

Term paper on prisoner rehabilitation

Law, Criminal Justice



Rehabilitation is defined as something that inspires positive change in someone during their confinement period (Foster 2006). Rehabilitation is seen as a humane and progressive form of punishment that intends to reform a convict to lead a productive life. Rehabilitative theories believe that prison is not the ideal way to achieve corrective behavior of offenders because it seeks to isolate offenders from life's realities which in essence they should be trying to learn how to cope with. Prisoner imprisonment encompasses drug rehabilitation behavior change and vocational training.

The origin of rehabilitation in the United States goes back to the late 18th century (Rothman 1971). Prisons as we know them today did not exist. Counties had local jails fashioned into houses where offenders were detained, living with their families as they awaited trial. With time, society started viewing crime as a social disorder and there was a need to develop orderly environments with clearly set rules hence the evolution of penitentiaries. Several reforms have since taken place that seek to refine and the rehabilitative system to take up more of a corrective approach.

In general, prisoner rehabilitation programs have many positive benefits on the prisoner as well as the society. They assist the prisoner in refraining from criminal activities and providing them with life skills. Genuine rehabilitation of prisoners guarantees safe living communities. To improve the prisoner rehabilitation system the state should focus on various factors such as improving engagement with community based offenders, offender access to education and training, providing employability upon release.

Parole is the conditional release of a prisoner, where he promises to adhere to conditions set by a parole board and under the constant supervision of an appointed parole officer. Non-compliance to the conditions set may result to re-imprisonment. The essence of parole is to have a prisoner released from incarceration but still be in the custody of the legal system. Parole differs from mandatory release in that mandatory release operates only in certain jurisdictions that use determinate sentencing statues. The parole board releases a prisoner from incarceration after he has served a specific percentage of the original sentence less any good time done.

The current parole process is under the mandate of the United States Parole commission and it has jurisdiction on Federal offenders (offenses committed before 1st November 1987), D. C. code offenders (offenses committed before 5th August 2000), D. C Code offenders (offenses committed after 4th August 2000, uniform code of military justice offenders, transfer-treaty cases and state probationers and parolees in federal witness protection program.

Probation is an alternative to prison incarceration where an offender is allowed to serve his or her sentence at a community level under the supervision of probation board or an agent of the law. Improvements can be made to the current parole and probation system by adopting best practices when implementing these alternatives. One such practice is Motivation as it plays a big role in rehabilitating offenders and parole officers should incorporate this in their interaction with offenders.

Community corrections programs are non-prison sanctions imposed on convicts either adults or juveniles following release from prison with the aim

of delivering rehabilitation services and achieving fiscal efficiency. These programs include reporting centers, halfway houses and other community related programs.

Community corrections have 2 main impacts in the community: Cost savings and program effectiveness. Community corrections are generally cheaper compared to traditional prison settings. It's estimated that the Ohio state makes a saving of between \$2, 000 and \$11, 000 per person by using community state programs given the fact inmates stay under the control of the state for shorter periods and there is no need to build more prisons to accommodate increase offenders. Community correction programs also reduce the probability of reoffending in the community albeit at a low percentage.

Gendreau et al. (2000) analyses the effectiveness of community sanctions vs. incarceration and found that there is no difference in recidivism between the two and concluded incarceration had no deterrent effect on subsequent criminal behavior. Sherman et al. (1997) also undertook a literature based study on the effectiveness and concluded that community sanctions do not reduce recidivism.

According to a 2009 International Centre for Prison Studies report, there are an estimated 9, 800, 000 people held in penal institutions in the world, with prison populations increasing in 71 percent of the over 200 countries surveyed. In poor countries especially in Africa who largely adopted their legislative, penal system and prison infrastructure from colonial powers the living conditions of prisoners is very poor, characterized by dilapidation,

severe congestion, inadequacy of key supplies such as food and a myriad of infectious diseases. Torture and mistreatment is also a means used to discipline errant prisoners. Corporal punishment is also a key characteristic in many of these prisons.

Although a lot of reforms have been initiated to improve these conditions, a lot still remains to be done. On 16th September Senators Patrick Leahy and Sam Brownback as well as Congressmen Joseph Pitts and Bill Delahunt introduced the Foreign Prison Conditions Improvement Act of 2010 with the aim of reducing inhumane prison conditions in the world and strengthen the rule of law

Whereas the United States and other developed countries view imprisonment as a means to improve an offender's life and help them easily integrate into the society after incarceration this is not the case especially in developing countries. These countries view imprisonment as punishment and a way of differentiating between good people and bad people

Compared to other countries, the United States prison system is viewed to be a model and one of the best managed systems in the world. The system is seen to uphold the rule of law, provide various forms of early release and focuses on rehabilitation and corrective action. However the once solid system is gradually eroding as prisoners still maintain contact with the external environment as prisons are fully serviced and equipped. However, according to (Foster 2006) the quality of the prison environment is not determined by the inmates but by the prison administration. At the same time discipline and disciplinary rules works to guarantee the stability of

inmate atmosphere in the prison. For the United States to adopt the corrections system of another country would be retrogressive.

An effective prison and corrections system should try to strike a balance between deterring citizens from committing crimes, while maintaining a system that seeks to equip, correct offenders and prepares offenders for reintegration to the community. Countries should also develop other alternative forms of sentencing other than incarceration to reduce overcrowding and to ease offender's integration into the society. States should endeavor to carry out prison reforms from time to time.

References

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