

Further Training Pays Off: The Beccaria Qualifying Programme

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Summary

The Council for Crime Prevention of Lower Saxony has been offering the Beccaria Qualifying Programme for players in the field of crime prevention since 2008. This further training course is unique in Germany. It imparts basic and specialist knowledge for work in the field of crime prevention. On 20 February 2009, the first 21 participants completed the course successfully and were awarded the degree "Crime Prevention Specialist".

Initial Situation

Crime prevention is a task related to society as a whole – this is certainly no new insight. The subject of prevention concerns many people with various career histories, many professions and institutions. Those active in the field of crime prevention work in various spheres of action: prevention committees, youth services, social work, school, preschool area, police, legal authorities, politics, press/media, medical area / public health sector, sport, business, or in science. Accordingly, they are teachers, police officers, social workers, pedagogues, sociologists, criminologists, members of the legal profession, administrators, certified child care specialists, actors/actresses, facilitators or supervisors. Thus, it is hardly surprising that all the people active in the aforementioned professions have different career histories. All of them have completed one or several vocational or professional training(s) - they may have studied social pedagogy, completed mediation training or a police training course or started an administrative career.

They do, however, not have any special prevention training because such a training course does not exist yet. There is neither any "traditional access", nor any "typical" career path, let alone any training in crime prevention that provides the participants with the qualifications required to work in this complex field. What we do have are many experts in this field. They are characterized by a strong commitment and

identification with their work, frequently by high idealism and often by maximum dedication. Additionally, they are convinced about what they are doing – after all, it is all about forestalling crime or deviant behaviour and advocating the good actively.

However, does that suffice, or does it mean that prevention can be practised by (almost) anybody, even by those without any specific prevention training? Why is there - even though crime prevention is enjoying increasing importance – no specific training? This is a question asked by Wibke Steffen¹ in this journal in 2002. She stated "... that a large number of people 'bustle around' in the field of crime prevention for whom this task is not a traditional one. Particularly with locally based prevention committees, the large potential of volunteers corresponds to an (almost) equally large deficit in theoretical and methodical "know-how". However, even with the traditional crime prevention agencies – police and legal authorities – one must not simply assume that the sound knowledge and skills required for this kind of work exist...." Steffen criticises the assumption that "anybody could do prevention work, and that no special training or aptitude were required for it. However, not every 'police officer' is able to do prevention work and neither is 'any other prevention agency', quasi 'instinctively', 'innately' able to do this kind of work – on the contrary, prevention work, like any other qualitatively demanding activity requires sound basic and further training." Even at that time, the overall topic of the journal *forum kriminalprävention* was "Basic and Further Training."² Paul Ekblom also points out that there is a training deficit in crime prevention.³ "No other profession (public health or architecture, for example) would send out its practitioners into the field and expect them to deliver with such limited conceptual resources!"

High-quality crime prevention requires – just like other fields of action – certain specialist knowledge and skills, for example the ability to act systematically and to plan and implement measures, projects or programmes in such a way that they are

¹ Steffen, 2002, pp. 15-16

² *forum kriminalprävention*, 2002, issue, 5, p. 15ff.

³ Ekblom, 2002, p. 12

verifiable. This, in turn, requires crime prevention knowledge such as knowledge of criminological and sociological theories. It does not suffice to identify the crime problem x at the place y and to give a precise description of it. In order to be able to explain a problem that has been identified, it is necessary to take into account the relevant theoretical insights, scientific and/or empirical findings. The conditions of origin of the problem must be analysed,⁴ influencing factors (such as risk and protective factors) must be specified and taken into consideration. Project objectives and target groups must be defined, with the following questions arising: Who do we want to reach? What do we want to reach? How can we reach it? How can we measure it (success criteria)? Methodical know-how, namely knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methods, is a prerequisite for reviewing the implementation of the measures and determining whether the objectives have been reached. This expertise is not always available.

