

The Dutch bootcamp turned inside out

Study on the progress of a bootcamp and a project called *Binnenste Buiten* (Inside Out) for young adult offenders

Summary

In 1994, an experiment was set up in the *Jeugdwerkinrichting* or *JWI* (a bootcamp), in an effort to tackle effectively the problem of crime among young people aged 18 to 24. The experiment sought to demonstrate whether it is possible to improve social integration in young adult offenders and prevent them from straying further into criminal conduct by teaching them (self) discipline and social skills, and subsequently helping them locate a suitable job or vocational training course. Participants in the *JWI* experiment thus entered a fifteen month programme, divided into three phases.

Structure of the *JWI*

The first phase of the *JWI* programme, which is located in the town of Veenhuizen, focuses on helping participants grow accustomed to work, learn discipline, and develop their social skills. While in this "basic" phase, participants work during the day in the wooded areas surrounding Veenhuizen. They follow a mandatory evening schedule, consisting of instruction in Dutch language skills, basic maths and social skills, as well as of physical exercise and awareness training on problems, such as alcohol and drug abuse. Participants are also tested extensively during this phase to assess their skills, potential for development and vocational or educational interests. The basic phase has a participant capacity of twenty individuals and has the status of a detention centre. The rules and regulations - at least according to the participants interviewed - are strict. Participation in all programme activities, for instance, is mandatory and radios and televisions are not allowed in the cells. Participants remain in the basic phase from three to six months, depending on how much effort they invest and their personal progress.

Participants enter the second phase, which also lasts from three to six months, in their own region of the country. The three "advanced" phase facilities - in Almelo (5 places), Hoorn (9 places) and Rotterdam (6 places) - focus on helping participants to make the transition to employment or locate a "vocational training course with good job prospects". Depending on their potential for development and preferences, the participants attend school during the day or gain work experience in work placement programmes, in employment preparation programmes or in jobs found through temporary employment agencies. The evening hours are reserved for physical exercise and recreational activities, as well as training and instruction in first aid. Participants spend their week-ends at home, i.e. their place of leave or residence. Although the advanced-phase facilities are situated in existing penitentiary institutions, and the rules and regulations largely resemble those of open penitentiary institutions, their status is not that of a penitentiary institution. Decisions to place individuals in the advanced phase are usually made in one of two frameworks: 1) a stay of proceedings; and 2) sentence enforcement. Individuals entering advanced-phase facilities in the former framework are placed there based on the conditional suspension of their pre-trial detention and a stay of the criminal proceedings against them until they have completed the entire programme. Participants entering in the framework of sentence enforcement serve out the punitive part of their sentence before placement in an advanced-phase facility as in accordance with article 47 of the Prisons Act. The framework selected for placement decisions can differ per court district as well as per participant. The basic phase and the advanced phase combined form the intramural segment of the bootcamp programme. This intramural segment lasts from a minimum of nine months to a maximum of twelve months.

The remaining three to six months are reserved for the final - or extramural - phase of the project. During this phase, participants are no longer held in detention. They receive intensive assistance in learning to live as independently as possible and gaining employment or enrolling in a vocational training course.

The *JWI* programme was established for young men aged 18 to 23, who "have fallen into serious criminal conduct, partly as a result of having lacked satisfactory upbringing, training and education", and who are facing non-suspendable prison sentences of 6 to 24 months. Other criteria for participation in the *JWI* programme include an ability to perform heavy physical labour and an absence of any serious addiction or psychiatric problems. Participation takes place on a voluntary basis. (These young people can choose between the *JWI* programme or traditional punishment). For this reason, participants must meet high standards in terms of

motivation and personal effort. Participant selection takes place in detention centres, preferably as soon as possible after they are taken into custody. This procedure aims to establish a system of imposing on-the-spot punishment and protecting - insofar as possible - these offenders from "criminal contamination". Due to the focus on preparing participants for work or a vocational training course in their own region, the *JWI* programme has remained open only to young people from certain court districts - at least throughout the three years of the experiment. The Almelo region includes the Almelo and Zutphen court districts. The Hoorn region consists of the Alkmaar, Amsterdam and Haarlem court districts. Finally, the court districts of the Rotterdam region comprise The Hague, Rotterdam and Dordrecht districts.

