

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No. 200 of 1993) provides for a National Department of Correctional Services. Within the Department of Correctional Services exist as an operative framework that primarily constitutes a rehabilitative approach towards incarcerated offenders. Therefore the purpose of this paper will be to explore the selected functions of the Department of Correctional Services in conjunction with the rehabilitation of offenders. By discussing these aspects a greater understanding will be realized with regard to the operative measures to be undertaken in restoring and rehabilitating an offender. The intent is that this paper enables a greater realisation of the subject matter to be realised.

Selected Functions of the Department of Correctional Services

Among the many responsibilities of the Department of Correctional Services, attention will be given to some of the functions focused on the rehabilitation of prisoners, vocational training for prisoners and methods by which they are released.

- 1) **The rehabilitation of Offenders** – The principle underlying the rehabilitation of offenders is based on the assumption that they are responsible for their own behaviour and behavioural change. Hence they have the potential to adjust their behaviour to become law-abiding citizens. Offenders who are imprisoned for substantial periods of time are therefore offered the opportunity to modify their behaviour while in a penal institution. To accomplish this objective, different methods of rehabilitation are employed:
 - ❖ **Institutional Committees:** These committees play an important role in ensuring that a professional and co-ordinated approach is followed with regard to the incarceration, treatment, training and development of inmates. Care is taken with regard to prisoner's participation. A multidisciplinary approach is integrated.
 - ❖ **Behaviour Regulation:** The manner in which inmates are handled in correctional institutions is aimed at creating an atmosphere and conditions conducive to the upliftment of the prisoner.
 - ❖ **Education:** Basic education can be regarded as a prerequisite for the eventual rehabilitation of the offender. The educational programmes which are made available by correctional authorities include programmes to eliminate illiteracy and provide formal and informal educational opportunities.
 - ❖ **Labour and industries:** The principle of labour in the penal institution is founded on the viewpoint that a work ethic should be instilled in every inmate who is capable of doing work and being trained. This affords inmates the opportunity to acquire certain skills.
 - ❖ **Religious Care:** This could be a forceful agent in helping the inmate develop a new approach towards the way of life. The underlying principle in this regard is not to enforce religious care on to the prisoners but to permit freedom of choice in respect of faith, religion, affiliation and participation in such activities.

- ❖ **Social Work Services:** These services are of basic importance in the treatment and rehabilitation of inmates and contribute largely thereto. The correctional authorities offer social work services to all sentenced prisoners and probationers with the objective of promoting their sound social functioning.
- ❖ **Psychological Services:** In the correctional environment these services are aimed at providing psychological and mental health support to prisoners so as to improve their quality of life. Opportunities are therefore provided and prisoners encouraged participating actively in these programmes.

2) Vocational Training

Vocational training forms part of the broader education and training programmes. It is aimed at establishing a basis for a culture of learning and the promotion of a work ethic which are essential for effective adjustment to and functioning of society. The vocational training programme is varied and includes the following: building training, workshop training and female hairdressing. Upon the successful completion of the training programme, a diploma or certificate from the Department of Labour and from the National Training Board is awarded. Career-directed skills training represent those fields in which artisan status cannot be obtained, but which do require specialised training. Where applicable, certificates are issued by external organisations. Fields in which training is provided include:

- ❖ Arc welding
- ❖ Auto Body Repair
- ❖ Fencing
- ❖ Bricklaying and Plastering
- ❖ Basic Woodwork
- ❖ Leatherwork

3) Safe Custody Of Prisoners

The Department Of Correctional Services respects and endorses the legitimate expectations of every prisoner to be detained under safe conditions. It is regarded as a prerequisite to building up the prisoner's self-respect, as well as promoting positive participation in rehabilitation programmes.

Apart from the objective of providing adequate prisoner accommodation which complies with accepted standards, the safe custody of prisoners forms an integral part of the process. The department is, however not totally successful as far as internal security is concerned. Escapes of prisoners take place regularly. Measures to ensure the safe custody of inmates are continuously updated and include:

- ❖ The involvement of management at all levels.
- ❖ The development of middle-level managers
- ❖ Efficient utilisation of security equipment and investigation of alternatives

- ❖ The evaluation of security directives to ensure that they comply with the necessary standards.
- ❖ Effective training of personnel to deal with emergency situations that may arise.
- ❖ The tightening up of security measures in practise.
- ❖ Supplementing the work force of the establishment to eliminate existing personal shortages.
- ❖ Structural improvements to prison buildings.
- ❖ Regular nocturnal visits to prisons by senior personnel
- ❖ Action against security personnel who are negligent in the performance of their duties.
- ❖ Criminal prosecution of escapees and persons who assist with escapes.
- ❖ Rewarding of prisoners who report planned escapes or who raise the alarm in such instances.

It is imperative to acknowledge that the above expressed information function as supplementation to the directives and policy regulations of both the Department Of Correctional Services and any affiliated institution involved accordingly.

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