

Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency Phenomenon and Re-Socialization of Delinquent Minors in Romania

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ABSTRACT

The degree of danger ratio of juvenile crimes in other countries, as well as in Romania, is a problem that concerns the educational and social control factors. In our country, the offences have increased due to malfunctions, anomie and social pathology aspects, problems of education and adaptation, malfunctions regarding the promotion of young people that determine phenomena of maladjustment, frustration, alienation and delinquency. At macro-social level, we are confronting cope with the accelerated development of the big cities, massive displacing of population, emerging of heterogeneous social communities, unemployment, inflation, economic instability, lesser community social control, social tolerance, new customs and habits etc. At a micro-social level there appear malfunctions in the activity of the main groups having an important role in socialization processes and social control (family, school, working colleagues, group of friends, associations and youth clubs). From an individual point of view, according to the personality of the teenager, one can exteriorize oneself through certain deviant behaviours: egocentrism, impulsivity, aggression. Through this research I will analyze the dimensions and characteristics of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon in the Romanian society, after the socio-political change in 1989; characterization of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon in Romania; identification of the social causes and factors of juvenile delinquency in our country; I will analysis of the vindicatory sanctions applied to the delinquent minors for the identification of the adequate measures that help decreasing the number of involved and the new aspects of the crimes.

Key words: Juvenile delinquency–re-socialization–integration–control factors.

1 INTRODUCTION

The degree of danger ratio of juvenile crimes in other countries, as well as in Romania, is a problem that concerns the educational and social control factors. In our country, the offences have increased due to malfunctions, anomie and social pathology aspects, problems of education and adaptation, malfunctions regarding the promotion of young people that determine phenomena of maladjustment, frustration, alienation and delinquency.

At macro-social level, we are confronting cope with the accelerated development of the big cities, massive displacing of population, emerging of heterogeneous social communities, unemployment, inflation, economic instability, lesser community social control, social tolerance, new customs and habits etc.

At a micro-social level there appear malfunctions in the activity of the main groups having an important role in socialization processes and social control (family, school, working colleagues, group of friends, associations and youth clubs). [1]

From an individual point of view, according to the personality of the teenager, one can exteriorize oneself through certain deviant behaviours: egocentrism, impulsivity, aggression.

The exist elements of continuity and discontinuity of the juvenile delinquency in the romanian society after 1989.

Elements of continuity are: maintaining certain malfunctions taken over from the old system, visible among the main “instances” of socialization and moral integration of the young people, maintaining the “risk” factors that lead to juvenile delinquency manifestations.

Elements of discontinuity are: young people do not represent anymore a homogenous or undifferentiated demo-

graphic category, having particularities referring to age, social status, value and normative system between different individuals, emerging of new styles and ways of living and of some juvenile “sub-cultures” that tend to contest the world of adults. [2]

Before 1989, very few studies in this area were made in Romania. There were two ideological obstacles for the validation of the researches in addressing regarding the factors and the dynamic of the juvenile delinquency during this period: “total secret on the statistic data regarding the evolution of the juvenile delinquency, in order to hide the emerging and its “normal” status and objective manifestations (Durkheim), in any society; legislative manipulation, by changing the nature of certain penal offences committed by minors, for “hiding” the social dimension of the juvenile delinquency.

The existent statistical data that refer between 1980 and 1989, show the fact that, during this period, most of the sanctioned minors (74%) committed robberies in the detriment of public and private property, 9.2% outrage and physical aggressions, 3.3% homicide and raping, and the rest of 4.8% prostitution, treachery and vagrancy.

As regarding the age group, the highest percentage in the juvenile delinquency phenomenon, during the analysed period, was made of minors between 16 and 18 years old (over 85%), while the minors under 14 years old and between 14 and 16 represented only 15% from the total number of the minors sanctioned for their offence. [3]

1.1 Problem Statement

The general and specific causes of the juvenile delinquency in Romania are: states of anomie; numerous economic disorders; political instability; legislative incoherence; incapacity in establishing a hierarchy of the social policies priorities; resettling and readjustment of the systems of values, norms, motivations, moral and civic attitudes; “Identity Crisis” of the young generation; numerous deficiencies of family and social socialization; certain prejudices, stereotypes and labelling that consider the young people a “problematic” category; the violent treatment of children; alcohol and drugs consumption; school abandon.

To present the types of crimes committed by juveniles a criminal typology should be considered. It is important to explain the actions of the categories and their analysis to see whether the offense is characteristic of juvenile delinquents.

