

Evaluation of Seminar

Police Role in Juvenile Delinquency

(held Canberra, 9th-13th August 1976)

By *C. R. BEVAN and **M. A. KINGSHOTT

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The authors of this paper have pointed out that whilst the seminar is old, the evaluation is not. The evaluating exercises were performed at time of seminar and computer print-outs done shortly afterwards but pressure of other duties has made it impracticable for them to spend enough time to interpret computer results until more recently. — Editor.

INTRODUCTION

From 9th-13th August 1976, the Institute conducted a seminar bearing the title "Police Role in Juvenile Delinquency" which was attended by police officers nominated from each State and Territory, navy police, probation officers from Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria, a court officer from the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Affairs and a magistrate from the Australian Capital Territory.

The programme consisted of eight papers followed by plenary discussions, small group workshops, an open forum and one panel discussion.

Papers were presented by the Commissioner of the A.C.T. Police, other high ranking police officers, the Assistant Director (Training) and the Assistant Director (Research) of the Australian Institute of Criminology, and the Senior Research Officer, Department of Youth and Community Affairs, New South Wales.

The Training Division of the Australian Institute of Criminology is responsible for the staging and direction of seminars, workshops, training courses, consultations, etc., involving all professions concerned with crime prevention and control, the disposition and treatment of offenders and their after care, law enforcement, court management, forensic psychiatry and psychological and social welfare services. Devising and practising reliable and valid means of assessing the worth of these exercises to participants, to the Institute and to criminal justice administrators is of much concern to the Training Division.

As it is judged to be of doubtful value to distribute questionnaires to participants at the close of the meeting seeking their assessment of its worth, other evaluative measures are being tried.

What seems most significant in assessing the worth of any seminar is a comparison of the attitudes, sentiments and information surrounding the theme of the meeting as expressed by participants at the commencement of the seminar with their perceptions at its conclusion. In this way some evaluation of the effectiveness of input at the seminar can be attempted. For this reason at this seminar participants were asked to respond to two exercises — one presented at the beginning of the seminar, and the other mailed to them after its conclusion.

PROCEDURE AND RESULTS

EXERCISE 1 required participants at the start of the seminar to suggest measures that could reduce delinquency. The seven most frequently suggested can be summarised in the following way:

- (1) Greater responsibility should be taken by schools for total education for living, for example, in giving information about legal and human relationships.
- (2) Recreational and child care facilities should be increased.
- (3) Training and involvement of police in juvenile delinquency matters should be increased.



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- (4) All concerned should become more involved with parents of delinquents.
- (5) The number of social workers involved in the juvenile delinquency area should be increased.
- (6) Probation services for juveniles should be expanded.
- (7) TV programmes should be more strictly controlled.

EXERCISE 2 was conducted at the conclusion of the seminar, and requested participants again to offer suggestions as in **Exercise 1**. The intention was to compare responses to each exercise and to note any change in participants' choices of measures at the beginning and end of the seminar.

The six measures most favoured at the end of the seminar were:

- (1) Schools and teachers should assume greater responsibility for juvenile crime prevention and correction.
- (2) Communication and mutual involvement between police, community and other agencies should be increased.
- (3) Juvenile Aid Panels should be uniformly instituted throughout all States and Territories.
- (4) A concerted effort to train and inform parents of their role, responsibilities, etc. should be undertaken.
- (5) Special police training in juvenile work should be increased.
- (6) The number of probation and welfare officers and counsellors for young people and school children should be increased.

The results of these exercises were analysed in terms of the frequency with which participants suggested each of the measures as being likely to be more effective than any, or some, or all, of the other measures suggested for controlling delinquency. Table 1 indicates the proportion of the 28 seminar participants who, at the beginning of the seminar, suggested methods which were subsequently summarised under the categories (or measures) numbered one to seven in terms of their relative merits in attempting to control juvenile delinquency.

Table 2 indicates those measures which participants, at the conclusion of the seminar, suggested as most likely to be effective in attempting to control juvenile delinquency, and shows the relative merits of each of these measures as far as participants were concerned.

It appears from the results of these exercises, as set out in Tables 1 and 2, that as the seminar progressed participants became more critical of the relative worth of the different measures they had suggested at the seminar's commencement.

This can be deduced from the fact that, at the start of the seminar, fewer participants were willing to say that any one measure would not be as effective as any other, whereas at its conclusion a percentage of participants considered that each measure suggested would be less effective than any of the others. Additionally, at the seminar's conclusion, more participants considered that each measure would be more effective than any other.

In other words, after they had listened to the speakers and taken part in workshops and discussions, a larger percentage of participants were prepared to reject the purported efficacy of measures initially suggested. In similar vein, not one participant was willing to state that any one measure suggested would be less effective than *all* of the others.

