currently in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which deal with minor delinquency treatment. Those are: Correctional institution in Banja Luka for male person, Correctional institution in Tuzla for male person, Correctional institution in Sarajevo for female person, Juvenile prison in eastern Sarajevo, Juvenile prison in Zenica and educational institution «Hum» also in Sarajevo. According to law of criminal sanction in Republic of Srpska (2010), educational-correctional homes are institutions for enforcement of sanction from 6 months to 4 years, while juvenile prisons are institutions where minors serve sentence for hardest criminal acts, in duration from 1 to 10 years.

And according to law of criminal sanction of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010), minors are sanctioned with educational measures, and older minors (age 16 to 18) can be sanctioned with juvenile prison. Younger minors (age 14 to 16) can be sentenced only to educational measures. Also, minors cannot be sentenced to parole.

“According to CPT (European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment) all minor delinquents, prisoned for being accused or sentenced for criminal acts, must be held in institutions specially projected for people of that age, offering regime tailored by their needs, and having personal specially trained for work with youth” (CPT standards, page 70.)

All educational-correctional institutions work in very difficult conditions, due to inadequate technical and material conditions. Also, educational treatment of inmates in these institutions is less important than security. And personnel are acting according to these priorities, and much more attention is paid to security then to rehabilitation and resocialization of minor delinquents. Only one institute managed to change this way of work and relation to minor delinquents. It is Educational – correctional institution Banja Luka, so this paper will describe work with juvenile offenders inside their facilities.

3. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN EDUCATIONAL TREATMENT OF MINOR DELINQUENTS

Educational – correctional institution Banja Luka was founded in 2006, as one division of prison for adults. Institution capacity is 25 people. With delinquents each day works multidisciplinary team: pedagogue, psychologist, social worker and teacher.

During treatment all inmates have school classes, have working activities, cultural and sport sections, visit different cultural and sport events.

When it was opened, management for this institution had attitude that very repressive measurements should be conducted over inmates, in order to make their rehabilitation more successive. Also, many of them thought that inmate are “unrealizable category” and that they should not spend too much energy on them. Unfortunately behavior of inmates often approved that opinion. Everyday breaking house rules, undeveloped working, cultural and hygienic habits, aggression, vulgar behavior and mutual disrespect, made work of personnel even harder in attempts of rehabilitation. This psychological situation was considered normal inside institutions which had primary purpose to move minor delinquents from streets, and stop them to do more criminal acts.

Organization of educational and correctional work in this juvenile prison is based on very strict system which tends to obtrude socially acceptable norms and educational tasks through force, without having in mind wishes, desires and interest of prisoners. Intrusion of rules and forcing strict conditions did not have enough success so far, because inmates reject authority and force. And even with these results, current management tended to enforce stricter regime. Compulsion could be noticed everywhere. First day when inmates arrive, they are introduced to many strict rules. Each

rejection or avoidance of rules is punished by some of measures: admonition, eliminating convenience (visit to town) or solitary. Since it is very homogeneous group that is behaving very anti-social, people who are punished more often get status of leader in group. Limited movement, long list of rules and punishments, represent deprivation that have bad influence to educational work.

Society is trying to deal with this problem by acting from top to bottom, and not form down-up, from reason to consequence. It is obvious that children with asocial behavior reject authority, regardless is it social worker, their parents, policeman or educator, and it is usual that rules forced by these people are rejected, because those people are not in their "world of quality". Reason is very simple, their work and methods are based on force and punishment, and that creates repulsive attitude by children (Radovanovic, 2007).

Minors in correctional institutions often reject each kind of extortion that with their work, efforts and change of attitudes can help to themselves and to others from their environment. And that by doing so will be accepted after leaving institution. They understand this tutelage as pure demagogy. In their dialogues they do not hide their awareness that society will not deal with them after leaving prison that they will be left to themselves, and that will find help and understanding only with people similar to them. This means returning to old habits and old behavior. This attitude makes each kind of educational work extremely difficult (Macanovic, 2007).

However, we in Correctional institution Banjaluka had strong wish to help these young people discarded from society, and by using different educational methods and innovative approaches to correct their attitudes, behavior, and return them self-respect and faith in new beginning. All approaches put focus on inmates' personality, and his needs, wishes and interests. Result of this were numerous sections, organized together by educators and volunteers, people who wanted to help these children, be their support, role model and example of successful life. But in order to empower this approach, it was crucial to open one strictly closed institution, as prison, towards NGOs (non-government organization) and people who were ready to help inmates with their knowledge and enthusiasm. One of the first NGOs that develop cooperation with prison was NGO "Victory", through projects focused on prevention of hepatitis B and C and AIDS. After this project, many other organizations and individuals like actors, sportsmen, teachers, were coming to prison, to talk to inmates, to educate them and to help prison personnel to improve educational treatment.

Every week we organized different visits to correctional institution, and we tried to bring as much different professions as possible. In visit came actors, sportsmen, painters, musicians, but also their peers from high school that spent some time with inmates and competed in different sports. Many sections were created this way, like music section, drama club, making of jewelry, section for journalism, IT section, football and chess section. We organized exhibits of inmate's work that were done inside

prison. Also, inmates had initiative to take care of animals, so management bought dog, rabbits and ducks. Inmates were handling all work with animals. Since of responsibility and working habits were developed this way. Also, each Friday inmates had classes with prison's chef, who showed them how to prepare different meals and cookies, and how to serve them. In these classes inmates learned how to cook simple meals, but also some basic good manners.