One way to obtain this kind of knowledge is to take part in a targeted *qualification measure*, such as the Beccaria Qualifying Programme,⁵ that takes into account the different starting levels and requirements of the crime prevention workers and contributes to increasing their competences and improving their professional practice.

In the following, the Beccaria Qualifying Programme will be discussed. This specific further training offer was developed by the Council for Crime Prevention of Lower Saxony / Lower Saxony Ministry of Justice within the context of an EU-project⁶ (2005-2007).

The Beccaria Qualifying Programme Crime Prevention

View of the further training course from the perspective of the organizers

⁴ Thus the resolution of the United Nations 2002 says: "Crime prevention strategies, policies, programmes and actions should be based on a broad multidisciplinary foundation of knowledge about crime problems, their multiple causes and promising and proven practices." United Nations, Resolution 2002 / 13; p. 5

⁵ By now there are numerous seminars and further training offers, ranging from mediation and conflict arbitration via domestic violence and stalking to school and youth violence. However, the seminars and courses offered are related to specific tasks, projects and topics.

⁶The programme was realized with financial support from the AGIS-programme of the European Commission, in cooperation with eight European partner organisations.

The first round started in February 2008. One year later, the first 21 graduates were holding their “Crime Prevention Specialist” certificates in their hands. And in March 2009, the second round of the Beccaria Qualifying Programme kicked off.⁷ All the participants share one thing: they have relevant practical experience in the field of crime prevention. They work in such diverse areas as prevention theatre, local prevention council, state prevention council, victim aid, regional Criminal Investigation Department, Federal Police, school or in safety training

Modules

The further training course includes four consecutive modules which can either be booked individually or as a complete package:

Module 1: Criminology, module 2: Crime Prevention, module 3: Project Management and the Module 4: Practical Project Work. Each of the modules comprises two weekends. The module Practical Project Work includes four one-day training sessions. As the training course is designed as an extra-occupational course, the respective tutorials will start at noon on a Friday and end on Saturday afternoon.

The teaching materials the participants are provided with consist of a reader and additionally of downloadable files from an Internet forum they have exclusive access to. If required, apart from the teaching materials, this forum offers the chance to exchange and discuss ideas.

Training objectives from the perspective of the organizers

⁷ Further information at: www.beccaria.de and www.lpr.niedersachsen.de

The knowledge imparted is, on the one hand, scientifically substantiated, and on the other hand it is characterized by practical relevance. Thus, the acquired knowledge can be integrated into everyday prevention work.

In the module Criminology, the participants get acquainted with the most important basic concepts and the basics of the history of criminology. Among other things, the most well-known crime theories are presented to them. Following this, they should be in a position to critically analyse theories, to use crime statistics (e.g. PKS [police crime statistics]) for their work in crime prevention and they should have an idea of research on unreported crime. After completing the Crime Prevention module, the participants should be qualified to critically analyse and evaluate prevention measures on the basis of their experience and knowledge. It is the objective of the module Project Management to enable the participants to systematically and comprehensibly plan, implement and evaluate projects. The foremost objective of the fourth and last module Practical Project Work is for the participants to prove that they are able to apply the knowledge they acquired (criminology, crime prevention and project management) in practice. Here, this application of the acquired knowledge plays a predominant role.

After completing the Beccaria Qualifying Programme the participants should be able to:

- Develop prevention measures, taking into account the latest scientific findings and data.
- Critically evaluate expert information (articles published in specialist journals, police crime statistics, research results);
- Verify the effectiveness of prevention measures (performance of a before-after comparison, knowledge of qualitative and quantitative procedures);
- Manage or chair prevention committees and work groups.
- Manage projects (project management, public relations work, networking etc.), including the planning and management of human, financial and material resources, as well as fund-raising.

As the qualifying programme is continuously and systematically developed, there will be, among other things, at the end of the respective module a written survey of the participants. The participants will evaluate the qualifying programme in three respects: 1. the trainers (professionally / didactically), 2. the module (its contents) and 3. the general conditions.