Structure of *Binnenste Buiten*

PTK De Corridor, a penitentiary training camp, launched a project called *Binnenste Buiten* (Inside Out) at approximately the same time the *JWI* programme was set up. *PTK De Corridor* is a half-open institution for young adult males with non-suspendable prison sentences (left) up to a maximum of eight months. *Binnenste Buiten* is an employment preparation project open to inmates staying at *PTK De Corridor* for at least thirteen weeks. Like the *JWI* programme, this project aims to help young people locate a suitable job or vocational training course. Participation in the project is also voluntary. The structure of the project does, however, differ significantly from that of the *JWI* programme. Since *PTK De Corridor* was intended as a national institution, the *Binnenste Buiten* project is open to young people throughout the entire country. Participants may include those who voluntarily registered to serve their detention, as well as individuals transferred from other prison institutions to serve out the next phase of their detention. During their stay at *PTK De Corridor*, participants can acquire work experience in local businesses or in such facilities as the institution's own wood workshop or playground project. They are also offered the opportunity to take courses in, as well as outside, the institution. The Employment Exchange in the participants' home regions are contacted soon after they enter the project so as to secure their opportunities to start/continue working once detention ends. The Employment Exchange offers key consultation and referral services in locating suitable jobs or vocational training courses. Before their release from *PTK De Corridor*, participants - together with a member of the *Binnenste Buiten* project team - visit the Labour Exchange Office, Social Services and other (care) organizations in or near their town of residence. These visits seek to make the transfer of supervision as smooth as possible. In addition, each participant's personal counsellor is visited. These counsellors can contact the *Binnenste Buiten* team if any problems arise. Participants are supervised for approximately six months after leaving the institution. During this follow-up phase, the *Binnenste Buiten* team maintains contact at fixed intervals with the participants and/or their counsellors. Where problems arise, the team offers assistance or makes referrals to other organizations. *PTK De Corridor's* goal is to help participants enter into a suitable job or vocational training course immediately following detention or within six months of leaving the institution.

Research questions

Given the nature of its similarities to and differences from the *JWI* programme, *Binnenste Buiten* is eminently suited as a model project for the *JWI*. When the National Agency of Correctional Institutions asked the *WODC* to evaluate the results of the *JWI* programme, it seemed obvious that the *Binnenste Buiten* project should be included in that evaluation. The evaluation focused on determining whether the preparations for employment or study in the *JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* programmes improved the participants' social integration and succeeded more in reducing the number of repeat offenders than a regular prison programme would have. To answer this question, we compiled data on the young people who had participated in the *JWI* programme or *Binnenste Buiten* project since both were first established. We sketched an overall picture of the participants using information on their backgrounds, as well as on their criminal conduct. The sources included the projects themselves and the case files in "outgoing case" records (cases where contact with judicial authorities led to placement in the *JWI* or *PTK De Corridor*). Information was also compiled about the course and final outcome of participation in these programmes, focusing primarily on the participants' employment status and/or enrolment in vocational training courses on completing the programmes. To determine whether the *JWI* is an adequate alternative for a non-suspendable prison sentence, we reviewed the case files of a group of offenders aged 18 to 24, who had been sentenced in 1994/1995 to non-suspendable prison terms ranging from 6 to 24 months. A comparison of this group of "conventional inmates" with the *JWI* participants could offer an indication of how the *JWI* "measures up as an alternative". To find out whether any subjects had reverted back to crime after spending time in these corrective intervention programmes, we retrieved more data on each of the three groups (*JWI* participants, *Binnenste Buiten* participants and the conventional inmates) from the police Identification Service System (*HKS*). Interviews with *JWI* participants offer information about the motives, expectations, experiences and views of these young people. We drew on this information in answering questions related to our focal questions. These are outlined below.

- What is the group profile of young people in corrective intervention programmes? Taking that question one step further, are the *JWI* participants, *Binnenste Buiten* participants and conventional inmates comparable to each other?
- Do the young people placed in *JWI* correspond to the project's target group?
- What factors influence the course and final outcome of participation in the project?
- Do participants see an improvement in their employment or educational status on completing the programme?
- Does participation in the *JWI* programme or the *Binnenste Buiten* project reduce the percentage of repeat offenders more successfully than regular prison sentences?