The clearest and most comparable example of this is item No. 4 on each table — the involvement of police and other agencies in training parents in their role and responsibilities in the problem of juvenile delinquency. By looking at Tables 3 and 4 it can be seen that at the beginning of the seminar 85.71% (or 24) of the participants considered that police and other agencies' involvement of the kind suggested would be more effective than at least four of the other measures suggested, and the remaining 14.28% (or 4) considered that this type of involvement would be less effective than four other measures, whereas at the seminar's conclusion, 60.72% (or 17) of the participants considered that such increased involvement would be *less* effective than four other measures originally suggested, and only 39.29% (or 11) maintained that such involvement with parents would be more effective than any four of the other measures originally suggested. It is feasible, though not provable, that 46% of participants changed their minds about this measure as a result of seminar input.

Another interesting result was participants' attitudes concerning the role played by schools in education for living and in accepting greater responsibility for juvenile crime prevention. At the seminar's commencement, 67.86% (or 19) considered that greater school involvement would be more effective than four other measures, but at its conclusion 75% (or 21) considered that this would be less effective than four other measures in reducing delinquency. As the two concepts are not exactly synonymous, it may not be entirely fair to judge this result as an almost complete reversal of opinion — although it is tempting to do so.

Similarly, although 46.43% (or 13) of seminar participants originally considered that an increase in special police training for juvenile work would be less effective than four other measures, this percentage had risen to 85.71% (or 24) at the seminar's conclusion — i.e. fewer participants felt confident at the end of the seminar that an upgrading of police training could effectively control delinquency.

It is also interesting to note that although 14.28% (or 4) of seminar participants originally considered that stricter control of TV programmes would be more efficacious in combating delinquency than four other measures suggested, at the conclusion of the seminar this measure received so little mention as to warrant its exclusion from the list of the six measures most favoured by participants.

One of the most significant results that can be directly related to input at the seminar was the fact that at its conclusion 25% (or 7) of the participants suggested that the institution of uniform juvenile aid panels throughout all States and Territories would be a more effective measure than four others, while only 14.29% (or 4) considered that this would be less effective than any other measure. The significance of this finding is that juvenile aid panels were not suggested by any participant at the beginning of the seminar as being an effective measure for controlling delinquency.

Another result worth noting is the attitude of participants towards an expansion of probation, welfare, counselling and social workers' services for children and young people. Items 5 and 6 in Table 3 indicate that, at best, at the beginning of the seminar, participants considered such a move to have very doubtful value in controlling juvenile crime (i.e. most thought that it would be less effective than four of the other measures suggested). This attitude was maintained throughout the seminar — as Item 6 in Table 4 indicates.

In addition to the above-mentioned comparisons of the most frequent suggestions made by participants at the seminar's beginning, the raw data from both exercises revealed that while initially three participants suggested that more punitive and officially-oriented action by courts would be effective in controlling juvenile crime, 13 participants (46%) after the seminar's conclusion considered that *legislation* for firmer action by courts in respect of children and parents, where appropriate, would be an effective measure in controlling or preventing delinquency.

A final point of interest is the difference in the spread of responses given by participants at the beginning and end of the seminar. Exercise 1 revealed 24 distinct categories of response, compared with 10 distinct categories in Exercise 2. This result confirms the conclusion that participants had become more discerning of the measures available for preventing or controlling juvenile crime as the seminar progressed. Although each measure, in isolation, may have been considered less efficacious than all others, participants appear to have combined individual measures to seek a more cohesive solution to the problem.

CONCLUSIONS

It seems from the data collected that participants came to the seminar with relatively strong notions about the effectiveness of various individual methods available for controlling or preventing juvenile crime. The fact that these opinions were not so strongly expressed after the seminar's conclusion indicates that participants may have become more aware of the uncertain nature and diversity of causes of juvenile delinquency, and less confident of individual measures previously suggested for its prevention or control. If uncertainty of this type results in a less fragmented approach to problems of juvenile offending, and a move to inter-disciplinary or inter-agency efforts to solve them, it indicates an increasing acceptance of a need for co-operation which deserves encouragement. If the seminar material engendered or initiated such a critical approach to the problems involved in preventing or correcting juvenile crime, then the seminar's value to participants, to their employers, and to the recipients of their services can be assumed.

PAPERS PRESENTED

- "A New Look at Police — Juvenile Relations" by R. A. Wilson.
- "Socialisation — The Family" by C. R. Bevan.
- "Current Trends in Delinquency Research" by D. Biles.
- "Trends in Juvenile Delinquency" by J. Kraus.
- "How Effective are Court Imposed Measures?" by J. Kraus.
- "Police Intervention in Juvenile Delinquency in Queensland" by K. J. Hoggett.
- "Juvenile Delinquency in the Australian Capital Territory" by W. Nicholl.
- "Juvenile Aid Panels in South Australia" by S. N. Smith.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Mr. C. R. Bevan, Assistant Director (Training), Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

Visiting Scholar

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Participants

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Senior Constable I. E. Blowers, Queensland Police Department, Southport, Queensland.

