Chapter 2
Prison Environments

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ABSTRACT

This chapter deals with the historical development of prison environments, linked to the context of inmate development. Since early days, the prison environment has always accounted for some form of inmate development. New-generation prisons have brought a more profound influence in the area of inmate development. However, there has been a larger emphasis on security in the prison environment, compared to inmate development. In addition, the inmate subculture has a fundamental influence on the interaction between the prison environment and inmate education and development. With this in mind, the chapter provides an overview of prison environments through the ages up to post-modern times. It constantly addresses the interaction between environment and education from the perspective of the relevant era of prison evolution.

INTRODUCTION

People react differently to their living environment. One often-neglected living environment is the prison environment. Prisons are microcosms of society (Holvey, 2005) and can be classified as physically aggressive, the result of adaptations for survival and retention of physical existence (Hartmann, 1936). Individual responses to prison environments include dependence, helplessness, exploitation, masculinity, withdrawal, isolation, and loneliness (Singer, 2012).

Nelson Mandela (1995) observed that prison robs you of your freedom and identity. It is authoritarian and tolerates no independence and individuality. These words applied to Apartheid prisons, but echo approaches to incarceration in most

modern-day prisons. According to Mwende and Pasha (2016), African imprisonment originates from colonial roots, inflicting cruel punishments with little rehabilitation. Even (post)modern prisons are not utilized for rehabilitation. Luyt (2008) emphasizes how South Africa, for example, fails to optimally utilize new-generation prisons to benefit inmates. Instead of utilizing two private prisons to pursue development these facilities became maximum security prisons. Through it the system indicates that security has higher priority than rehabilitation.

The aim of this chapter is to give insights into the factors that create prison environments including the history of prison, the ethical context of prison and other dynamics.

BACKGROUND

There is reason to believe that correctional education reduces recidivism (Davis et al., 2013). Inmates who receive correctional education improve chances of employment. There is a negative relationship between correctional education and prison environments, as prison environments impede on successful completion of educational programs.

The prison environment is one of learning, but does it educate? Gendreau and Goggin (1999) identify three schools of thought. Firstly, prisons suppress criminal behavior. Unpleasant prison life and negative stigma serve as deterrents to criminal behavior. Secondly, prisons increase criminality. Inhumane conditions make offenders more likely to recidivate. Thirdly, prison effects on inmates are minimal. Offenders enter prison with antisocial attitudes/behavior that remains during incarceration. According to Coates (2016) education should be more important in prison systems, as it is the engine of inmate rehabilitation.

ISSUES

It is impossible to discuss the complete history of prisons here, but the reader must obtain an overview of the influence of different prison systems on education during incarceration. Selected historically familiar prison systems that have made a contribution to learning ideologies are highlighted here.

Imprisonment has not always been common as punishment. Physical punishment and social ostracism were historically common. Major transitions, from physical punishments to imprisonment occurred in the eighteenth century. Factors that facilitated the shift from bodily harm to institutional interventions are complex (Sellin, 1930). At first, incarceration was meant to detain people until sentencing

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