Characteristics of the young people

During the study period (from the time the project was launched until 31 December 1995), 93 young people entered the *JWI* programme and 240 young people the *Binnenste Buiten* project. The group of conventional inmates on whom we compiled information comprised 90 individuals.

These three groups of young people differed little in their backgrounds. The average age of the *JWI* participants on entering the programme was exactly 20. Some 40% were of native Dutch origin. Over 50% of the participants were (still) living with their parents or legal guardians at the time of their arrest. Over 20% had no permanent home or place of residence. On examining their daily activities, we found that a good two-thirds of these young people were neither attending school nor working. Moreover, most of the participants appeared never to have completed secondary school. Only one fourth of the participants had a secondary school diploma, usually at the pre-vocational or lowest general level. According to the information from the case files, four out of every ten participants were gambling addicts or using alcohol or drugs (excessively) at the time of their arrest. In most cases, excessive drug use involved soft drugs (31%).

The differences between the three groups were more pronounced as regarding criminal conduct. For one thing, the average conventional inmate had a more extensive police record and had been convicted more often than had the *JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* participants. On examining the outgoing case records, we found that *JWI* participants had generally committed more serious crimes (i.e. involving violence against others) than the young people in both of the other groups. A closer look at the *JWI* would reveal that 90% of the participants had previous police records. Given the number of their previous contacts with law enforcement authorities, it follows that these individuals were fairly "seasoned" offenders: on average, the records showed nine charges, three of which led to convictions. We can infer from official police reports that two thirds of the participants were arrested on suspicion of such crimes as extortion or theft with assault and battery. Almost all of these offences involved material damages, averaging at some NFL 30,000. Four out of every ten participants had inflicted (minor) bodily harm on their victims. After their arrest, all of the *JWI* participants were held in pre-trial detention. At the time of their placement in the basic phase of the *JWI* programme, they had spent an average of three and a half months in a "regular" detention centre. There were no differences in this regard between individuals placed in the programme in a stay of proceedings - or sentence enforcement - framework.

Using a number of characteristics in the participants' outgoing case files, police records and any files that may have been added to their records, we calculated "gravity" scores (see appendix 3). These scores indicate the gravity of the offences for which these young people were placed in the *JWI* programme. We did the same for *Binnenste Buiten* participants and the conventional inmates.

A comparison of the average severity scores for the three groups would show that, on the whole, the *JWI* participants committed offences of a significantly more serious nature than had the *Binnenste Buiten* participants. The difference, however, is attributable to a certain sub-group of the *JWI* participants: those who did not complete the programme. The drop-outs proved to have a significantly higher average severity score than did the individuals who completed the programme. Similar findings also surface in the evaluations of the *Cashba* community service programmes (Essers et al, 1995) and of the correctional learning programmes (Van der Steeg and Niemeijer, 1996). In comparing the *JWI* participants who completed the programme to the *Binnenste Buiten* participants, we found the differences negligible. (This finding applies to the young people who completed the *Binnenste Buiten* project, as well as to the drop-outs). In terms of the gravity of their offences, the conventional inmates were comparable to the *JWI* participants. Their average severity score is as high as that of the *JWI* participants who completed the programme, and somewhat higher than the *Binnenste Buiten* participants. We would find little difference in this regard if we were to compare the *JWI* participants to young inmates with regular non-suspendable prison sentences of 6 to 12 months or even to those with non-suspendable prison

sentences of 12 to 24 months. Assuming that the scores used accurately reflect the gravity of the offences committed, our findings indicate that the *JWI* programme can serve as an alternative for non-suspendable prison sentences of 6 to 12 months and 12 to 24 months.

Given the information above, we can conclude that participants who complete the *JWI* programme have much in common with the *Binnenste Buiten* participants and conventional inmates. This applies not only to their backgrounds, but also to the (gravity) of their criminal conduct. The *JWI* drop-outs comprise a separate category. They were placed in the programme for far more serious offences.

Having examined the characteristics of the *JWI* participants, we can conclude that they comprise a fairly difficult group. The grand majority are (frequent) repeat offenders, have committed very serious crimes, have no constructive ways to spend their time and have never completed secondary school. Moreover, a number of them have no permanent home or place of residence.

