Wangedrag van debiele minderjarigen
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SUMMARY

This dissertation aims at a better understanding of the connection between mental deficiency and criminality by a comparison of the misbehaviour of feeble-minded minors with that of normal children. A detailed discussion of this subject is wanting both in Dutch and foreign literature.

The dossiers concerning the children of „Groot-Emaus“, a large Protestant institution for feeble-minded minors in the village of Ermelo (province of Gelderland), formed the material for my inquiry. Besides some children who have been placed there by their parents or the municipal authorities admittance is given to:

a. children whose parents have been relieved from parental authority by the county-court on account of unfitness or inability to educate their children;
b. children whose parents have been deprived by the county-court of their parental authority on account of serious neglect of their children, abuse of parental authority or bad conduct;
c. children who have been committed to the care of the Government by the juvenile court on account of committing penal offences.

Besides the latter also many others of the children had seriously misbehaved before being admitted to „Groot-Emaus“.

In order to eliminate all influences of the war as well as of the pre-war tensions, only the data of the children who were present in this institution on the 31st of December 1937 have been used.

Method. The data have been worked up statistically and an explanation of the results has been deduced from our knowledge of the physical and psychical development, the intellectual, emotional and volitional life of the feeble-minded child.

Subdivision.

A. An investigation into the local origin of the children indicates that per 100,000 inhabitants in towns, 1.9 from middle-sized towns, 1.5 from the country. As neither number of mentally deficient nor those coming from the country has been a difference cannot be indicated.

B. The misconduct of I have compared the data between investigations made with regard to not feeble-minded. This comparison of exclusively delinquent boys of governableness at home, vagrancy, physical injury, and stealing proved to be less frequent for boys than with exclusively delinquent boys than with exclusively delinquent girls. Contrary to delinquent girls.

I have also examined the misconduct and the connection with the local origin of the children.

C. Both mentally deficient into serious misconduct at a younger age. A special study has been the nature of their misconduct and their local origin. The average
indicates that per 100,000 inhabitants 4.6 children came from large towns, 1.9 from middle-sized towns, 2.3 from small towns, and 1.3 from the country. As neither the general proportion between the number of mentally deficient children coming from the towns and those coming from the country nor the general proportion between the number of delinquents coming from the towns and those coming from the country has been ascertained, the causes of the above differences cannot be indicated with certainty.

B. The misconduct of the children showed much variety. I have compared the data bearing upon this subject with those of investigations made with regard to delinquent juveniles who were not feeble-minded. This comparison led to the result that the misconduct of feeble-minded delinquent boys as compared with that of exclusively delinquent boys presented a higher degree of un-governableness at home, vagrancy, begging, mischief and destruction, arson, physical injury, and sexual misbehaviour. Truancy and stealing proved to be less frequent with feeble-minded delinquent boys than with exclusively delinquent boys. Ungovernableness at home, vagrancy, begging, and offences against property were more prevalent for feeble-minded delinquent girls than for exclusively delinquent girls. Contrary to expectation, sexual misbehaviour of feeble-minded delinquent girls did not exceed that of exclusively delinquent girls.

I have also examined the combinations of the various kinds of misconduct and the connection between the nature of the misconduct and the local origin of the children.

C. Both mentally deficient boys and mentally deficient girls fall into serious misconduct at an earlier age than normal boys and girls. A special study has been devoted to the connection between the age at which the children were admitted to „Groot-Emaus” and the nature of their misconduct, as well as that between this age and their local origin. The average age of admittance is over one year
lower for children of the towns than for children of the country. This difference may be caused by the fact that in the former case the responsible authorities are sooner interfering.

D. Home conditions have been analysed as follows:

(1) Broken homes (as a consequence of the death of one or both parents, admission to a lunatic asylum, divorce, illegitimate birth) and (2) misconduct of the parents (alcoholism, criminality and sexual misconduct) were not more frequent for feeble-minded delinquent children than for exclusively delinquent juveniles.

(3) With regard to the cultural standard and the economic status of the family (judged from the occupation of the father) the feeble-minded delinquent juveniles did not prove to be in a worse position either.

(4) On the other hand, psychical defects (mental deficiency, insanity, epilepsy, nervousness and suicidal tendencies) were more prevalent among parents of feeble-minded delinquent children than among those of exclusively feeble-minded and those of exclusively delinquent juveniles.

(5) The feeble-minded delinquent boys came, on an average, from equally large families as the normal delinquent boys, the feeble-minded delinquent girls even from smaller families than the normal delinquent girls. However, not to much weight should be attached to these results, because our data do not seem to correspond exactly with the facts.

It has repeatedly been observed that a greater proportion of mentally deficient juveniles (especially feeble-minded ones) is found among delinquent children than among youth in general. As according to the above mentioned results, this higher rate of delinquency among feeble-minded children cannot be ascribed to more unfavourable home conditions, it must be explained by their psychical constitution which predisposes them to asocial and antisocial acts.
The results of this inquiry lead to the following practical consequences.

(1) More co-operation is needed among all persons and authorities who come into contact with the feeble-minded child, such as the family, the school, youth-associations, after-care institutions for the feeble-minded, Child Guidance Clinics, the police, the „Voogdijraad” (Guardianship Council, i.e. minors protection board) and the juvenile court. This may be achieved by organizing, both for ordinary schools and schools for feeble-minded children, meetings of parents, especially devoted to the moral dangers menacing the feeble-minded child; furthermore by attaching a „visiting teacher” to schools for feeble-minded children and by extending the after-care for the mentally deficient.

(2) The „Voogdijraad” should inform the court more fully about the physical and psychical condition of the children whose parents are to be relieved from or deprived of their parental authority (see p. 244, a and b).

(3) A deprival of parental authority against the parent’s will and a provisory deprival should be made possible by the law.

(4) It is most desirable to increase the number of institutions, especially destined for feeble-minded children.

(5) In the large towns homes for feeble-minded working boys and homes for feeble-minded working girls should be founded.

(6) A proper after-care is necessary for feeble-minded juveniles who have just left an institution, a foster home or a home for working juveniles.

(7) A guardianship for adults who, owing to feeble-mindedness, cannot look after their own interests, forms a satisfactory solution for those feeble-minded who, when coming of age, are still deemed unfit for social independency.