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Performance-Based Standards for Juvenile Corrections

Doris Layton MacKenzie, Gaylene J. Styve, and Angela R. Gover

Total quality management (TQM) has revolutionized business, and some of its components can be applied to corrections. The importance of information for developing performance-based standards is obvious. Much more difficult is the process of deciding what information to obtain and how to use it. In the area of juvenile corrections, information about the conditions or environments of juvenile facilities and how these conditions are associated with intermediate and long-term outcomes will be invaluable in developing performance-based standards.

Key words: conditions of confinement, corrections, juvenile, performance-based standards, total quality management

RECIDIVISM RATES have long served as the critical measure for evaluating the effectiveness of correctional programs. Yet, few corrections practitioners believe that recidivism rates depend mainly on factors they can control. Recently, there has been a recognition of this problem and some have called for a new paradigm for the justice system.^{1,2} This new paradigm would continue to recognize the importance of the long-range measures of success but would also recognize the importance of intermediate measures of effectiveness that are more directly under the control of correctional personnel. An important component of this new paradigm is the need for clearly identified performance-based standards.

The move toward performance-based standards is based on total quality management (TQM)—a concept that has revolutionized business and some government agencies. Performance-based standards would give correctional personnel a barometer to use for gauging whether they are achieving the desired outcomes. Traditionally, standards in corrections have been based on expert consensus. These standards were determined by knowledgeable experts' views of "best practices" in corrections. In contrast, performance-based standards use empirical measures of outcomes to determine the effectiveness of correctional practices.

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At first glance, performance-based standards appear threatening to many corrections practitioners because recidivism has been the traditional outcome measure of interest. Most correctional personnel recognize that there are numerous factors that influence recidivism, and many of these factors are beyond their ability to control. However, the call for new measures for evaluating effectiveness, combined with a focus on more short-term measures of success makes performance-based standards more acceptable.

This article describes how some of the new developments in business, government, and corrections can be used to change our view of how standards for juvenile corrections might be developed in light of the new paradigm. A change toward quality management will require clearly identified short- and long-term goals for corrections and the development of methods for obtaining information about the achievement of these goals.

Total Quality Management

Quality management has been a driving force in recent years in the redesign of private organizations and corporations; only recently have these concepts begun to be applied in the public domain.³ The concept of quality management was originated by W.E. Deming, a statistician who was asked to provide some advice to Japanese manufacturers to get the economy back on its feet after World War II.⁴ At the time, U.S. consumers were reluctant to purchase anything labeled "Made in Japan" because the quality of the products was usually so poor.

Deming argued that quality is in the eye of the beholder; if you are making a product or delivering a service the quality is judged by the customer.⁴ Total quality means quality in all aspects of the work—quality of the product, quality of the service, quality information, quality objectives, quality organization, and a quality institution. Using this broad view of quality, Deming developed the concept of TQM, a comprehensive, client-focused strategy to improve the output of an organization. TQM is a way of managing an organization at all levels from management to line staff. The goal is to achieve client satisfaction by involving all employees in continuously improving the work process of the organization.

Developing TQM requires leadership by top man-

agement with long-term strategic planning and short-term strategic tactical planning to implement TQM throughout the organization. Clearly defined measures for tracking progress and identifying improvement opportunities must be developed. The systems conforming to TQM require adequate resources for employee training and education as well as methods for recognizing and reinforcing positive behavior. Workers are empowered to make decisions, and teamwork is encouraged. Perhaps most important is the need to develop a system to ensure that quality is built in at the beginning and continues throughout the production of a quality product or the offering of a quality service.

Reengineering Correctional Agencies

When an institution's circumstances require a major change, the incremental improvements of TQM may not be enough.⁴ At such times drastic action is required. The process, called reengineering, involves a radical change in the way an institution operates. The philosophy is that of starting over—"If we could begin again, how would we recreate ourselves?" Unlike TQM, which is a bottom-up, continuous improvement, incremental process, reengineering is top down and seeks continuous improvement in work processes. Reengineering starts with the desired outcome from work processes, designs the work processes that are most likely to lead to these outcomes, and then constructs the organization required to implement the processes.

Osborne and Gaebler's book *Reinventing Government*⁶ applied TQM to government. They emphasized that performance standards could be developed for public agencies. Their research on cities illustrated that government could be just as effective as private entities when it was forced to depart from a monopoly position and compete in the marketplace. The idea is that government agencies could bring quality into all functions of government. And, in 1993, the U.S. Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) with the purpose of improving "the efficiency and effectiveness of federal programs by establishing a system to set goals for program performance and to measure results."⁶ The law attempts to improve program management through the process of operationalizing strategic plans and specifying outcome measures and how

they will be evaluated. Budget allocations can then be made using this performance information.

