

Offender Rehabilitation and Reintegration: A South African Perspective

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ABSTRACT The reintegration and rehabilitation of offenders is one of the main objectives of the Department of Correctional Services in South Africa, yet this aspect is of primary concern of the community and the public at large. This is primarily due to the perceptions that many people have about the criminal justice system which is often gleaned from daily news reports on television, newspapers and various social media coverage of crime, offenders and victims in South Africa and internationally. Although the purpose of the South African Correctional system is not punishment, but the protection of the public, promotion of social responsibility and enhancing human development in order to prevent the rate of recidivism, the correctional population continues to escalate. Most incarcerated offenders will eventually be released from custody and return to the community from which they came. The purpose of this paper is firstly to examine the prison population in South Africa and secondly to explore the different rehabilitation and reintegration programmes available to offenders.

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa there is an inadequate amount of knowledge regarding the rate of recidivism, the role that reintegration and rehabilitation programmes offered to offenders of crime and the role that this can play to restraint the high rate of recidivism. Most information is anecdotal based on the high turnover of offenders entering and leaving correctional institutions. Discussion of predictions of offender rehabilitation and reintegration needs to be understood within the wider debate of the changes that have been occurring in South Africa and its subsequent consequences for punishment. Garland (1999) was of the view that the world we now inhabit is no longer that in which modern criminology emerged with its emphasis on individual treatment and correction of the offender; the social, economic and cultural changes of the last few decades seem to undo the certainties of modern social theory and its relation to the world, thus there is an emergence of terms such as high, late and post modernity, each of which has implications for the way in which we conceive of our society and the implementation of policies. Garland and Sparks (2000: 199) argue that we are now in Late modernity, and in addition to bringing new levels of choice and freedom, the coming of late modernity has brought with it new disorders particularly the high levels of crime

and insecurity. For example, amongst demands for exemplary sanctions against offenders are also calls for schemes to name and shame the offender focusing on the relations between the offender and victims (elements of restorative justice). Another example of the contradictions present is that whilst there is a spread in the use of community corrections and alternate sentencing, there is nevertheless an increase in correctional populations (Rose et al. 2000: 322).

According to Garland and Sparks (2000: 199) the experience of high crime rates as being a normal part of life has led to a distinct culture which ultimately changes the way in which criminology and criminal policy operates. The question then arises, what does this mean for the prospects of promoting support for the reintegration of offenders? Rose (2000: 325) notes that the generation of persons growing up in this culture are primarily concerned with seeking to minimise criminal occurrences and managing dangerous groups rather than seeking to discipline and normalise the offender. The fear of crime and concerns for victim and public safety has begun to dominate government policy with a "crime consciousness" being an important factor. This has eventually led to frustration and the calls for harsher punishment in response to the danger presented by crime as well as an increase in measures to avoid crime. Due to the high rate of crime in South Africa, especially the

increase of serious crimes over the past two years, media reports and sentiments from the public generally indicate that citizens are fearful and less sympathetic to offenders, particularly those who have been released from prison.

This portrays a forbidding depiction for the success of programs aimed at facilitating the reintegration of the offender into the community, mainly in the context of modernisation within the 21st century. However, the need for such programs and support from the community for the successful reintegration of offenders cannot be disregarded. Whilst offender reintegration programmes may remain the most intensive and least effective in reducing crime, this does not mean that efforts to promote reintegration should be abandoned (Muntingh 2008: 30). Overpopulation in correctional facilities continues to be an ongoing problem and a serious threat to the recognition of basic rights of inmates and the implementation of rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives by the Department of Correctional Services. Thus the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the rehabilitation and reintegration programmes available to offenders in South Africa. In order to do this it is imperative that one has an indication and understanding of the correctional statistics in the country. This can serve as a foundation for rehabilitation and reintegration service providers, who may use this study to offer more comprehensive reintegration and rehabilitation services to offenders which will have a positive impact on offender's behaviour, hence a reduction in the rate of recidivism.

The South African Correctional Population

The South African Correctional population is closely linked to the crime statistics of the country which in turn is an indicator of the stability of a country-- the higher it is the less stable a country is regarded to be. In the past two years the crime statistics has for certain crimes have increased, for example murder which is an important crime to monitor because unlike other

crimes, the number of reported murders is likely to be very close to the actual number of murders committed nationally and internationally. Incidents of murder increased from 16,259 murders in 2012/13 to 17,068 in 2013/14. The average number of murders committed each day increased from 45 in 2012/13 to 47 in 2013/14 (South African Police Services (SAPS): 2015).