The studied categories are the next ones: assault offenses; offenses against property; organized offenses; offenses related to drugs, alcohol and sex.

Purposes for the research of the theme are: elaboration of a work that has a scientific and unitary character (based on the statistical data and the results of the sociological results made by the Rehabilitation Centre for Minors from Găești) on the juvenile delinquency in the Romanian society – as one of the significant social aspects from the last 18 years; accomplishing a case study at the Rehabilitation Centre for Minors in Găești, regarding the psycho-social characteristics of the delinquent minors and the factors that contribute to

the emerging of the juvenile delinquency, which is useful as informational basis for those that work in the decisional institutions for establishing the solutions in order to diminish the number of crimes made by minors and of those who are involved in the prevention, treatment and socialization programs of the minor delinquents.

1.2 Research Questions

Possible questions for diminishing the juvenile delinquency are the following: if teachers get involved in special correctional programs for the students showing some of the above listed characteristics; educating the people who want to become parents and showing them the necessity to attend antenatal infant psychology courses; government involvement through financial support and providing facilities in order to deal with such cases; an information campaign and society involvement on delinquency problems.

In any society, social control is not only a means of coercion and legal sanctions, but also a procedure to induce such behaviours that stimulate desirable and legitimate lines of conduct.

Desirable and legitimate behaviors include: manners, customs, traditions, and art, ethics, personal ideals and gestures (flattery, opprobrium etc.).

Social control processes aim at social and moral integration. Positive social control requires knowledge and understanding of the values, norms and rules of social coexistence by each individual. Negative social control is based on the individual’s fears that he / she will be punished for non-compliance or violation of social norms and rules.

Organized control can be exercised by the society in its whole thorough bodies and professional organizations, social or belonging to the state, and the unorganized control is exerted by the belonging groups. Formal Control is achieved by legal, moral and administrative laws and regulations. Informal control is achieved through customs and traditions.

2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Objectives of the study are as follows: knowing the dimensions and characteristics of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon in the Romanian society, after the socio-political change in 1989; characterization of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon in Romania; identification of the social causes and factors of juvenile delinquency in our country; analysis of the vindictory sanctions applied to the delinquent minors for the identification of the adequate measures that help decreasing the number of infants involved and the new aspects of the crimes.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

We applied as research methods: case study elaborated within the Rehabilitation Centre for Minors in Găești: analysis of the prisoners’ files, questionnaires, minors’ interviews, analysis of the specific programs accomplished by

means of specialized interventions into the specified institution; analysis on delinquent behaviours among the minors; forms of delinquency; types of offences made by the juvenile delinquents.

The Rehabilitation Centre for Minors from Găești has been functioning since 1959. The structure of the educational process is adapted to the new conditions, but following the same main objectives: continuing studies at school; qualifications in vocational schools or short courses; carrying out the educational, cultural, artistic and sports activities to promote a social integration after release.

After the events of December 1989, the rehabilitation of the juveniles bears major changes in order to adapt to the new demands regarding the democratization of the prison system. From now on, it has become possible to: organize activities outside the rehabilitation center; connect with the civil society, which is becoming more and more evident; some institutions and associations that protect the minors can carry out direct protection activities within the penitentiary.

After 1995, the center has established experimentally a Bureau of Probation, with all its own human and material resources.

The Functions of the Rehabilitation Center for Minors in Găești are: institutional care and supervision; rehabilitation, socializing and personal development of minors; family and social integration; professional training and orientation; monitoring and evaluation.

The specialized intervention is given by a team of specialists (psychologist, sociologist, priest, social worker, physician, educator) and consists in carrying out specific programs:

„ Chiar și acum începe drumul tău spre libertate” (Even now, your way towards freedom unfolds)- institutional adapting program; „ Fii atent... nu dependent” (Be attentive, not addictive)- programme for former drug or hallucinogenic substance users; the program for the prevention/diminishing violence; the special program for minors in a separated room to learn how to control anger, to acquire communication and self-learning skills or the positive thinking.

Stages of the research: We established the connection with the management of the Rehabilitation Center for Minors from Găești, we analyzed the records of the former convicts, we made questionnaire researching, we interviewed some minors. By analyzing the files we had the possibility to know the social situation of the juvenile delinquents. The second step was the questionnaires' research on control group. The studied group of minors was comprised of 45 people aged between: 15-18 years old, both genders, from both the rural and urban environment, we tried to identify the differences in attitudes and the real possibility that these features may influence the deviant behavior of the young people. Participation in the study was voluntary, without exerting any pressure upon the questionnaires. The questionnaires were filled in personally by investigative staff under discretion without the presence of another person or member of the staff. The questions were formulated so as to

provide a maximum amount of information. The number of questions was kept to a minimum in order to maintain the focus and the interest of the questionnaires.