How Can These Concepts Be Applied to Correctional Agencies?

While the use of such performance standards in public agencies is relatively new, it has important implications for use in correctional agencies. In order to succeed, reengineering may be necessary, beginning with a reexamination of the philosophy and operation of corrections. This reengineering will require clarification of the objectives, identification of the clients, and improvement in the quality of information used for decision making. Short- and long-term strategic planning will be necessary.⁷ Perhaps one of the most important aspects of such quality planning will be the development of measures that permit clearly defined methods for tracking progress and identifying improvement opportunities.

In Deming's opinion, workers are blamed frequently for failure to produce a quality product or provide a quality service.⁴ He demonstrated this concept by asking a volunteer from the audience to select from an urn a sample of red and white plastic balls using a specially designed ladle. He asked the volunteer to select only white balls, an impossible task given the number of each in the urn. Deming's point was that it is not the worker's fault if there is something wrong with the process.

This feeling is shared by many correctional workers regarding what they are being asked to do. They are held responsible for outcomes that are so far in the future and influenced by so many other factors that they see little relationship between what they do and what happens later. Workers need information about short-term performance as well as long-term outcomes. As the system now exists, workers seldom

receive information on either short- or long-term outcomes. They are forced to work with anecdotal information about success. However, they can hardly be expected to work to improve the correctional process if they have little idea of the goals and whether the outcomes reach the goals.

Conditions of Confinement and Performance-Based Standards

Much attention in the corrections community has focused on the standards used for corrections. Traditionally, these standards have been based on the opinions of experts in the field. High rates of conformance with nationally recognized standards do not necessarily mean that all is well. Many of the existing standards specify procedures and processes to be followed, but not outcomes to be achieved.⁸ However, recently, there has been a push toward verifying the validity of these standards through the use of data on actual performance (performance-based standards). These performance-based standards would tie the standards to the performance or outcomes desired.

Rather than depending on reports of the success of some program, such performance standards would require clear evidence of impact. There are several lines of research that have begun to move in the direction of providing information for quality management for corrections.⁹⁻¹² These projects are attempts to quantify aspects of the environment that can be used as indices of the quality of the environment. The first step requires methods to measure aspects or conditions of confinement. The next step requires a clear definition and a way to measure the expected relationship between the aspects or conditions of confinement and the outcomes to be achieved.

A substantial body of literature has begun to recommend the need to specify the components of programs and their relationships with outcomes. For example, a recent Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) publication examined the conditions of confinement of juvenile detention and correctional facilities.⁸ Using mailed surveys, the Children in Custody Census, and site visits, researchers measured conformance to national professional standards and other selected aspects of conditions. They recommended further study of why

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facilities vary so dramatically in such factors as exercise of control and safety. Furthermore, they proposed that more research be completed to examine the effects of these conditions on the juveniles both while they are in the facilities and upon release.

Similarly, after completing their evaluation of the juvenile VisionQuest Program, Greenwood and Turner¹³ also recommended that future evaluations describe and measure the “program inputs and processes” that can influence the effectiveness of a program. As the authors are arguing here, they propose that the general classification of a program as a boot camp or a wilderness program does not give a detailed enough description to enable identification of the components that will produce the desired impact. More detailed information about the conditions of confinement is needed as well as how these conditions are associated with measures of performance and effectiveness.

Another line of work that has sparked discussions within the criminal justice community focuses on reevaluating commonly used performance measures. This subject was the topic of a 1993 Bureau of Justice Statistics–Princeton University project.¹ The project working group proposed that the use of traditional criminal justice performance measures should be rethought. In particular, DiIulio¹ argued that while rates of crime and recidivism may represent basic goals of public safety, they are not the only, or necessarily the best, measures of what criminal justice institutions do. He advised criminal justice agencies to develop mission statements that include any activities that the agency can reasonably and realistically be expected to fulfill.¹⁴ In line with this advice is Logan’s emphasis on evaluating prisons on the day-to-day operations, not on ultimate, utilitarian goals of rehabilitation or crime reduction.¹⁵ Logan further argues that if we “do not want to set [prisons] up for failure, we must assign them a function and a mission that we might reasonably expect them to fulfill.”^{1(p.24)} To paraphrase Logan’s point of view, goals must be narrow and consistent in scope, and achievable and measurable within the prison itself with intrinsic and not just instrumental value.

Petersilia¹⁷ argued that along with their public safety functions, community corrections should be evaluated on other activities such as the accuracy, completeness, and timeliness of pre-sentence inves-

tigations, monitoring of court-ordered sanctions, and how well offenders are helped to change in positive ways. Thus, these researchers emphasize not only the need to investigate components or conditions of the environments being studied but also the need to use a wider range of measures to examine effectiveness.

