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Reviews

Book Reviews

Criminal justice management: Theory and practice in justice-centred organizations. Second edition

By Mary Stohr and Peter Collins
Publisher: Routledge (2014)
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(paperback)
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(paperback)

Understanding penal practice

Edited by Ioan Durnescu and Fergus McNeill
Publisher: Routledge (2014)
ISBN: 978-0-415-63581-3
(hardback)
Price: £95.00 (hardback)

Both of these books are concerned with staff working in the criminal justice system. It has been argued previously that it is important to explore the working lives of these actors for three predominant reasons.¹ The first is that they carry out an essential state function that has a human impact on those who are imprisoned; it is important to understand their effects. The second is that they are a distinct occupational group who experience particular pressures, stresses and tensions; it is important to understand the effects upon them. The third is that studying the work of prison managers can illuminate wider social issues including power, order, inequality and resistance as they are manifested in the contemporary prison. These books are also both concerned with instrumental effects; how they can develop and improve practice.

Despite these similarities, the books adopt significantly different strategies and as a result speak to

different audiences and with different purposes. Stohr and Collins start from the premise that it is possible to discern 'best practices', or:

'...better ways of doing things, in criminal justice management. These 'better ways' are more likely to yield desirable outcomes, such as safety and security for the public, the staff, and the clientele of the agencies, a skilled and involved staff, and, on balance, an enriching experience for all' (p.2).

As such, they make claims to have uncovered a prescription for 'effective management'. The book is primarily aimed at American prison managers. The works cited in the book are predominantly from the USA and draw heavily upon standard foundation texts in management studies. To a UK audience there are obvious omissions from the rich and growing sociology of prison staff that has emerged over recent years, including the work of Alison Lieblich, Ben Crewe, and Elaine Crawley, as well as important contributions by former practitioners including Andrew Coyle, Shane Bryans and David Wilson. The format and style of the book is intended to be accessible, using highlighted boxes to draw upon specific practical examples and experiences as well as academic works.

In contrast, Durnescu and McNeill offer a more diverse and less narrowly constrained work. They draw from prisons and probation and across a range of nations including, USA, UK, Europe and Japan. Intellectually, they are also more engaged with the sociology of work and criminal justice. They intend to go underneath organisational statements and intentions, in order to discover the

reality of the front-facing experience and how this illuminates broader criminological concerns. As the editors describe:

'...we cannot seriously engage with the evaluative question: 'What Works?' without also engaging with the critical and comparative questions 'What exactly is going on here and why is it like that [here]?', and the explanatory question 'How exactly are these relations between penal practitioners and penal subjects constituted, constructed and experienced?'" (p.5)

They are therefore engaged not with a top-down prescription of what is intended, but instead a bottom-up exploration of penal practice as street craft, a place where macro-issues of power and ideology intersect with occupational cultures and individual agency.

These two books are therefore fundamentally different not only in their style, scope and intellectual foundations but also in their politics. Stohr and Collins's work promotes dominant, hegemonic ideas about management and organisational control. For them, the idea of the heroic leader and total control from above are propagated. They focus on the techniques of managerialism including the deployment of organisational systems for monitoring, control and governing the subjectivity of employees through the use of human resource management techniques. Such approaches far from offering ideal prescriptions are highly contestable. Their stated perspective that imprisonment can be 'an enriching experience for all' is also highly controversial, and it could be argued legitimises prisons and masks the painfulness of the carceral experience. Durnescu and McNeill's book is far less simplistic, exposing

1. Crewe, B., Bennett, J. and Wahidin, A. (2008) *Introduction* in Bennett, J., Crewe, B. and Wahidin, A. (eds) *Understanding Prison Staff* Cullompton: Willan p.1-13.

the complexity, messiness and contradictions of penal practice. Their collection brings to life how penal practice is a field struggle with practitioners having to balance and make sense of a number of competing pressures. The tide of globalisation does wash in, bringing with it concern with risk and uncertainty, punitive sensibilities and capitalist commercial practices including managerialism. However, practitioners also draw upon their own personal values and the long-standing features of their occupational cultures. As a result, there is not uniform practice across organisations or nations but instead there remains a place for localism and for individual agency. They also recognise the limitations and contradictions of imprisonment, how it is entangled within wider power structures, and the challenges of trying to do good in an institution founded upon pain and punishment.

The focus on practitioners in these two books is to be warmly welcomed as indeed is the fact that there are divergent approaches and perspectives. However, readers are cautioned to be alert to the political payloads being carried.

Dr Jamie Bennett is Governor of HMP Grendon and Springhill.