At the time of writing this research paper the only updated available statistics on the correctional population was available from the Annual Report of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (now renamed to the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services). The statistics on the Correctional Services website has not been updated since 2011 and do not provide sufficient detail. The Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons (JIP) was established as an independent statutory body in terms of section 85 of the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 (the Act) to monitor the conditions in prisons and the treatment of prisoners and to report to the President and the Minister of Correctional Services. It was further mandated to appoint Independent Prison Visitors (IPVs), now known as Independent Correctional Centre Visitors (Independent Visitors) to visit institutions and, should there be complaints, to try to have them resolved. The vision of the IPV's is to ensure that all prisoners are detained under humane conditions, treated with human dignity and prepared for reintegration into the community. According to the Correctional Services Act, Act No. 25 of 2008 (2008: 8) the word "correction" means provision of services and programmes aimed at correcting the offending behaviour of sentenced offenders in order to rehabilitate them.

There are 241 active correctional centres across South Africa. Eight are for women only, 13 are for youths and 129 are for men only. 91 accommodate women in a section of the prison. The total capacity of prisons is 118 154 people, with 25 000 places being reserved for people awaiting trial detainees (ATD) or remand offenders. The total prison population in 2014 was 154

Table 1: Offenders in custody-remand and sentenced: Department of Correctional Services 2006-2014

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Remand	46327	48461	53435	49447	49030	47862	46351	48696	44236
Sentenced	111075	113213	112552	115753	114282	112683	111814	104670	110412
Total	157402	161674	165987	165200	163312	160545	158165	153366	154648

Source: Department of Correctional Services

648, of which 44 236 (31%) were ATD and 110 412 (69%) were sentenced offenders. Nationally, there is an overcrowding level of approximately 137 percent. This figure varies according to the number of offenders released. Table 1 represents the increase/decrease of the correctional population during 2006 to 2014.

From Table 2, 52 percent of the sentenced offenders were serving sentences of ten years or less. Ten percent were serving sentences of less than two years. This means that according to South African law this 10 percent of sentenced offenders are not exposed to rehabilitation or reintegration programmes. Together with approximately a third of the offenders who are awaiting trial the percentage of offenders within correctional institutions not receiving any form of corrective programme amounts to approximately 40 percent of the total inmate population.

Table 2: Length of offender sentences for 2012 (latest available)

Sentence length	Number	%
<6 months	4405	4
>6-12 months	3725	3
>12-24 months	3661	3
2-3 years	12015	11
3-5 years	11987	11
5-7 years	8086	7
7-10 years	14773	13
10-15 years	20060	18
15-20 years	12168	11
>20 years	10712	10
Life	10349	9
Death	1	0
Other sentenced	525	0
Total sentenced	112467	100%

Source: Department of Correctional Services 2013

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the rehabilitation and reintegration programmes available to offenders in South Africa. This research examines some of the programmes of rehabilitation and reintegration offered by the Department of Correctional Services and Non-Governmental Organisations nationally. To address the aim of this paper, a review of literatures has been conducted. Information has been gathered from the most important documents on the basis of which the Correctional Institutions is predicated upon that is, the White paper

on Correctional Services and the principles enshrined within the South African Constitution. This study took into consideration the annual reports by the Judicial Inspectorate of Correctional Services, the Department of Correctional Services and the South African Police Services. Furthermore information has been gathered from books, journals, reports, articles as well as critical and evaluative works based on offender rehabilitation and reintegration.

Defining Offender Reintegration

Morgan and Owers define offender reintegration as:

“A systematic and evidence-based process by which actions are taken to work with the offender in custody and on release, so that communities are better protected from harm and re-offending is significantly reduced. It encompasses the totality of work with offenders, their families, significant others, (and victims) in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations” (Padayachee 2011: 16).

