

BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by David Phillips, Sheffield Hallam University

DICTIONARY OF PROBATION AND OFFENDER MANAGEMENT

Canton, R. and Hancock, D. (eds), Cullompton: Willan (2007) pp. 397; £22.99, pbk. ISBN 1-843922-89-4

The *Dictionary of Probation and Offender Management* is, to say the least, a well-compiled information pack. Whereas the term 'dictionary' is often used to refer to documents that provide basic definitions of terms, the *Dictionary of Probation and Offender Management* provides a lot more. The main strength of the book lies not only in the provision of detailed and, in some parts, critical and analytical definitions of and information about important and relevant terms, but also in the selection of the contributors. The entries in the *Dictionary of Probation and Offender Management* are written by renowned experts in the fields of probation and offender management in the UK and abroad. Another strength is the fact that the contributors are not exclusively academics but include practitioners of immense experience in the probation service and NOMS. Although the bulk of the entries concern the UK, there are entries on the probation services of different parts of the world, including the probation service in Africa, USA and Canada. Whilst the non-UK entries are brief, it is important to note the fact that there are no entries on the prison systems of these countries. The effort to include entries from other countries is commendable, more so now that comparative study is becoming a popular area in criminology and criminal justice studies.

This book comprises three parts. The first part is a detailed Introduction and Overview of the probation service in England and Wales with a special emphasis on the history of the service. Other areas of NOMS are not discussed in this part of the book. However, the editors emphasise their preference for probation as the focus of the collection, with NOMS being given a secondary coverage. The probation service is not only the key service in NOMS but also one that is the most rapidly expanding and developing part of NOMS. In this sense, the decision to focus on probation is justified. In addition, this part examines some issues of current probation police and practice in England and Wales, which should be of interest also to students of NOMS. This part of the book is very well

presented. It provides valuable information that sets the scene for the reader. It could be argued that practitioners may already have knowledge of most of the information contained in this part of the book; however, it is doubtful whether such information, in such a concise manner, is available in existing texts. More importantly, this section will be of immense value to non-practitioners and students.

The second and main part of the book consists of the entries, organised in an alphabetical order. The comprehensive nature of the entries makes this book look more like an encyclopaedia than a dictionary. In addition, the inclusion of key texts and sources at the end of each entry further increases the value of the book as a reference text.

The third section of the book consists of appendices that include a list of abbreviations commonly used by probation and NOMS officials a probation time line and concept maps. This is important as the field of probation and NOMS is dogged by abbreviations and terminologies that are increasing as new criminal justice ideas and policies are introduced. Hence, this part will serve as a ready reckoner for practitioners and be of immense value to readers especially students.

In a nutshell, Canton and Hancock's *Dictionary on Probation and Offender Management* is an excellent collection. It is a valuable addition to the literature and a useful companion to all who are interested in probation and NOMS issues, both practitioners and non-practitioners alike, including students. It is a timely publication and a good read for all those who want to familiarise themselves with important concepts in working with offenders. Needless to mention is the fact that it will be a very good academic resource for teachers of criminology, criminal justice and community justice. The book will also benefit overseas students who are more likely to be unfamiliar with many of the themes used in the book.

Basharat Hussain, PhD student University of Hull; Lecturer in Social Work Department, University of Peshawar, Pakistan

MODERNISING PROBATION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE: GETTING THE MEASURE OF CULTURAL CHANGE

Whitehead, P. (2007) Crayford, Shaw and Sons. ISBN 978-0-72191-730-6, pbk, pp 216.

The author considers developments to the structure of the probation service and how these have resulted in a dramatic shift in the culture of the organisation. In view of the rapidity of change this book provides a very useful and timely analysis, although the structure may present some challenges to the reader. The ideas for the book germinated in the final paragraphs of a previous collaborative work (Whitehead and Statham, 2006) in which the authors raised a number of questions on behalf of 'all who engage thoughtfully and questioningly with the serious issues' (p.7). In analysing the current developments in the Probation service Whitehead asks:

'How did we end up here? 'Did we lose the map'? 'Was it replaced by another? Or 'did we just wait to be taken on a mystery trip'?

