

Essay 4

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Identify infrastructure parameters facilitating change by DOC secretary, administration, and daily operating staff.

In 1858, Florida established DOC, department of corrections, and built its first prison, Florida State Penitentiary. Its construction was straight forward. Concrete block building surrounded by razor wire. Redemption was self realized and educational opportunities were none. Punishment was continuous in the form of chain gang work squads. Time was served and you were released with no life skills sets, only those of which you possessed before incarceration. Simple but ineffective.

As such, communities began to evolve around prisons. These usually were employees of the prison and their families. Communities grew with generations of family members as prison employees with personal ideologies taking hold as a form of moral justice. Moral codes, from a social point of view, are simply formulations of standards of conduct in which society finds convenient or necessary to impose upon their members. Even morality, from a sociological standpoint forms conduct which are conducive to social harmony, social efficiency, and survival of the group or community.

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Our industrial revolution spawned a new age of reality in relation to our standard of living. Two main factors of social evolution were, competition; within groups to ensure efficiency, legality, and leadership. The second was cooperation within groups to ensure survival of the group as a whole.

Society and associations are abstract terms related to and including economic, political, moral, religious, and industrial phenomena and must be viewed from the collective, or social standpoint rather than detached problems by themselves. Many individuals struggled with the complexities of society and became detached with our legislative bodies who were imposing conditions of survival that some could not sustain. Soon, the prison population grew exponentially.

With the explosion of incarcerated peoples, administrative codes and legislative statutes were enacted to organize prison policy and procedure, punishment codes, and allocate a budget for operations. In my opinion, two factors were not accounted for. One, the rapid increase in prison incarcerations and the construction to house them. Two, DOC's inability to foresee recidivism as a potential problem.

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Crime, in one form or another has been part of humanity since we first began to organize ourselves and form cooperative systems.

The best possible means to prepare an inmate for his or her return to society is the introduction of programs in vocational trades and life sustaining skill sets. This idea of education in life skill sets to sustain and support an inmates transition back into society was not a foundational goal of legislation, DOC administration, staff or the general public who voted these law makers into office.

State correction officers are charged with care, custody, and control of the inmate. Criminal justice are events that are not to be interrupted by their desire for punishment. And with a mind set upon that of expiation, there remains no positive end result.¹ Florida's main source of income, some debate this issue, are tourism, then prison, source of employment and business service sectors, and finally the citrus industry.

¹ Sigal Barsade, professor at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, conducted research that shows our emotions and moods can transfer from one person or to an entire team both consciously and unconsciously, its called "emotional contagion".

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After 30 yrs. of failed prison policy, legislation has directed DOC budget towards this problem of recidivism and its root cause. However, prison reform will never occur because the constituency that voted for policy makers do not want ex-felons roaming the territory of Florida.

If a political entity signed a prison reform bill to reduce sentencing guidelines, better educational opportunities for inmates, increase their tax base to pay for this change and it failed, their political careers would be over.

Another problem facing DOC are the resources to sustain any form of incentive educational programming.

Such as liability issues for teaching staff, a steady stream of educational material, mostly donated, and space for classrooms and vocational training areas. These issues were never considered in the construction phase of this present day eventuality. DOC's main concern is housing.

To enact a pattern for change in attitude-behavior by the inmate and make overall prison operation constructive both for the inmate, staff, and promote a sound business model, a sincere effort must include all levels of administration from legislation to staff and the constituency for any educational/reform initiative to succeed where funding alone has not yield a return on our investment.

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For any new idea to succeed there must also be consistency in application which is an obstacle not easily overcome by prison standards.

People in high pressure positions, such as prison staff, face a diverse range of challenges from the complex needs to problem solving, inadequate wages, and administration who are not always supportive of opinions or emotions. Emotional labor describes the effort required to manage the way we express our feeling²

One possible solution to better educate prison operating staff is to teach personnel to operate with less authority and more humanity, IRA, (identity, intercede, resource, and assessment). The "Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, SEL, was established in 1994 and recognized two factors contributing to social and emotional learning. One, cognition behavior to build self and social awareness, and two, manage emotions to build positive relationships.

² Arlie Hochschild first defined it as "creating a publicly visible facial and bodily display within the workplace", and studied how people in certain professions frequently are required to put on fake fronts.

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Benefits from IRA training initiative and SEL techniques within the workplace would encourage the following attitude-behaviors:

- 1) creativity and innovation
- 2) organizational commitment
- 3) job satisfaction
- 4) managerial performance
- 5) social support from team members
- 6) leadership emergence
- 7) merit pay.

In conclusion:

I.P. Facilities are for those inmates who just want to do their time, follow rules, and prepare for their transition back to society. Legislation has passed the Second Chance Pell Grant Act. to be available to incarcerated people. But not all facilities are eligible to participate. First, the warden at each facility has to apply for the program and there must be colleges who are approved and offer online classes or correspondence courses, which in itself must be approved by the warden and administrative bodies, not easily accomplished. Second issue is available space at the facility for these classes and staff to proctor the classes.

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Then there is the issue of materials, computers, books and so on, to be donated, who? How about the problem of building the physical infrastructure to support men and material, where's the money come from? All difficult decisions to be made by people in high places who still believe that no second chance should be given.

AMU's are simple to define. You want to fight, do drugs, commit robbery, kill. AMU will be your place of residences. (Administrative Management Units).

There are always alternatives to life's conditions. Prisons should be no exception. Maybe one day people will realize that corrections, for those who wish to do so, must come to fruition. Granted, there are those who should never get out, and those who will falsify themselves to gain their desire. But those people will lose the game of life,

But at whose expense?