Essentially, the reintegration of offenders denotes working with the offender to effect change and reintroduce the offender into the community, encourage law abiding behaviour and prevent further engagement in criminal activity. It is necessary to know that reintegration is a *process* rather than a singular intervention. It is associated with the process of support commencing during incarceration and continues after release, which is sometimes referred to as “after care”. Reintegration resonates with the ability of the ex-offender to function within the community, within their family, employment and be capable of managing circumstances in a manner that circumvents risk and additional conflicts with the law. This is predicated on the reduction of the rate of recidivism.

This in essence provides a framework which should underpin programmes that aim to facilitate the successful reintegration of offenders. In addition, it is argued that restorative justice values and principles provide a sound framework for the development of programmes geared towards the rehabilitation, treatment and reintegration of offenders (Skelton and Batley 2008: 33). The ethos of restorative justice in its focus on repairing the harm caused by the act in order to restore the victim, offender and the community lies at the heart of offender reintegration.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The Need For and the Types of Reintegration of Offenders

Within the South African criminal justice system the sentence of imprisonment is generally used as a sentencing option. The increase in the spate of crimes over the past two decades has contributed to the public outcry for harsher and severer punishment to perpetrators of crime. Furthermore the Criminal Law Amendment Act 105 of 1997 introduced minimum sentences of 5, 7, 10, 15, 20, 25 years and life for a range of offences including categories of theft, corruption, drug dealing, assault, rape and murder. It obliges a magistrate and judge to impose not less than the prescribed minimum sentence unless substantial and compelling circumstances justified a lesser sentence.

This has resulted in the escalating correctional population which contributes in the overcrowding of correctional facilities. Correctional overcrowding has consequences for the offenders that are incarcerated, the correctional systems and the community. For the person incarcerated, the consequences of overcrowding include the exposure to poor health conditions, the risk of violence and victimization, an increased safety risk from fire hazards to both staff and detainees, and increased levels of suicide (Griffiths et al. 2007: 24).

Overcrowding within correctional institutions affects the effective implementation of institutional based programmes. Thousands of individuals pass through the correctional system every year. In South Africa approximately 30 000 offenders are released from corrections every month. However, almost the same number of offenders is taken into state custody during the same period – creating a virtual static correctional population. This translates into 360 000 former offenders returning to the community each year. The majority of individuals imprisoned in South Africa are young men convicted for less serious offences, these persons serve short term sentences and are then released with the expectation that they fit back into the community, find a job and refrain from engaging in any further criminal activity (Muntingh 2005).

Three types of offender re-integration programmes are prevalent, that is, institution based programmes, surveillance based transition pro-

grammes and assistance based transition programmes (Griffiths et al. 2007: 6-22):

“institution based programmes are described as being designed to prepare offenders to re-enter society including such programmes as ‘education, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, job training, counselling, and mentoring’; however it is noted that as these programmes are voluntary, large numbers of offenders who do not participate are then released back into the community without any pre-release preparation. Surveillance based reintegration programmes are described as centring on the supervision of the offender in the community once released, essentially parole supervision (this may also involve strengths based rehabilitation in the performance of reparation work). Assistance based programmes are described as including services to assisting mentally ill offenders once released, employment/job market/re-entry assistance, lodging and financial assistance, family support and substance abuse interventions”.

Nonetheless Griffiths et al. (2007: 41) maintain that implementation of these programmes should be continuous and consistent through the transition of the offender from incarceration through their re-entry to the community. Successful reintegration programmes should begin prior to the offenders release, while the offender is still incarcerated and continue through the offenders ‘transition to and stabilization’ in the community. Reintegration programmes should aim at finding a middle ground between the surveillance and control of offenders and then the support and assistance of the offender.

Department of Correctional Services and Non-governmental Organisations Crime Prevention Initiative: Khulisa and NICRO