Course and final outcome of participation in projects.

The Jeugdwerkinrichting

Between 17 and 26 percent of the participants dropped out in each phase of the *JWI* programme. Approximately 60 percent completed the programme during the focal period of this study. (The remaining participants were still in the basic, advanced or extramural phase when we had finished compiling data).

On average, drop-outs in the basic phase leave after two months. Usually, this occurred due to a lack of motivation, a failure to return after leaves (i.e. escape) or aggressive behaviour towards the staff or fellow participants. Participants who complete this initial phase in Veenhuizen take an average of five months to do so.

Drop-outs in the second, or advanced, phase result primarily from the use of hard drugs, commission of additional offences during week-end leaves and a violation of the terms and conditions of the programme. The average drop-out in this phase also occurs after two months. Most of the participants who complete this second, or advanced, phase of the *JWI* programme take the maximum period allowed: six months.

The drop-outs in the extramural phase had already completed anywhere from 11 to almost 15 months of the *JWI* programme. The reasons for discontinuation in these cases were the same as those of drop-outs in the second phase. The participants who remained throughout the full duration of the extramural phase, and thus successfully completed the programme, were either enrolled in a vocational training course, employed or working as salaried apprentices when they left the programme. In addition, almost two thirds of those who completed the programme had their own independent living accommodations by the end of the programme; the rest returned to parents or relatives or went to live in boarding facilities.

There is no evidence to suggest any connection between the framework in which participants (stay of proceedings or sentence enforcement) were placed in the *JWI* programme and the course and final outcome of their participation. We did, however, notice a clear difference between drop-outs and those who completed the programme as regarding the "severity" of their police records. It also appeared that participants who were attending school, working or in military service before entering the programme tended more to complete the programme than those who had no constructive way to spend their time.

An overall look at the *JWI* programme would show that almost half of the drop-outs left during the basic phase and slightly less than one third during the advanced phase. Given the duration of the entire project (15 months), we can conclude that half of all *JWI* participants dropped out, whereas the remaining half completed the programme. In their interviews, the participants who completed the programme indicated that the basic phase served primarily to reinforce their self discipline, determination and social skills. They experienced the advanced and extramural phases as a constructive period of preparation for their return to freedom in society. They did, however, find the transition from the basic phase to the advanced phase quite drastic. They found themselves faced "suddenly" with much more freedom, responsibility and independence than they had had in the basic phase.

Binnenste Buiten

Of the 240 young people who took part in *PTK De Corridor's Binnenste Buiten* project, two-thirds completed the project. The average duration of participation was ten months. Approximately one fourth of the participants dropped out, usually during the detention phase. A lack of motivation, (disciplinary) transfer to other institutions and a failure to return from weekend leaves comprised the main reasons for discontinued participation, which occurred - on average - after the first two months. Half of all the participants were working or enrolled in a vocational training course within six months of leaving *PTK De Corridor* (at the end of the follow-up phase). Ten percent were still registered or had re-registered for employment with the Labour Exchange Office. Of the remaining participants, some had quit working or attending their vocational training course. Others had disappeared without a trace or had dropped out of the programme at some point. As was with the *JWI* participants, those who completed the project proved more often than the drop-outs to have spent their time more constructively before entering the project. The individuals who completed the programme and the drop-outs showed no differences in their average severity scores.

Improvement in employment or educational status

We compared the participants' employment and educational status before and after entering the *JWI* programme and the *Binnenste Buiten* project to determine whether their participation had improved their situation, and thus their social integration. At least 70% of those who completed the *JWI* programme proved to have profited in this regard. Of the "successful" participants who had no constructive ways to spend their time before entering *JWI* and who were employed or attending a vocational training course on completing the programme, most were still employed or enrolled in their training courses four to twelve months later. (Incidentally, this group of participants comprised a very small total of 17 individuals). The same finding applies to the *Binnenste Buiten* project: some 60% to 70% of those completing the project witnessed a clear improvement in their employment or educational situation as compared to the period preceding their detention.

