

The Penal Voluntary Sector Book Review

Posted on September 22, 2018

Introduction

The Penal Voluntary Sector is a book that exhibits the relationships between charity and punishment; these kinds of relationships are becoming more common in countries around the world. Recently, over the years, the feature has significantly been in policy in both Wales and England. There are numerous Penal voluntary organizations that have been delivering probation and prison services under contracts, and there is room to expand. However, these organizations have different relationships with the statutory agencies, and the effects of this work have been poorly understood (Tomczak, 2017).

This book provides some insight into the rigorous examination of these policies, which are relevant but very complex and need a little more to be studied. It explores to the world what these voluntary organizations do with prisoners and probationers. The effect of the voluntary organization on the prisoners and how the staff undertakes their work in the prison (Tomczak, 2017).

The authors make use of empirical research, an innovative application of actor-network theory. This will enable readers to take a step to understand the change in our world and the significant increase in penal organizations in our societies. The author examines what the voluntary organizations are doing to the probationers and prisoners, how they do their work, and the effect of charitable work that is done by the prisoners (Tomczak, 2017).

The concept brought forward from the book is the innovative application of the network theory, which has enabled a huge change in the understanding of this organization. Challenging the polycentric accounts produced over the last decade illustrating how voluntary organizations mediate the experiences of imprisonment and probation (Tomczak, 2017).

Current policy developments in various countries have increased the role of penal voluntary organizations. There are notable developments in criminal justice through marketization, including the broad big society initiative. Modernizing commission green paper suggested by the public service reforms (Tomczak, 2017).

In simple form, a voluntary penal organization is located between the state and the market, thereby providing useful working definitions of the penal organization as a charitable and self-defined agency, working hand in hand with prisoners and offenders in community-based prison programs. These organizations' limits are blurry; currently, the organization encompasses and focuses on offenders and their families, for example, the Nacro and the Howard League for Penal Reforms (Tomczak, 2017).

Most voluntary organizations are multi-functional because of their wide range of functions. The penal voluntary organization also performs service delivery, this involves a voluntary agency supplying direct services to its clients, it is either in kind or in forms of support and information. For example, the prison trains the prisoners in creative needlework and paid skills (Tomczak, 2017).

The penal voluntary organization services extend beyond service delivery if it is private contractual-based work, which normally entails service delivery. Another function of penal voluntary organizations is campaigning. It involves collecting information about a certain interest and then using the acquired information to put a strain on the verdict makers of the public setting through straight action, lobbying, advocacy, and campaigning to alter the practices and policies (Tomczak, 2017).

These campaigns illustrate just how humane and effective the penal voluntary organizations really are. Some of these voluntary organizations have a mutual aid function, which focuses on assisting others and exchanging common needs. For example, The Apex Trust runs a women's project, which is only a women's peer support group. This provides the beneficiaries with opportunities to support their colleagues and build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance. Another function of the coordinator involves an umbrella organization that offers services to other voluntary bodies (Tomczak, 2017).

The market in Private Voluntary organizations and Criminal Justice

As a result of neoliberal reforms in the past three decades, criminal justice has established a service provision. The private entrepreneurs and voluntary sectors work together by operating in the public sector. Numerous sectors in the penal system were privatized, notwithstanding the many scales run by the regime elements. There are several examples, such as prison security guards being outsourced from a private entity. These private security guards are responsible for the security in the penal sector. Therefore, they run the daily activity of the penal sector in regard to security. The earliest prison operated by a private entity was opened in the United Kingdom in the year 1992. Currently, there are approximately eleven prisons run by a private corporation, but the security is managed by a private contract like the G4S justice system (Tomczak, 2017).

Charitable Innovations in Punishment

Voluntary organizations providing penal services under the contract are undeniably significant in grasping the penal sector. Some corporate styles have recently been affected by voluntary organizations, greatly affecting policy reforms. The relationship between statutory charities and criminal justice with the government is still unclear (Tomczak, 2017).