In partnership with the Department of Correctional Services, non-governmental organizations such as Khulisa and the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Re-integration of Offenders (NICRO) and The President’s Award for Youth Empowerment have contributed in fight and eradication of crime from its grass root through offender rehabilitation and reintegration programs which attempt to break the cycle of crime and violence in South Africa. The Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiative was established in 1997. It aimed at addressing crime ho-

listically and the different programmes were intended to intervene at the various stages in the cycle of crime. The types of programmes run by Khulisa include corrections programmes, skills development, restorative justice programmes, community participation programmes, pre and post release programmes (van Selm 2008). One of the key programmes, *The My Path Programme* is a year-long programme designed for individuals that are in need of corrective behaviour therapy and personal development. The programme aims to promote the exploration of participants themselves as 'emotional, social, physical and psychological' beings in addition to 'the discovery of creative abilities' (van Selm 2008: 90). My path, rehabilitation and reintegration programs for offenders who have a minimum of two years (remaining) to serve at time of programme registration is facilitated by Khulisa and include a number of processes that promote behavioural change and skills development. Muntingh (2008: 6) acknowledges that the *My Path programme* 'remains the foundation on which behavioural change interventions for offenders can be built'. Furthermore, Khulisa place offenders on a path to prepare themselves for re-entry into a positive, productive and meaningful lifestyle by building partnerships with potential employers to make jobs available upon release and try to employ ex-offenders whenever possible (Khulisa 2014).

According to the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Re-integration of Offenders (NICRO) (Masquet 2014), diversion is a significant shift away from punitive and retributive criminal justice towards rehabilitative, educational and developmental options aimed at promoting restoration, reconciliation and healing. The NICRO Diversion Programme (2013: 1) offers seven standard options aimed at a healthy alternative and significant developmental opportunity for marginalised, socially excluded and traumatised young people in conflict with the law by giving them a chance to turn their lives around and become productive, responsible citizens. There are a number of objectives of the intervention programmes. Some of these are to:

- ♦ Prevent young people in conflict with the law from re-offending
- ♦ Identify and deal with underlying problems motivating juvenile offender behaviour
- ♦ Provide psycho-educational and rehabilitative programmes to the benefit of all parties concerned

- ♦ Offer young offenders the opportunity of taking responsibility for their actions and be accountable for these actions, in addition to providing an opportunity for reparation
- ♦ Prevent first time or petty offenders from receiving a criminal record and being labelled as criminals, as this may become a self-fulfilling prophecy
- ♦ Lessen the case-load of the formal justice system
- ♦ Avoid the imprisonment of first-time or petty offenders who are exposed to criminal elements, emerge hardened by the experience and all the more prepared to repeat their offending or criminal behaviour
- ♦ Reduce the risk of young people committing crimes.

One of the programmes, the *Tough Enough Program* facilitated by NICRO commences in prison and target prisoners remaining with six or less months to serve of their sentence. The programme is conducted over a period between nine to twelve months. This programme assists offenders and their families to explore the opportunities and possibilities in assisting them to reintegrate into their community (Mpuang, 2000). Figure 1 represents the key role players within the South African Criminal Justice System (Singh 2004).

The South African Perspective on Offender Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Although the Constitution of South Africa does not expressly provide that the state should assist offenders to 'reintegrate' and 'rehabilitate' the overall framework debates the duty of the state to support and create opportunities for offender reintegration. The White Paper on Corrections (2005) recognizes that the rehabilitation and reintegration of the offender into society corrections is a societal responsibility and that civil society organizations have a critical role to play, due mainly to the fact that DCS does not have a strong focus on post-release support services for ex-offenders. As stated earlier, there have been various civil society organizations that work with offenders and ex-offenders by providing services to them aimed at promoting their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. This is aimed at the likelihood that the ex-offender may be rehabilitated thereby reducing