Biological characteristics of the studied group: the interviewed group is made up of 88.9% boys and 11.1% girls. This percentage mostly corresponds to the gender structure of the young people institutionalized in The re-education centre for minors. Moreover, the population institutionalized in this type of institutions, including penitentiaries, is generally made of males.

The category of age was between 15-18 years old. The middle intervals, 16 years old with 40.0% and 17 years old with 48.9%, totalizing almost half of the group members, are majority, as comparing to the other age group: 15 years old, with 6.7% and 18 years old, with 4.4%. This distribution is justified by the fact that at the age of 18, the young people are externalized, and age 15 is the lowest, being the age of onset in the criminal activity. The ages with a stronger criminal activity and falling in casuistry of the teenagers are between 16-17 years old, reflected in the age structure of this group too.

If analyzing the low level of education, we can estimate that the young people from this group were not socialized, they abandoned school at an early age, being members of street gangs, as they declare.

The lack of education is closely related to the professional profile. Therefore, none of the young people is qualified. This aggravates their social status by excluding them from the labor market or the accepting the unqualified and low-paid ones in the field of physical work. If analyzing the categories of responses it can be noticed their preference for physical work, outdoors, and avoiding the activities that require intellectual effort.

All group members are at their first conviction, which favors full reintegration action due to the potential offered by the young age and isolation of recidivist offenders. School attending during the institutionalization offers the possibility of a return into the social life.

60% of the young people come from the urban areas and 40% of them from the rural areas. Among these, 75.6% were brought up in complete families up until their arresting, 20.0% were brought up in single-parent families – 13.3% were brought up only by their mother, 6.7% are under the care of their father and 4.4% were brought up by their grandparents.

The Rehabilitation Centre for Minors from Găești supports the young people through complex educational activities, social assistance and rehabilitation programmes and regards the finality of all these activities by: building the capacity to reflect on the world, to solve basic problems; inter-connection with the acquired knowledge; valuing the personal examples for social integration; development of the capacity of active integration in different groups: family, social environment, professional, friends etc.; development of the essential functional skills for the school success; communication, critical thinking when making decisions; constructing one's personal autonomy.

4 FINDINGS

In the research conducted at the Rehabilitation Center for Minors from Gaesti, the analysis of the juvenile offenders' files, after the questionnaires and the semi-structured individual method of interviewing the juvenile offenders who proved a high level of thrills searching and after the performed case studies, the following conclusions have been drawn: most of the surveyed minors committed the offense in the urban areas; as regarding the atmosphere of the family, there is a significant difference between those who are delinquents and those who are not; where juvenile delinquents grew up in an improper family environment, they committed more crimes; in committing the crime, the reference group had an important role; very often the crimes are committed by juvenile offenders under the influence of alcohol and drugs; very often juvenile offenders are searching for thrills; they are less sociable, especially with members of the control group; thrill seeking, self-control, impulsiveness are aspects that characterize the activity of juvenile delinquency.

Generally, juvenile offenders are aware of the illegality of the committed acts, of the risk posed by each delinquent action. In most cases, juvenile offenders are very good at making decisions, they always think about the possible actions of the others and make their decisions based on that thing.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The mentioned family environment explains in a great extent the social failure of the young people: lack of family support; malfunctioning of the partnership between school and family; the tensioned atmosphere inside the family. The interviewed group in this case is an acknowledgment of the sociological theories on the social learning of delinquency: drugs abuse; lack of qualification; school abandon; confusions when interpreting the surrounding reality; interesting structure in self-perception; young people's personality; social labelling; other people's mistrust.

The crime prevention can be addressed on three levels, given the action and its recipient:- the first level is that of the offender, the second one is that of the victim, the third one considers the opportunities for committing the crime.

We can talk about primary, secondary and tertiary prevention models. Primary prevention includes ways that strengthen the feeling of security of the population. Secondary prevention belongs to the realm of strategy about who committed the crime and the victim. Tertiary prevention contains institutional reactions caused by the offense against the criminal and the victims, and in terms of opportunities to commit a delinquency, it is constituted of direct, concrete mechanisms, for the removal of the possible recurrence of crime in dangerous areas.

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