The authors attempt to address the gap in how non-contractual relationships are built. The readers

are able to see an analysis of how charitable programs were established on an informal and small-scale basis in a prison environment. The relationships are mostly below the radar, as they feature neither in the recent policy discussion nor in scholarships. This means an array of probation and prison work is still not understood (Tomczak, 2017).

Another vital issue is who delivers the criminal justice services. It is also essential to consider who delivers the penal services and who pays for their delivery. There are few larger charities involved in delivering core penal services under contract in Wales and England. The charitable work in the book is optional enrichment rather than core custodial work. However, the enrichment can fit the core requirement. The author analyses what charities do and what they are able to do with the prisoners in Wales. This is influenced by several factors operating at different scales and can alter over time (Tomczak, 2017).

Effects of Charitable Work

It is both problematic and surprising that the voluntary sector is important in criminal justice policy, but we do not understand the effects of charitable work or its distinctly from the private agencies and statutory. There are numerous benefits to be acknowledged by the charitable programs for probationers and programs (Tomczak, 2017).

Recently, the penal voluntary sector has attempted to follow the general presumption there is something in the quality of a non-profit community-based organization. There is no evidence to prove the alleged beneficial effects of charitable work, perhaps because the symbolic value of a voluntary sector seemingly confers a kind of immunity protecting the nonprofit sector from scrutiny. Any attempts to comprehend the effects of charitable work were further complicated by the net-widening literature. This implies that the voluntary organization reproduces and extends the exclusionary networks of the state carceral control (Tomczak, 2017).

Informed of the empirical data, the author explores the effects of these charity works. It puts in mind consideration how charities reproduce, extend, and transform punishment, in simple words, how charities act both as an intermediary and a mediator of punishment. The potential of enabling the charities functions that are able to give insights on positive mediations and transform the punishments (Tomczak, 2017).

Charitable works have resulted in extending control at the macro and micro levels, sometimes through innocuous interactions in the informal setting. Charitable work can also mediate positive punishments, notably across the distinctive relationships with the probationers and prisoners, thereby enabling resistance (Tomczak, 2017).

Conclusion

The book examined the effects of penal voluntary organizations (PVO) working together with statutory agencies and criminal justice. The penal voluntary organizations acted as intermediaries and mediators of punishment between the state and the prisoners. This analysis has been explained throughout the book. Due to the significant benefits of the penal voluntary organization, work has remained unproven and under-theorized. Drawing on two bodies of literature offering different concepts of the penal voluntary organization (Tomczak, 2017).

Furthermore, the main role of the intermediary actors is underdeveloped and rarely analyzed. The bias behind conceptualizing the mediators in a penal sector may be of no help for criminology, whereby the concept of net-widening by extending penal control is essential (Tomczak, 2017).

The evidence supports the conceptualization of penal voluntary organizations as intermediaries of punishment, creating a notion that the work of the organizations is able to transmit and extend penal control, for example, by extending further the reach of criminal justice into the community (Tomczak, 2017).

Penal voluntary organizations have translated the government penal policy, which has been used to imply the greater use of imprisonment, for longer periods with the intense community supervision. Therefore, the discourse and practices operated within the penal institution should be controlled. The penal voluntary organization works deserve; thus, the sector's net-widening and implications are further analyzed (Tomczak, 2017).

By mapping the diversity of forms of charity work, the book provided a better awareness and enabled and controlled the prisoners and probationers. There are factors that might influence the eventful outcomes, for example, employing extra service users in the organization and having a non-judgmental and strength-based interaction with service users through some aspects of criminal justice (Tomczak, 2017).

The book provides a springboard from the future to work and identify how exactly the charities can create a positive and distinct contribution to the probationers and prisoners and how they are included or excluded from the effects of balancing these charities, thereby resisting net-widening and extending out of control, these factors may relate to the outcomes that they cannot be achieved (Tomczak, 2017).

Reference

Tomczak, P. (2017) *The penal voluntary sector*, Routledge.