Repeat offenders

According to information from the Identification Service System (*HKS*), slightly over half of all of the three groups (*JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* participants and conventional inmates) came into contact once again with law enforcement authorities due to new offences. An average of two to three official reports of crimes were added to the police records of this group of repeat offenders during the 18 to 22-month period following their time in these corrective intervention programmes. The period preceding their initial return to crime after completing these programmes or detention averaged at eight months. The three groups showed no significant differences either as regarding the nature (i.e. gravity) of the new offences on their police records or the amount of time it took them to re-offend and the frequency of their additional offences.

We noted only one difference in the *Binnenste Buiten* participants as regarding completion of the project and repeat offences. Of those who completed the *Binnenste Buiten* project, 46% got into trouble again with the police as compared to 65% of the drop-outs. The figures for the *JWI* participants are 56% and 54%, respectively. The difference between these two groups is - insofar as we have been able to establish - connected to the *JWI* participants' higher average severity score. The *JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* participants whose previous offences were - comparatively speaking - (very) serious showed almost equal tendencies in re-offending, regardless of whether they had completed their respective programmes.

Finally, we examined the relationship between the tendency to re-offend and these young peoples' employment or educational situation six months after their time in corrective intervention programmes. Of the *Binnenste Buiten* participants who were working or enrolled in a vocational training course at that point, 38% had come into contact again with the police. This figure is half as high as the figure for participants who were still not/no longer working or following any courses half a year later: 76% had become repeat offenders. Of the *JWI* participants who completed the programme and were working or following vocational training courses four to twelve months later, 50% had become repeat offenders. The findings offer no evidence of differences between *JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* participants as regarding the relationship between successful completion of the programme and the tendency to re-offend. However, given the small number of *JWI* participants concerned (14), it is impossible to draw any definitive conclusions in this regard.

Conclusions

Given our findings in this study, we can draw a number of positive - and negative - conclusions as regarding the *JWI*.

The *JWI* participants have indeed appeared to be the kind of young people for which the bootcamp was originally established. The "average" *JWI* participants are fairly "seasoned" veteran offenders. These individuals were arrested on suspicion of serious crimes (theft with assault and battery, extortion, etc.), are unemployed and either completed a very low level of education or were school drop-outs. Given the gravity of their offences, their placement in the *JWI* programme would seem a suitable alternative for the non-suspendable prison sentences of 6 to 24 months, which they would face otherwise.

The *JWI* participants' employment or educational situation after completing the programme would indicate how participation affected the social integration of these young people. Assuming that employment or enrolment in a "vocational training course with good job prospects" would contribute significantly to the social integration of these young people, some 70% of the participants who successfully completed the programme could be said to have clearly improved in this regard. These individuals, who had no constructive ways to spend their time before entering the programme, were still employed or attending a vocational training course four to twelve months after completing the programme. Other aspects of their social integration also appeared to have improved. A number of participants, for instance, were enabled to find independent living accommodations. Moreover, the *JWI* participants interviewed indicated that they had acquired more (self) discipline, determination and social skills.

We should, however, add a couple of qualifying remarks here. For one thing, the *JWI* participants were few in number. During the first two years of the experiment, no more than seventeen young people completed the programme. (Even by the third year, 1996, this figure rose to only 39 individuals). Figures this small will not always lend themselves to demonstrating clear relationships or drawing conclusions. It is impossible, for instance, to establish conclusively whether the lower percentage of repeat offenders among the successful *Binnenste Buiten* participants also applies to successful *JWI* participants. All the same, the similarity of the *Binnenste Buiten* project results is more significant. That similarity applies not only to the participants' (ability to maintain their) employment or educational status on completing the programme, but also to improvements in their employment or educational status as compared to the period preceding the programme. As indicated earlier, both of these groups of young people share much the same profile. The severity scores and backgrounds of the *JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* participants who completed their programmes were fairly identical. The absence of any clear differences between the *JWI* and *Binnenste Buiten* participants in terms of improvements in their employment or educational situation also applies as regarding their tendency to re-offend. In this respect, there were no differences - either between the two groups of project participants or between them and the conventional inmates. The *Binnenste Buiten* participants who completed the project were the only sub-group who showed positive results in their tendency to re-offend. The percentage of repeat offenders among those who completed the project and who had (also) succeeded in locating and remaining in a suitable job or vocational training course was a mere half of the figure for participants not working or following any courses by the end of the follow-up period. Incidentally, the percentage established in this study for repeat offenders (50%) is not unusual. Research on correctional learning programmes (community service penalties of four to six months imposed on young adults as an alternative for non-suspendable prison sentences of six to twelve months) has found, for instance, that 40% of those who completed the project and 70% of the drop-outs had been re-registered in the Identification Service System (*HKS*) for additional offences (Van der Steeg and Niemeijer, 1996). Moreover, a study on *RETour* (an extramural programme for regular sentence enforcement, which offers young inmates aged 18 and above intensive supervision during their last few months of detention in establishing residence and finding opportunities for development, schooling and employment) found that 50% of participants had reverted back to crime (Wartna et al, 1996). Evaluations of the *Cashba* and *Dagtrainingscentrum* or *DTC* day programmes (intensive three-month programmes geared, among others, towards young adults) showed the percentages of repeat offenders to range from 60 to approximately 70 percent (Essers et al, 1995).

