

The Supervision of Programs in Prisons and Rehabilitation Department: The Case of Botswana Correctional Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supervision is very important in the running of any organisation that aims to execute its functions for the benefit of the people in the milieu in which it exists, such as prisons in Botswana. In the discipline organisations such as the Prisons and Rehabilitation department, supervision is strongly guided by the organisational structure and the need to maintain the highest standards of discipline. This explains the reason why professionals who get enlisted in the organisation undergo training that qualifies them to adhere to the prescribed standards and codes of behaviour in the organisation. The supervision in Botswana prisons has become important because of the need to rehabilitate offenders so that they become acceptable members of their respective communities. The prisons do have programs that are geared towards making the stay of prisoners in prisons more as an epoch characterised by training, than that of punishment. The chapter will demonstrate that supervision is important for prisons to run smoothly, with explicit recognisable harmonisation of activities within the institution.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines how supervision in Botswana prisons is conducted and most importantly, what value it adds in the functioning of an institution that has positions that are conspicuously differentiated. The Prisons and Rehabilitation is headed by the Commissioner who is deputised by the deputy commissioner. The deputy commissioner supervises the senior assistant commissioners, assistant commissioners, senior superintendents, superintendents, assistant superintendents, principle officers, assistant principle officers, sergeants and warders, in that order. The organisation has the structure that emphasises the channelling of instructions from the top to the bottom. The seniority of officers in the same position is determined by the amount of time an individual has spent in a given position. An individual who has spent a longer time, in comparison to the other, in his/her position is senior.

The other level of supervision within prisons takes place between the officers and the prisoners; with the latter taking the lowest level in the structure. The prisoners also hold a different position, which means there is supervision that takes place amongst the prisoners. The trustees (prisoners that hold supervisory positions because they are trusted not to escape from prison) are usually empowered to supervise prison activities that are availed for their rehabilitation and that of their colleagues. The empowerment of prisoners to supervise does often help them to have supervision skills, which also assist the prison authorities in ascertaining that programs are well supervised. The supervision of programs by prisoners themselves promotes the sense of ownership of the programs.

ORGANISATIONAL BACKGROUND

The idea of imprisonment or incarceration as a form of punishment is believed to have started in the 1850s when some countries imprisoned debtors, delinquent juveniles, minor misdemeanants and felons. In modern Britain, imprisonment was started with the use of Bridewell Palace as a place where vagrants, idlers, thieves and petty criminals were confined (Melossi & Pavarini, 1981). However, in Bologna early prisons were initially appropriated from among the existing aristocratic “torri”. The first permanent cells were designated sometime between the completion of the first communal palace in 1203 and the construction of the so called Palazzo Re Enzo, the lifelong prison of Frederick II’s son who was captured in 1249 (Geltner, 2008).

As noted by Frimpong (2001), Botswana’s first encounter with the formal system of imprisonment for purposes of punishment dates back to mid-1880s, when the then Bechuanaland was declared a British protectorate. This means the structures were developed that stipulated how the supervision in prisons was to be conducted. The

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