Inspector M. Bruce, Police College, Victoria Police.

Inspector R. Chalker, Northern Territory Police Force.

Detective Sergeant A. J. Dau, Australian Capital Territory Police Force, Canberra.

Senior Sergeant J. P. Flynn, Sub-Officers' College, Victoria Police.

M.P. Constable D. Gleeson, Northern Territory Police Force.

Policewoman Constable E. A. Harrison, Commonwealth Police Force, New South Wales.

TABLE 1

<i>EXERCISE 1</i>	<i>Not as effective as any other measure</i>	<i>More effective than one other measure</i>	<i>More effective than two other measures</i>	<i>More effective than three other measures</i>	<i>More effective than four other measures</i>	<i>More effective than five other measures</i>	<i>More effective than any other measure</i>
1. Schools should educate for living	None	None	3.57% (1)	28.57% (8)	25% (7)	21.43% (6)	21.43% (6)
2. Upgrade recreational and child care facilities	7.14% (2)	35.71% (10)	25% (7)	21.43% (6)	7.14% (2)	3.57% (1)	None
3. Upgrade police training and involvement with juveniles	3.57% (1)	7.14% (2)	10.71% (3)	32.14% (9)	17.86% (5)	28.57% (8)	None
4. Increase involvement of agencies with parents of delinquents	None	None	7.14% (2)	7.14% (2)	10.71% (3)	32.14% (9)	42.86% (12)
5. Increase the number of social workers for juveniles	10.71% (3)	7.14% (2)	21.43% (6)	14.29% (4)	14.29% (4)	28.57% (8)	3.57% (1)
6. Expand probation services	14.29% (4)	32.14% (9)	17.86% (5)	17.86% (5)	14.29% (4)	None	3.57% (1)
7. Expand control of TV programmes	39.29% (11)	14.29% (4)	17.86% (5)	14.29% (4)	10.71% (3)	None	3.57% (1)

TABLE 2

<i>EXERCISE 2</i>	<i>Not as effective as any other measure</i>	<i>More effective than one other measure</i>	<i>More effective than two other measures</i>	<i>More effective than three other measures</i>	<i>More effective than four other measures</i>	<i>More effective than any other measure</i>
1. Schools should assume greater responsibility for juvenile crime prevention and correction	7.14% (2)	21.43% (6)	14.29% (4)	32.14% (9)	7.14% (2)	17.86% (5)
2. Increase communication and involvement between police, community and other agencies	7.14% (2)	7.14% (2)	25% (7)	14.29% (4)	35.71% (10)	10.71% (3)
3. Institute uniform juvenile aid panels throughout all States and Territories	14.29% (4)	35.71% (10)	10.71% (3)	14.29% (4)	10.71% (3)	14.29% (4)
4. Increase education and training of police for juvenile work	3.57% (8)	14.29% (7)	28.57% (7)	14.29% (2)	17.86% (2)	21.43% (2)
6. Increase probation, welfare and counselling staff for school children and young people	10.71% (3)	10.71% (3)	25% (7)	21.43% (6)	17.86% (5)	14.29% (4)

TABLE 3

EXERCISE 1

Measures suggested by participants at commencement of seminar	<i>Not as effective as four other measures</i>	<i>More effective than four other measures</i>
1. Schools should educate for living	32.14% (9)	67.86% (19)
2. Upgrade recreational and child care facilities	89.28% (25)	10.71% (3)
3. Upgrade police training and involvement with juveniles	53.56% (15)	46.43% (13)
4. Increase involvement of agencies with parents of delinquents	14.28% (4)	85.71% (24)
5. Increase the number of social workers for juveniles	53.57% (15)	46.43% (13)
6. Expand probation services	82.15% (23)	17.86% (5)
7. Increase control of TV programmes	85.73% (24)	14.28% (4)

EXERCISE 2

TABLE 4

Measures suggested by participants at conclusion of seminar	<i>Not as effective as four other measures</i>	<i>More effective than four other measures</i>
1. Schools should assume greater responsibility for juvenile crime prevention and correction	75% (21)	25% (7)
2. Increase communication and involvement between police, community and other agencies	53.57% (15)	46.42% (13)
3. Institute uniform juvenile aid panels throughout all States and Territories	75% (21)	25% (7)
4. Increase education and training of parents re their role and responsibilities	60.72% (17)	39.29% (11)
5. Increase special training of police for juvenile work	85.71% (24)	14.28% (4)
6. Increase probation, welfare and counselling staff for school children and young people	67.85% (19)	32.15% (9)

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