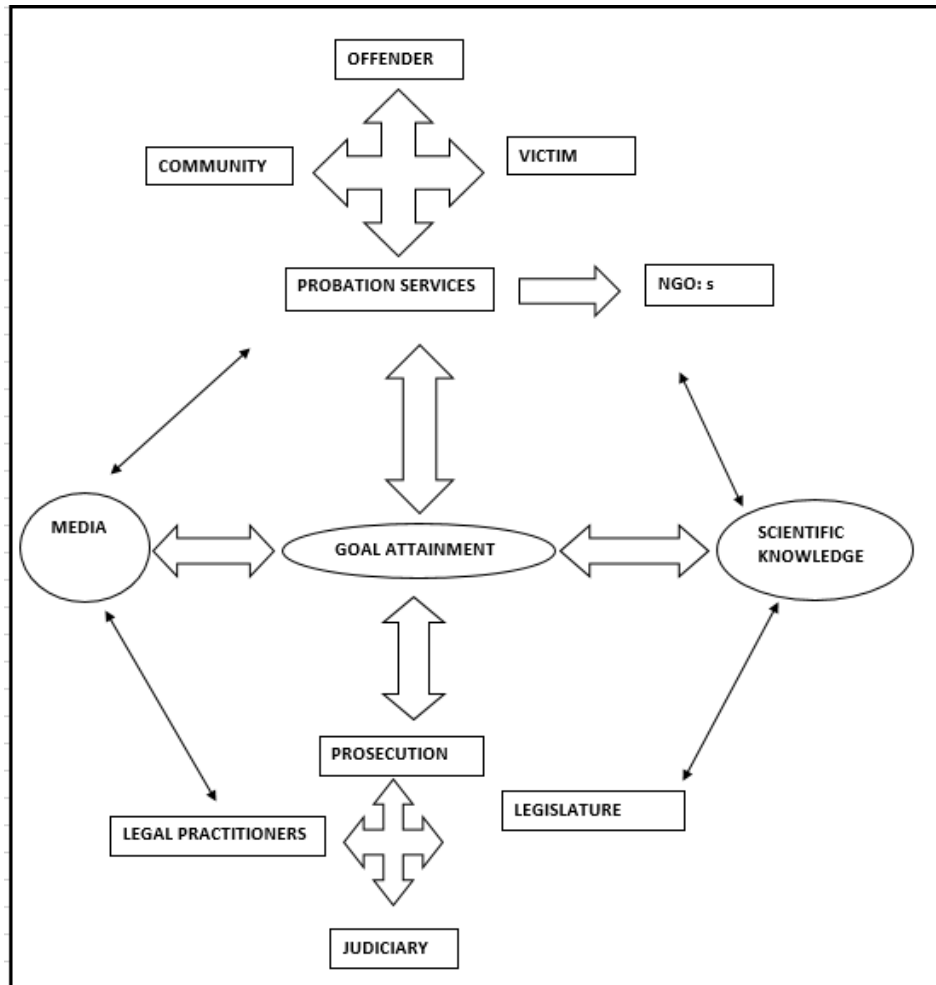


Fig. 1. Key role players within the criminal justice system

Source: Author

the chances of re-offending. Among these civil society organizations include Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA), and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), (Muntingh 2008). The most crucial of all the challenges facing the Department of Correctional Services revolves around the serious overcrowding of correctional facilities and the extent to which this state of affairs effectively negates the rehabilitation of correctional clients, undermines human dignity in correctional facilities and renders safety and security of offend-

ers and the community vulnerable (Department of Correctional Services Draft Green Paper 2003). It was found by Muntingh (2002) that:

“Throughout the world, people are incarcerated in vast numbers without it having resulted in any significant reduction in crime. The threat of punishment also does not appear to have any significant impact in terms of preventing people from committing offences. The fact that so many current offenders are in fact recidivists and have been in corrections before clearly shows the deterrence approach does not hold much promise as a crime reduction strategy.”

Furthermore Booyens (2011: 86) states that when offenders are told that they will be released they frequently ask “*Released to do what?*” To a large extent this attitude may be attributed to the fact that it is during this crucial period after release that most ex-offenders face personal, economic and social challenges which may renders them vulnerable to engage in crime again. As noted above, the DCS does not have a strategy to deal with released offenders. Although the correctional system has the responsibility to rehabilitate offenders before they are released, as soon as they step out of the correctional institution the support, whether rehabilitative or reintegrative that was in existence within the institution, terminates. Effective reintegration should be the main aim of the correctional system. Muntingh (2008) found that some ex-offenders were not satisfied with the manner in which they were prepared for release. According to his research one participant described the pre-release programme used by the DCS as follows:

“The pre-release programme from DCS does not really help. They tell how traffic lights work; green means go and red stop. But we know these things, this is not useful. How do you really prepare a person for release? You are really just dumped outside. We need a proper reintegration programme. DCS must at least try to have a reintegration programme. There are different options but they need to try harder to make it work, like learner ships.”

In South Africa, rehabilitation and reintegration services are only available to inmates serving sentences of 24 months or longer. Awaiting trial offenders (who comprise approximately a third of the prison population are not provided with any facilities for rehabilitation or reintegration because they are still awaiting their trial. This period of waiting could sometimes exceed two years due to the bottleneck within the criminal justice system. The figure below represents the number of offenders who have access to rehabilitation services within corrections (Judicial Inspectorate of Correctional Services 2010). It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of sentenced offenders have regular access to work and rehabilitation programmes. Table 3 shows the access to rehabilitation and reintegration programmes attended by offenders during the period 2008 to 2013.