During the first two years of the *JWI* experiment, little progress was made towards the goal of establishing a system of on-the-spot punishment through placement in the programme. On average, the participants had been held in pre-trial detention for 3.5 months, before they were sent from "regular" detention centres to enter the basic phase of the programme. Our findings also showed that the framework for placement in the programme (stay of proceedings or sentence enforcement) did not affect such matters as the duration of pre-trial detention before placement in the basic phase or the number of drop-outs and "successful" participants.

This brings us to the final aspect of our discussion of the *JWI*: the drop-out rate. From the time the experiment was first launched, the drop-out rate has been the focus of much attention. The media issued numerous reports of "Lubber's half-empty camp" - even to the point of raising discussions in the House of Parliament.

We should point out, first and foremost, that although the *JWI*'s drop-out rate of 50 percent is high, it is nothing unusual. A comparison with the drop-out rate for the *Cashba* and the *DTC* correctional learning projects would show little difference. In total, 38% of all participants in the three-month *Cashba* project dropped out. The drop-out rate for *DTC* participants rose above 50% (Essers et al, 1995). The correctional learning programmes in Van der Steeg and Niemeijer's study (1996) showed a drop-out rate of 57% during the first two years. Given the fairly long duration of the entire *JWI* programme, the drop-out rate is not excessively high. Should plans emerge to reduce that drop-out rate anyway, there are a number of options. One possibility would be to limit eligibility for placement in *JWI* to "the less severe cases": offenders with less serious crimes on their records and/or individuals already working or attending some kind of educational programme. However, this measure would serve to eliminate a considerable portion of the original target group. In that case, the only hope left to them is of serving time in *PTK De Corridor*, where they might be able to benefit from the *Binnenste Buiten* project. Another option is to introduce a better method of providing information about the programme and raise the standards for selection based on motivation. One potential problem with this would be that the participants would not realize what heavy physical labour, (self) discipline and structure entail until they experience it "in Veenhuizen". Almost 60% of the *JWI* drop-outs leave during the basic phase, and the majority of them are withdrawn within one to two months. Thus, the basic phase could be said to function as a second screening instrument. This is the stage in which the participants' motivation and determination has to stand the true test, the test of reality. Given the current target group, a certain drop-out rate would have to be accepted as unavoidable - that is, if we are to avoid compromising on the aims of the basic phase (i.e. acclimation to work, (self) discipline and structure), and thus preserve a major focus of the *JWI* programme. The problem of the resulting temporary vacancies in the advanced phase could be resolved by increasing capacity in the basic phase. The number of drop-outs in the next, advanced phase, where 30% of the participants "abandoned ship", might be reduced by making the transition between these two phases less drastic. One option worth considering would be to introduce weekend leaves gradually after the basic phase, where rules and regulations are stringent. This measure may also serve to reduce the drop-out rate among participants placed in the *JWI* for (very) serious offences.

De Jeugdwerkinrichting binnenstebuiten gekeerd; onderzoek naar de resultaten van de Jeugdwerkinrichting en het project Binnenste Buiten

E.C. Spaans

The Hague, WODC, 1997

Onderzoek en beleid, no. 161