One of primary goals of treatment was education of inmates. Many of them quit their regular formal education, and they even do not know how to write properly. First task was to teach them writing. And those who were better in formal education were trained to use computers.

Through all these activities inmates developed their working, hygienic and cultural habits. Educational treatment in total was based on mutual respect of educators and inmates with one common goal – successful socialization of minor delinquents.

4. DRAMA CLUB

Numerous sections and activities that were implemented motivated inmates to show their creativity, and talents, which had positive reflection to their behavior and following house order rules.

One of the most popular sections in correctional institution was drama club. Idea for this section came from inmates themselves. It is interesting that many of them have never visited theatre. Several visits to theatre, visits of actors to prison and conversations with inmates interested them to act. Idea was supported by student of Academy of Dramatic Arts, who was willing to work as volunteer and to help in realization of this project.

However, interest of inmates for show slowly decreasing, because many of them were half-literate and they could not remember text of roles in this show. After few months unsuccessful work we got idea to make show where inmates will show their natural behavior and talk about their life. We made only general construction of scenario, and idea came from famous reality "Big brother". Inmates accepted this idea and started to prepare show. Preparation lasted 6 months. Name of the show was "I wanna go home" and it was suggested by inmates. In this show they acted together with educators and guards, 20 people altogether.

4.1. Theatre show "I wanna go home"

This show is actually comedy, where inmates tell their "life story". All their tales are true and talk about their life before prison, about family, love, life inside prison, dreams and wishes, and plans after leaving prison. Through these stories inmates are trying to present their bad, but also good sides, their life and reasons why they

came to prison. This is story about their life, but also about society their live in. And through show we recognize real children without their "tough" mask, honest in their stories about childhood.

Show was performed for the first time in January 2008 for personnel of prison Banjaluka. Everybody was delighted and liked the performance very much. There were present guests from OSCE and Ombudsman for children's right. After that, show was performed 10 times, in schools and in Faculty of law Banja Luka. Also, they participated in competition of amateur theatres, where they received reward from audience.

Scenario and music was suggested by inmates, and performing of this show lasts one hour. By acting together with their educators they send clear message "Give us new chance"! And this way they show that they want to change, that they accept sanction for their behavior, but also that they are ready to deal with new challenges outside the prison and to start from new beginning.

5. REHABILITATION OF MINOR DELINQUENTS

Through including inmates in work of drama-club, they were given opportunity to show other side of their personality. It is consider as innovation in educational treatment, where minor delinquent by himself talks and understands his mistakes, wrong behavior and consequences of this behavior. And he by himself search for solutions in his future life. Educator is directing him to talk about his earlier behavior, to identify mistakes, but also encourage him to regain self-respect, his values and abilities which he owns. This way we crate partnership in treatment, and more relaxed and honest connection between educator and minor delinquent. This innovation in treatment is based on attitudes and needs of inmates, and then through work in one of the sections, we can influence to change of earlier attitudes and behavior. This approach has educational, developmental, moral and esthetic function. Experience in the form of drama-club shows how innovative approaches can be valuable factor in rehabilitation.

Regardless to their earlier behavior and criminal act they done, they still are children who deserve another chance. And this is the reason why this innovation has special role in their resocialization. These approach shows human side of institution like prison, and in the same time shows all values that one person should have. Experience shows that successful socialization of minor delinquents is mainly connected to their educational treatment, as much as adjusting of treatment to personal needs of each inmate. This treatment is based on tolerance, partnership and democratic relationship, and on principles of individualization and humanization.

It is fact that from first group who was working on this show, only one inmate continued with criminal acts after leaving prison. This fact confirms importance of this

method of successful resocialization. These experiences should be improved in future, but also considered as one of important parts of rehabilitation treatment.

6. CONCLUSION

Theory and practice do not always follow turbulent time we live in, so it is very common question where are the limits of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. It is known that if some behavior becomes characteristic of majority, regardless to its previous meaning, it is not considered as deviant any more. Today we are witnesses of constant tolerance to different "marginal" behaviors to difference of people and their right to be different and special. Through this we prove clear orientation towards human and democratic society, and acceptance of difference between people, because it is known that this approach contributes to spiritual wealth of society. But we also witness low authority at all levels, from parents, teachers, experts to politicians, comparing to influencing young generation, setting goals for them and expectations in their education. Consequence of that state in society is growth of number of minor delinquents who become "virus" that all reject. Rejected from society, sanctioned by repressive punishments, imprisoned in institutions which are not adequate for work with this population, without love, attention and respect, they become persons with predisposition to continue with criminal actions, mostly because of their existence in society. Unfortunately, many of them at the end come to prison or become title in newspaper as victim of some criminal confrontation.

We tried to give new chance to minor delinquents, new start in uncertain country like Bosnia and Herzegovina, by introduction of new and innovative approaches in educational work with minor delinquents in Correctional institution Banja Luka. One of innovation is drama-club, where inmates showed other side of their personality, the positive side that wishes to change and get a new chance. Experience that we showed in this paper point that we should have faith in young people who are forgotten from many, to respect them, give them back their self-respect and offer them love which they do not feel.

Theatre show "I wanna go home" is true story of children from Correctional institution Banja Luka, which change relation of many people towards minor delinquents and created network of people and institutions which are willing to help these children.

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