Book Review

Delivering Rehabilitation: The politics, governance and control of probation.

By Lol Burke and Steve Collett

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 978-0-415-54038-4

Price: £26.99

This book has been published at a time when the probation service is going through the most turbulent period since its inception. The creation of Community Rehabilitation Companies to take on the supervision in the

community of low and medium risk offenders and the welcome addition of supervision for those on short sentences, is complicated by the contracting out of large portions of the original probation service. Only those that pose the highest risk remain under the supervision of the directly employed, public sector (now national) probation service. The media attention, headlines and discussion on social media continues and the timing of this book is not lost on the authors. In fact it appears to have spurred on a project that they were looking to complete for some time.

The authors are Lol Burke, who is a Senior Lecture in Criminal Justice at Liverpool John Moores University, and has experience as a practitioner in the probation service before entering academia. An established commentator on probation, he is the editor of the Probation Journal and on the editorial board of the European Journal of Probation. Steve Collett has an extensive history working in probation, becoming chief officer after a thirty year career before retirement. Both then are authoritative commentators on a service that they have contributed much to over their working lives.

The book touches on a number of issues including governance, performance, professional identity, citizenship, the state, and market forces in relation to probation. It aims to be attractive to a range of audiences including academics and practitioners in the field of corrections and wider social policy, as well as students of criminal justice. However, what is clear from the first quote in Chapter 1 from the eloquent Alan Bennett, is that the underlying theme to this book is a combative rejection of the privatisation of a service that cannot accommodate profit with the humanitarian interests of rehabilitation. Indeed the authors spell out that their book fills a gap

in their own market of probation service publications, partially because it is a more politically informed text than others already in the domain.

The first few chapters set out the context of delivering rehabilitation in a probation setting, highlighting the political environment that brought a more punitive approach to criminal behaviour. The authors interestingly examine what they believe to be probation sleepwalking into the current Transforming Rehabilitation project, following the service allowing itself to be subsumed into the National Offender Management Service, a prison service dominated, command-and-control style agency in their view, which broke the strong relationships with local communities and developed the New Public Management paradigm.

There is a thought provoking chapter on professional identity in the probation service which seems to highlight a cultural cold war that has taken place within the service, where language and short versus long term impacts have been agonised over for a number of decades. It explores how staff balance care and control in their work but invariably ends up with a section on market-driven logic or professional values, and whether both can be accommodated within the current strategy.

The return time and again to the privatisation of sections of the probation service, brings out more of an ideological examination of the function of probation in the remaining chapters, including a very good analysis of who is to blame for an offender/service user's current situation and whether probation can solve that issue or wider social aggravators need to be taken into consideration more by the political elite.

In conclusion, this book does provide a unique insight into the politically informed context of delivering rehabilitation in the

probation service. It comes at a time when there is much interest in how the new Transforming Rehabilitation arrangements will work and it also seems to indirectly call for a follow up piece in a few years' time to chart the changes that have been implemented. Overall, this is an informative and captivating read for the wide range of readers it aims for. It is necessarily wide ranging, yet also concise enough to remain on topic which is a real achievement given the title of the book. It is unashamedly political rather than a neutral review of the state of probation, which, whatever political persuasion the reader adopts, is the main draw to reading this book

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Book Review

Criminal justice ethics: Cultivating the moral imagination

By Sharon Hayes

Publisher: Routledge (2015)

ISBN: 978-1-13-877697-5 (paperback)

Price: £29.99 (paperback)

As late as the end of the 1980s, Professor Andrew Rutherford was observing that criminal justice management was, 'an arena characterized by competing ideologies.'¹ Based on interviews with managers he argued that there were three clusters of values or 'credos' that shaped individual practice. The first was 'punitiveness', which encompassed moral condemnation and dislike of offenders and support for harsh, even degrading punishment. The second was 'expedient managerialism', a

concern with disposing of tasks as smoothly and efficiently as possible. The third was 'humanity', including empathy with prisoners and victims, constraining state power, and promoting rehabilitation and care. This work suggested that there was a vibrant moral discourse within the criminal justice profession. Subsequently, it has been argued that this diversity has been subdued and instead there has been the hegemonic growth of 'managerialism' with its focus upon commercial competition and private sector practices such as extensive systems of monitoring and control.² This has not only altered practice, but has also had an impact upon values. In her Perrie Lecture delivered in 2011, Professor Alison Lieblich.³ cautioned against the encroaching hegemony of 'economic rationality' as the governing approach to public service, including prison management, suggesting that, 'general questions of value have come to be *replaced*, rather than *restrained*, by questions of technical efficacy'. The risk of this, she suggested was that 'a preoccupation with efficiency... brings in its wake, moral indifference'.

