

Dissertation abstract

Penitentiary policy in Poland - challenges and risks for Prison Service officers and employees

The subject of this study was the evaluation of the implemented penitentiary policy in Poland, as well as the accomplished prison reforms in the context of challenges and threats for prison officers and employees.

The cognitive objective guiding the implementation of the research process was to find out the opinions of prison officers and staff on prison reform and the impact of penitentiary policy on the rigour and restriction of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, as well as to examine the impact of the direction of penitentiary policy adopted since 2017 and prison reform on the challenges and threats faced by prison officers and staff. The essence of the work undertaken concerned the identification of the main challenges and threats for prison staff resulting from the implementation of the penitentiary policy in practice, as well as from the implementation of the assumptions of the prison modernisation programmes. In addition, the cognitive objectives of the dissertation also include learning about the difficulties posed for officers by the 'Work for Prisoners' programme and the operation of the Electronic Supervision System, as well as examining the impact of demographic and service variables on the safety of Prison Service officers and staff. The idea of the dissertation is not limited to the theoretical aspect only, but also shows a practical dimension, which crystallised in the form of the development of a concept of a pro-social penitentiary policy based on the foundations listed in the form of overarching values, together with a descriptive account of their practical application, adapted to the actual possibilities and resources. The research also resulted in an attempt to frame prison policy from a systemic perspective.

The main research problem took the form of a question with the following content: which aspects of penitentiary policy implemented in the conditions of a total institution in 2017-2023 have the greatest impact on challenges and threats for penitentiary staff? In view of the actual state of affairs framed in this way, it became crucial for the research basis of the dissertation to solve one of the specific research problems, which was formulated as follows: what changes should be made in penitentiary policy (or penal policy) and prison reform in order to correspond to modern global standards in terms of improving the working conditions of officers, making better use of their potential and ensuring decent conditions for the execution

of imprisonment and the treatment of prisoners with respect for their rights under national and international law?

The following main hypothesis was adopted in this study: it is assumed that the main aspects of the penitentiary policy implemented between 2017 and 2023 that influenced the challenges and risks in the professional work of penitentiary staff were: risks arising from contact with inmates, extensive bureaucracy, staff shortages, administrative and organisational changes, and structural transformations of units. The directions that the penitentiary policy adopted in the indicated time period negatively affected: the safety of officers and staff in the performance of their professional duties, the threat of professional burnout, the increase in professional duties resulting from the operation of the Electronic Dispensation System and the expansion of the "Work for Prisoners" programme.

Among the theoretical methods, the author adopted the method of institutional-legal analysis, which is necessary to refer to legal acts constituting an important background for political decisions taken in the field of reforming the Polish penitentiary system and setting new directions for penitentiary policy, as well as the system method, which is necessary when analysing the penitentiary system as a certain whole composed of interrelated elements. The empirical research was carried out by means of a diagnostic survey with the use of a questionnaire technique in selected penitentiary units in the kujawsko-pomorskie voivodeship, and by means of a semi-structured in-depth interview technique with experts dealing with the issues addressed in this paper. The research tool was a questionnaire and interview sheet.

The research process conducted enabled the research objective to be achieved. The main research problem and the specific problems were solved in the individual chapters of the dissertation and in its conclusion. The validity of the set research hypotheses was also verified. The completed research led to the confirmation of the veracity of the initial assumptions, which were enriched with additional comments and reflections.