Taken as a whole, the work by these researchers emphasizes the need for methods to measure the conditions or environments of correctional programs. Moreover, the research needs to examine the relationship between these conditions and intermediate and long-term outcomes.

National Study of Juvenile Boot Camps and Comparison Facilities

The authors are currently in the progress of studying juvenile facilities to determine the conditions of confinement of boot camps and comparison facilities. More than 50 sites have agreed to participate in the study. To date, data have been collected from 49 facilities and surveys have been conducted of over 2,400 juvenile inmates. The study focuses on identifying the differences among institutions and the intermediate impacts of the environments on the juveniles who spend time in the facilities.

Environmental Quantification

Despite the benefits such information would provide, a limited number of researchers have tried to quantify the correctional environment in a manner that is conducive to assessment of the environment. Yet, reliable quantification of juvenile facilities would allow different types of programs within a jurisdiction as well as nationwide to be compared. For example, can we generalize all types of “juvenile boot camps” and speak of them as a whole or are there significant differences within the boot camps or between them and other types of programs?

Quantification would also allow examination of program impact on youth, change over time while in the program, youth outcomes and institutional change over time including recidivism, positive adjustment, and community reintegration outcome measures. Researchers frequently focus on offender change due to participation in a program. This

method of research would also provide an avenue for examining the role of institutional change and progression in the correctional process.

Models for Measuring the Conditions of Confinement

There are several different models that may be appropriately adapted for measuring the environments of juvenile facilities: OJJDP's Conditions of Confinement Study,⁸ Quality of Confinement indices used by Logan,¹⁵ the Correctional Program Inventory (CPI) developed by Gendreau and Andrews,⁹ the Prison Environment Inventory (PEI) tested by Wright,¹⁰ and the Prison Social Climate Survey used by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.¹⁶ Each study includes quantitative indices to measure aspects of the environment.

OJJDP researchers assessed 46 criteria that reflected existing national professional standards (from ACA, The National Commission on Correctional Health Care, ABA) in 12 areas representing the advisors' perceptions of the most important needs of the confined juvenile. They focus on four broad areas (basic needs, order and safety, programming, juveniles' rights). The researchers examined the association between these conditions and such factors as escapes, suicides, and injuries.

In a similar manner, in his comparisons of private and public prisons, Logan developed indices to measure the quality of confinement based on his perception of the goals of corrections. He proposed that correctional institutions should not be asked to do what other social institutions are more responsible for doing and have failed to do. He argued that it is unfair to expect corrections officials to somehow "correct the incorrigible, rehabilitate the wretched, deter the determined, restrain the dangerous and punish the wicked."¹⁶(p.23) They should instead be responsible for what they can do—"keep prisoners—

keep them in, keep them safe, keep them in line, keep them healthy, and keep them busy—and do it with fairness, without undue suffering, and as efficiently as possible."¹⁹(p.25) While the authors disagree with Logan's philosophy of ignoring rehabilitation, his work provides an excellent example of how we can measure components of the environments that can be used to develop standards. He used various measures of safety, health, activity, and so on to compare private and public facilities.

In direct contrast to Logan's proposal, Gendreau and Andrews propose that rehabilitation and the reduction of recidivism are the very essence of corrections.⁹ The Correctional Program Evaluation Inventory (CPEI) was developed by Gendreau and Andrews to measure aspects of the environment that are indicative of the quality of therapeutic programs. The authors agree with Gendreau and Andrews. Correctional facilities for juveniles are not only designed to keep them in and keep them active but also to rehabilitate. Particularly in regard to juveniles, a major goal of corrections should be rehabilitation. Thus, if standards are to be developed, it is important to design methods to measure the components of the environment that are important to rehabilitation.

Last, there is a body of research showing the importance of environmental influences on inmate behavior.^{10-12, 20-23} The prison environment is defined as a set of conditions that is perceived by its members and is assumed to exert a major influence on behavior.²⁴ The prison environment affects inmates in different ways. A common theme appearing in this research is that some environments are supportive of rehabilitation, others are not.

The Prison Climate Survey, another environmental survey developed by Saylor and colleagues at the Federal Bureau of Prisons, provides an excellent example of how surveys can be used for management decisions.¹⁸ They developed methods for surveying staff and inmates in facilities. This information is processed and rapidly returned to the facilities so administrators can use it to compare their facilities with others or to examine how their facility has changed over time. In the latter situation, the information is valuable as a gauge to see the impact of some administrative decision or change.

In all of the above-cited research, the researchers developed quantitative indices or scales that could be used to measure aspects or components of the

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environment. While they differ in their view of some correctional goals, in general they agree on the basic components of quality correctional programs.

