An Investigation Into Training and Mentoring Practices Within the Prison Estate

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter will investigate the basis for the teaching of integrity-based competencies to prison officers as part of their training. This training underpins the performance of prison officers in the execution of their daily workplace duties. At the heart of this study is a desire to understand and explain how a prison officer can be taught to go beyond what is the basic requirement in their tasks, in order to deliver the 'safe and humane' service required of them in the prison system. The degree of success in achieving this form of elevated integrity within the prison can be seen to impact upon the lives of the prisoners in the officer's care, and on wider society as a whole. For instance, the challenges of dealing with concealment and detection avoidance of illicit substances can create problems for the inexperienced officer. Therefore, their training becomes important in successfully overcoming concealment of illegal materials. The chapter will also investigate mentoring as a key form of learning within prisons. While the world of prison is one which is closed to many in society, the author gained insights when he worked as an 'embedded criminologist,' working as a lecturer on a prison training programme for five years between 2008 and 2013. This provided him with valuable criminological and penological understandings of the hidden world of the prison system, as well as the officers who work behind their walls.

INTRODUCTION

When examining teaching and learning in the context of a prison, one has to ask the question 'why would anyone do such a job'? In addition, the question of how to teach staff to do such a difficult job with competency and integrity might also be posited. The answers might be found in explorations of the human condition. In his discussion of 'Integrity: Psychological, Moral, and Spiritual', Rhett Diessner sets out Socrates' three components of the Human psyche or soul: the logical-rational, the spirited or affective, and the desiring or willing' (Diessner: 2007, p. 6).

The author also incorporates Kant's concepts from *the Critique of Judgment* of three faculties of the soul as 'knowledge, feeling and desire'. Therefore, we can begin to understand the basis of moral integrity and human competency as being derived from this subset of logic, spirit and desire or will. Such qualities are invariably drawn upon when humans are faced with challenges to their character, and this can be borne out by the learning experiences of prison officers who are charged with maintaining the ethos of the Prison Service desire for 'safe, secure and humane' approached to prison work. In particular, prison officers provide us with a good example of a group who must maintain integrity in the face of negative resistance (and on occasion, violence).

This chapter focuses on the teaching and learning processes which develop a moral and competency-based framework for prison staff. This includes dealing with routine issues such as concealment and detection avoidance of contraband materials, which may challenge an officer's ability to deal with confrontational prisoners in a humane and safe manner. The public perception of the prison officer is often surrounded in negativity, which adds to the difficulties in developing and maintaining moral integrity for recruits to the service, within a teaching and learning environment. From the perspective of the author, understandings of these challenges and the manner in such a programme would be delivered stems from experiences working with prison service recruits as part of their academic programme, which included Sociology, Criminology and Human Rights. Through out this process, I was able to discuss these issues with recruits, and chart their progress over a year in the prisons during participation in workplace inspections within the prisons where they worked.

One key issue which emerged from this process was an understanding of how difficult it was for recruit prison officers to come to terms with the dualistic demands they faced from internal as well as external concerns about integrity and competencies. Carl Rodgers (1961) as outlined the basis for understanding 'authentic' forms of integrity as those which are derived from inward reflection and [re]-evaluation of our personal values. For the prison officer, this process incorporates what Goffman has described as a 'dramaturgical' process; the officer must develop a 'mask' for inside