From the Table 3 it is deduced that social work sessions were the most attended by offenders although this attendance decreased by 7 percent from 2008 to 2013. Attendance at sports, recreation, arts and cultural programmes decrease from 99 percent in 2008 to 52 percent in 2013. The rehabilitation and reintegration programmes go hand in hand with the number of expert staff employed to attend to the inmates.

Table 4 represents the number of social worker, psychologists and educationists with correctional facilities in South Africa from 2008 to 2014. Figure 1 indicates the ration of incarcerated offenders to staff.

Table 3: Access to rehabilitation and reintegration services 2008-2013

Indicator:	2008- 2009	%	2009- 2010	%	2010- 2011	%	2011- 2012	%	2012- 2013	%
Offenders Attended	(N=109877)		N=114972		(N=113571)		(N=112467)		(N=104878)	
Social work sessions	116115	106	208861	182	134358	118	40469	36	104073	99
Psychological sessions	9073	8	9494	8	No figure	Na	No figure	na	20865	20
Formal education	15130	14	21552	19	26320	23	25224	22	22351	21
Sports, recreation, arts and culture programmes	108887	99	127293	111	126416	111	99105	88	54717	52
Per day in production workshop	1834	2	1745	2	1693	1	1608	1	3110	3
Per day working in Agriculture	2741	2	2905	3	2906	3	3215	3	1515	1

Source: Judicial Inspectorate of Correctional Services 2013

Table 4: Number of expert staff nationally addressing behavioural change with inmates 2008-2014

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>2008-2009</i>	<i>2009-2010</i>	<i>2010-2011</i>	<i>2012-2013</i>	<i>2013-2014</i>
Social Workers	377	503	488	503	504
Psychologists	3	10	55	57	67
Educationists	431	429	416	447	463

Source: Adapted from NICRO 2014

Table 5 indicates that there are 208 offenders for every social worker, 1565 offenders for every psychologist and 227 offenders for every educator within correctional facilities. This huge ratio between offender and expert assistance places a huge burden on corrections and the criminal justice system as a whole.

Table 5: The ratio of incarcerated offenders to staff 2012-2013

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Ratio 2012-2013</i>
Social Workers	208
Psychologists	1565
Educationists	227

Source: Adapted from NICRO 2014

The successful re-integration of offenders into the community after confinement is a challenging undertaking. Within the correctional institution the inmate's every movement is scrutinised. The routine, regulation and undesirable effects of socialization into correctional life can be rigorous and long lasting. It is estimated that at least 95 percent of South African prisoners will return to the community after serving their sentences and a good portion of these will serve sentences of six months or less (DCS 2013). Without reintegration services upon their release, offenders completing their first sentence will find themselves toughened by their experience and may be incapable or disinclined to pursue non-criminal activities. Communities into which the offender is released play an integral role in the reintegration process. If offenders do not integrate positively into their community, this could have a negative for the safety of the community at large.

The critical criminogenic requirements of the offender should be addressed if rehabilitation programs are to have an impact that is including but not limited to education, employment, accommodation, drugs and alcohol, mental health, social networks, cognitive skills, and attitudes.

The fact that the role of DCS in rehabilitating and reintegration offenders ends as soon as the offender is released seems to be a constraint for the successful reintegration of the majority of offenders who find themselves back in their communities without housing, education or useful skills required to make them eligible to enter the ever increasing competitive job market. Furthermore offenders should be exposed to intensive skills development programmes that will be of benefit to them in becoming productive members of society. The broader society should be encouraged to help with obtaining employment, transport, housing and personal needs of the ex-offender. If the offenders were prepared with skills to obtain employment then it would help to prevent them from returning to crime upon release.