It is against this background that Sharon Hayes, an Associate Professor at Queensland University of Technology, offers a text book on criminal justice ethics. She draws a distinction between morality, as individual beliefs and choices, and ethics, relating rules of guidelines for particular groups, in this case criminal justice professionals. The book itself is set out in three parts. The first, 'Ethical theory' is an overview of some foundation texts such as utilitarianism and deontology. The second part, 'Ethics in public life', is again concerned with foundation material on constructing the idea of the good

society. The third part, 'Ethics in the criminal justice system', considers specific professions including lawyers, police and prison staff. It explores the different, contested values and professional codes within these professions, such as the ever-present tensions between various ideas of the purpose of imprisonment.

This book is essentially a text book aimed at undergraduates. It effectively marshals the foundation material and presents it in an accessible and applied form. The subject is engagingly brought to life through examples and case studies. This book is not primarily aimed at practitioners and it is unlikely to immediately appeal to many, but if the criminal justice professionals of the future are to be engaged with this material and encouraged to cultivate a moral imagination, then that may have long-term benefits in resisting the encroachment of economic rationality and reinvigorating professional discourse.

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Book Review

Public management: Second edition

By Ian Greener

Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan (2013)

ISBN: 978-0-230-35399-2 (paperback)

Price: £29.99 (paperback)

The public sector has faced an increasingly complex and demanding task in the wake of the financial crisis and the emergence of the 'age of austerity'. Public expenditure is being significantly reduced and as a result the role of

1. Rutherford, A. (1993) *Criminal Justice and the Pursuit of Decency* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. For example Bryans, S. (2007) *Prison Governors: Managing prisons in a time of change* Cullompton: Willan.

3. Lieblich (2011) *Perrie Lecture: The cost to prison legitimacy of cuts in Prison Service Journal* No.198 p.3-11.

the state is being called into question. This brings a particular set of challenges for public management and public managers. This is the focus of the second edition of *Public management* authored by Professor Ian Greener of the University of Durham.

The central argument of this book is that public management is a complex task characterised by a series of paradoxes. Greener defines this condition as follows:

'Where there is a paradox, however, there is a duality where contradictory elements co-exist over time, and the organization must simply live with them — there is no opportunity to choose as both the contradictory elements are inescapably part of the organisation' (p. 4)

Such paradoxes will be familiar to those working in prisons who have to balance the dualities of security, control, care and rehabilitation.

The contradictions and tensions that exist within public management, Greener argues, include: both managers and professionals believe that they should be in charge of public services; public services must be both democratically accountable to their citizenry, but also achieve good results for their individual users; public services must be run according to public values, but also according to market values; public services must be efficient, yet also

deliver strong customer service, and; public managers are appointed by contradictory means (election or selection). Taken together, he suggests that:

'Public management, however, is an inherently paradoxical enterprise, attempting to balance the need to be democratically accountable to the public as a whole as well as good individual service, meeting the demands of government as well as the needs of local people, balancing respect for professionals while demanding accountability from them, and allowing deficit spending when it is justified, but having the discipline to reduce expenditure in boom times when it is not' (p. 207)

The explicit articulation of these pressures by Greener is of value in itself. What it does is to craft an appreciation of the complexities and distinctiveness of public management. As he highlights in one case study, public administration in France and Germany is formally recognised as a distinct profession, reflected in training, development and in public esteem. Whilst these elements are missing in the UK, the challenges and importance of this task are the same.

In this second edition, Greener attempts to draw out some of the ways that contemporary economic circumstances have re-shaped public management. In particular, he exposes the paradoxes that underpin the relationship between

the state and the market. He argues that whereas the economic crisis had its roots in the private financial sector, the solution is seen to lie in an intensification of the faith in unregulated financial markets. He also suggests that the large public spending deficits have been accumulated as a result of the failures of the private sector and yet the responsibility for reducing this has fallen upon the public sector. Whilst such observations are highly political and critical, they are nevertheless important and credible arguments

From a practitioner perspective, it is to Greener's credit that he is not polemic or dogmatic in his approach to considering the future of public management. His approach is to suggest that public management has to live with contradictions that exist and to flexibly apply solutions, seeking a balance according to circumstances, needs, values and outcomes required.

Whilst this book is not explicitly about prisons, it is of significant relevance to anyone involved in public management. Greener's greatest success is in drawing out and illuminating the distinctive nature of public management. That is an achievement for which practitioners can be profoundly grateful.

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