Surveys of Juvenile Institutions

As shown in Table 1, there are many similarities among the dimensions used to measure the components of the environment. They provide excellent models for developing measures of the conditions of confinement for juvenile facilities.

In the authors' study of environments they designed four types of surveys to capture both objective "hard record" data and subjective or "soft perceptual" measures of the correctional environment. Separate survey questions were developed for inmates and staff in order to obtain subjective reports on questions regarding the various aspects of their environment. A facility survey obtains objective information such as the number of injuries and escapes (e.g., safety) that parallels the environmental

conditions rated by staff and inmates.

Similarly, an innovative videotape survey technique allows for objective quantification of the environment. The videotape survey also parallels the perceptual information collected. The videotape aims to capture the complex interactions expected between individual and environmental factors. Wright noted the desirability of conceptualizing some interrelated dimensions that may act as behavioral predictors.¹⁰

In each survey, the authors attempted to capture important components of the environment including control, activity, safety, care, risks to residents, quality of life, structure, justice, freedom, perceived benefits of rehabilitation, and aftercare/individualized planning. For example, the authors assumed that a well-run facility would be safe for staff and inmates. Therefore, in the survey for the juveniles and staff they were asked whether they were safe in the facility. They were also asked if they were afraid of being hurt by staff or other inmates. The facility survey served as another method for determining the

Table 1

COMPARISON OF PRISON ENVIRONMENT INDICES

Performance Measures ¹⁵	Prison Environment Inventory ¹⁰	Correctional Institutions Environment Scale ¹¹	Conditions of Confinement ⁸	Prison Social Climate Survey ¹⁸
1. Security	1. Privacy	1. Staff control	1. Security arrangements	1. Security
2. Activity	2. Activity Social stimulation	2. Involvement		2. Services
3. Safety	3. Safety		3. Staffing Deaths Health care issues	3. Personal safety
4. Justice		4. Clarity		
5. Order	5. Structure	5. Order Organization		
6. Conditions				6. Quality of life Personal well-being
7. Care	7. Emotional feedback Support	7. Expressiveness Support Personal problem Orientation		
8. Management & problems		9. Freedom	9. Autonomy 10. Practical Orientation	9. Community access

safety of the environment because information such as the number of injuries or accidents that had occurred in the facility in a specific time period was requested. As a pilot study, the authors also included a video survey of the institutions in order to examine whether information about the environment obtained from a video would supplement the information on safety issues obtained from the other surveys.

Another example of the type of information being obtained is that coming from the justice scales. The authors assumed that quality facilities should have methods for inmates and staff to file grievances and that each group should know how this process worked. They should not be afraid to complain if they have been treated unfairly, they should have someone to turn to when they need help, and they should not believe that they are unfairly punished.

The authors propose that such empirical measures of the environments may be indicative of the quality of an environment and can represent the basis for developing standards. The next step is to identify intermediate and long-term goals that can be measured. The ultimate goal is to understand the relationship between the conditions and the intermediate and long-term goals and to further recognize mediating factors.

Table 2 shows some of the measures the authors

are using in their study of juvenile facilities to examine the intermediate outcomes. A study of the long-term outcomes is being postponed to a later phase of the study. In the study, the authors will investigate whether a safe institution will result in changes in the juveniles spending time in the facility. Will they be less anxious and depressed? Will their antisocial attitudes decline? Will more juveniles complete treatment or educational programs? Theoretically, juveniles in a safe, caring environment that focuses on rehabilitation should experience less depression, anxiety, and antisocial attitudes and their ties to family, school, and employment should increase.

Conclusion

Many ideas from total quality management and reengineering can be used to improve juvenile institutions. One particularly important aspect is the need for quality information about the environments of juvenile institutions and the impact of these environments on the staff and juveniles who must live and work there. Such information will be an invaluable tool for administrators to gauge their institutions against others. Furthermore, by increasing understanding of the relationship between the components of the environment and the intermedi-

Table 2

MEASURES: CONDITIONS OF THE ENVIRONMENT SHOWING INTERMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Conditions of the environment	Intermediate outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Control	Depression	Recidivism
Activity	Anxiety	School
Safety	Accomplishments	Employment
Care	(education, skills, vocational training)	Ties to the community
Risks to residents	Antisocial attitudes	• family
Quality of life	Locus of control	• school
Structure	Dysfunctional impulsivity	• employment
Justice	Ties to the community	Commitment to conventional behavior
Freedom	• family	Peer associates
Rehabilitation focus	• school	
Aftercare/Individualized planning	• employment	
	Commitment to conventional behavior	

ate and long-term outcomes, the goal of developing reasonable performance-based standards for juvenile corrections will be closer.

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