In a study conducted by Ngabonziza and Singh (2012) most participants in their study expressed their fear about life after incarceration. Their fear was based on returning to a life of economic uncertainty and a hostile environment that they had left and to which they will inevitably return to upon release. Some participants of the study (who had been released), indicated that they are struggling financially to make even afford bus fares to help them in their job hunting. Underlying drivers that potentially contribute to crime such as socio-economic factors that might be the root cause of the offender's criminal behaviour, need not only to be addressed but an effective sustainable support system that will continue to exist after offenders have been released should be provided by all stakeholders including general public, public sector, communities, non-governmental organisations as well as government departments. These ex-offenders who have returned in their communities but still have problems of unemployment, homelessness, social isolation or are still struggling to even make ends meet, may not have intentions to reoffend but with limited human and financial resources, efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate them which do not stretch and go beyond the

correctional walls, incarceration is likely to remain a revolving door.

Furthermore Griffiths and Murdoch (2009: 27) maintain that amidst the current calls from the public for harsher punishment, it is important to acknowledge the consequences of incarceration to the community. The increased use of incarceration as a sentence option and the resultant overcrowding of correctional institutions may place the community at a heightened risk of further victimisation as offenders who do not have access to treatment and vocational programs while incarcerated are at an increased risk to re-offend. Therefore, it is recognised that the conditions offenders experience within these institutions will ultimately contribute to their ability to make 'pro-social' choices when they are released. Due to overcrowding, resources that might have been devoted to offender programs, mental health and drug treatment services; are instead being spent on creating bed-space because of the enormous increase in the number of offenders. This not only results in violation of the human rights of offenders, but also in the over-extension of staff and the creation of conditions that undermine rehabilitation. Apart from the effect that the overcrowded conditions have on the physical and mental wellbeing of staff members and offenders, it also results in the breakdown of law, order and standards within the prison system and is a critical issue that confronts the criminal justice system. Thus it severely hinders the management of treatment and development programmes that are intended at effecting rehabilitation and reintegration. A rehabilitative correctional environment, responsive to the needs of individuals, cannot exist when institutions are overburdened, which is why the contrast in response on the part of the state and judiciary towards arrested suspects, and the treatment of offenders, is rather inexplicable. But it illustrates, perhaps, that legislation or legislative intent cannot change the status quo if political sentiment is lacking (Ballard 2014: 259).

CONCLUSION

To many offenders, being sent to a correctional institution is the ultimate rejection; which has often started in early childhood and has continued throughout an offender's life. The experience of arrest, appearing in court and being sentenced, especially to one of incarceration

is a disturbing experience, especially for first offenders. It is often the perception of the community that incarceration of an offender within a correctional institution is a place where criminal persons are kept in order to protect society. The offender who is sentenced to incarceration is also often aware of the low status to which he/she has sunk. Rehabilitation and reintegration into society is a severe challenge for Correctional Services and often not much is done in order to prepare the offender for re-entry into the community. The acquisition of adequate skills is very often the key to successful rehabilitation. The problem of recidivism in the South African correctional system is aggravated by the reality that correctional institutions have been unable to prepare offenders meaningfully for release or to survive in a world outside the institution. Furthermore correctional systems have failed to provide adequate treatment services for those offenders who suffered the psychological effects of detention in deteriorated and overcrowded environments. This hampers the re-absorption of the offender into society. Simply altering laws and creating possibilities of new non-custodial sanctions is not enough. It is vital to persuade all key players in the criminal justice world to accept these measures and that it is meaningful. The policy makers, legislators, the judiciary, police, prosecutors, media and the general public need to be convinced. If more people show interest in the human rights of incarcerated offenders, then more effort will be placed on resolving the overpopulation in correctional facilities. One of the major concerns of the public is the change of the criminal behaviour of offenders, to remove the risk they pose to society, and to transform them into socially attuned individuals. Since offenders are eventually released into the community, it is the responsibility of society as well to facilitate their adjustment back in the community. Correctional institutions should be reserved as a last resort treatment alternative. It should be a measure to restrain those offenders who cannot be 'cured', the main function being the protection of society and secondly to do so with the minimum amount of cruelty. Although alternatives to incarceration may not be effective as far as rehabilitation is concerned, they represent a more humanistic approach to punishment. The reduction of the correctional populace fundamentally depends on the use of community-based and

other alternatives to incarceration. The success of this will depend upon the assumption that society, that is the courts and magistrates, can break away from centuries of reliance on incarceration as punishment, and the policies that have been advocated should be put into practice.

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