Additional Effects

Apart from the transfer of knowledge, the qualifying programme has some additional effects. Here the exchange of knowledge and ideas among experts from very diverse fields of action is of utmost importance. During the breaks or in the evenings the participants use the chance to think outside the box and to look into the positions of different professions and, as the case may be, to establish networks. This way, the qualifying programme helps establish a contact network among the participants.

Those having completed the first round already have a new target: they are planning to establish an alumni network. Thus, the cooperative relationships between and the professional exchange among the institutions with diverse disciplinary backgrounds are to be continued beyond the completed training course.

View of the further training from the perspective of the graduates

Why do people take part in the qualifying programme? What is their motivation? Asked about his motivation, Jürgen Fais from ParaVida (Cologne) replies: *“It was my intention to expand and deepen [my] knowledge of criminology and crime prevention, to take a scientific approach to the topic, get an overview of its interdisciplinarity, its compact content, how it can be communicated.”*

How did the participants benefit from the qualifying programme? Do the sketched qualification objectives have any practical relevance? How can “Crime Prevention Specialists” implement the acquired knowledge in their everyday work?

Thomas Flocken, from the acting collective *Neues Schauspiel Lüneburg* sees very concrete benefits for his own work:

“To me the special quality of the programme is based on the fact that it is not simply a mere knowledge transfer. Instead, the lecturers encouraged us constantly to take a critical approach towards our work and ourselves.

I have been able to learn a lot for my own (everyday) work - if nothing else, because it has always been possible to relate the educational contents with our own experience. This way, our project planning has been optimised.

However, the further training programme has also encouraged me to take a more assertive stance when it comes to legitimizing our work in front of the relevant decision makers and making our case for better conditions to achieve success.“

Jürgen Fais draws a positive conclusion: *“The Beccaria Qualifying Programme keeps its promises. It offers a compact overview of the highly complex topics of criminology and (crime) prevention. It focuses on practical implementability. The lecturers have high expertise in theory and practice. Methodically, the modules are structured in such a way that the participants with their varied backgrounds can benefit from each other’s knowledge. Conclusion: It is more than just felicitous and absolutely recommendable“.*

That’s the way it is supposed to be! Especially since it was kick-off time for the second round of the Beccaria Qualifying Programme in March 2009.

Awarding the certificates to the first graduates of the Beccaria Qualifying Programme



The prevention experts on 20 February 2009

Quintessence

Quality assurance and improvement in crime prevention requires:

1. Quality conscious thinking and acting, i.e. developing an evaluation culture.
2. Systematic approach, i.e. focusing on quality criteria.
3. Interdisciplinarity
4. Marketing
5. Networking
6. Sustainability
7. Professionalism by qualification

Continuous prevention and intervention work is a prerequisite for any effective and sustainable crime prevention. If we want continuance and sustainability which implies “gearing one’s present actions to securing the future in the long term“,

1. The necessary financial, human and time resources need to be provided and
2. Successful prevention approaches and projects need to be transformed into standard offers.

“Crime prevention requires adequate resources, including funding for structures and activities, in order to be sustained”, it says in the United Nations resolution.⁸ Concerning this point, the politicians are in demand. In addition to the numerous prerequisite factors (such as basic understanding, attitude, openness and self-criticism, clear professional responsibilities, good co-operation, networking competencies, interdisciplinary co-operation, transparency), prevention work above all requires expert knowledge to be effective. This knowledge can be acquired through training. The Beccaria Qualifying Programme is one of the ways to obtain more professionalism. Further training is important and it pays off.

Literature

Eklom, P. (2002): European Crime Prevention Network – towards a Logic Model and Mission Statement. Vision of 1 July 2002, S. 11

Steffen, W. (2002): forum kriminalprävention, issue 5, p. 15ff

United Nations (2002): Extract from Resolution 2002/13. Action to Promote Effective Crime Prevention. New York, 24 July 2002

⁸ Resolution 2002/13, p. 5