These questions are bound up with developments around a modernisation agenda driven by political imperatives that demand value for money, and accountability. These imperatives have themselves been accelerated by the development of information technology that gorges on quantitative evaluation- targets, performance and measurability. The conjoining of managerialism with the need for quantification has created an organisational culture the hallmarks of which are 'drabness and sterility' (p.4). In Manichean terms the probation service has moved from 'light' where the sub cultural remnants of 'autonomy, discretion, qualitative judgements' (p.1) remain, into the 'dark' where lurks the quantification of measurable targets.

In order to explore these interrelated themes the author takes the reader on a sometimes circuitous route and regards the chapters as 'several journeys into different facets of probation- philosophical, political, cultural and criminological' (p.7). These are however, linked by a theme of 'understanding'. Sometimes the journey through the arguments has to take the reader back to the beginning and this may create difficulties in following the argument.

The first chapter establishes the parameters of debate: 'Thinking about probation and Criminal Justice'. The second chapter invites the reader to embark on a journey through an intensely detailed analysis of the background to organisational change in which policy

and legislation have proliferated and for which the computer has become the 'dominant symbol'.

The third chapter takes the reader back to the beginnings of criminological theory in order to explore the 'broad criminological context in which offending should be addressed and understood' (p.59). The purpose of this is to emphasise both the history of criminological theory and its importance to the critical and reflective practitioner.

Such a practitioner requires a high standard of teaching and learning and this is perhaps the most important issue for the future of practitioners. What type of training provides the most effective and appropriate tool for the next generation of practitioners? The emphasis it is suggested should ensure that professional judgement by critical, reflective practitioners does not get squeezed out by the routinisation of tasks, 'scientific' assessment tools and quantifiable outcomes.

Chapter four again takes the reader back on a vast philosophical 'tour de horizon' from Plato to the Vienna circle. This may appear to be a 'dense, discursive, allusive and ambiguous' (p.9) chapter but the underpinning idea, however, is that that 'you cannot reduce work with people to blunt instruments of quantification and measurement' (p.9).

Effective practice should include a philosophical understanding of ethics. The chapter concludes that the probation service has now got itself into an intellectual muddle and hopes that at last there will be an acknowledgement of the existence of 'qualitative and ineffable features' (p.134)

Chapter five takes the reader away from ideas around organisational culture, criminological theory and philosophy by introducing a piece of practical research.

This empirical study (2006) sought the opinions of 'a group of independent minded professionals' (p.11) and presents here some initial findings. In 2006 interviews were conducted with a number of defence solicitors in the north east of England (12 firms, 31 solicitors) not all respondents shared the same perspectives but most identified a number of characteristics: of current probation practice. These included rigorous enforcement, punishment in the community, managing risk and target driven initiatives. 83.9% of respondents expressed no understanding of NOMS (p.180). In summary probation interventions with offenders appeared to 'ensure the maximum severity of punishment' and entailed 'a complete failure to acknowledge 'any positive aspects of the defendant's behaviour' (p.153).

The final chapter draws together some major themes from the book, suggests further reflections on modernisation and cultural change and the emergence of NOMS. Whitehead reminds readers how probation workers have become more office based and increasingly computer orientated. This is far cry from creativity and as if to emphasise this

change Whitehead, at one point, invites the reader to consider, 'probation officers as artists' (p.90).

The whole service appears to be danger of losing its ideals and is 'victim to the modernising trends that have invaded the public sector' (p.194). Finally Whitehead wishes to relocate the service back in its social work roots and calls for the establishment of a departmental committee (the first since 1962) to inquire into all aspects of probation work set up by Ministry of Justice in its first year. Now that would be an interesting development!

Reference

Whitehead P. and Statham R.S. (2006) *The History of probation: Politics, power and cultural change 1876-2005*, Shaw and Sons, Crayford, Kent.

David Phillips, Senior Lecturer in Community Justice, Sheffield Hallam University

LADIES OF LOST CAUSES: REHABILITATION, WOMEN OFFENDERS, AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

**Rumgay, J. (2007) Cullompton, Willan. 264 pp.
ISBN 978-1-64392-298-8 (pbk)**

In some ways this book is unique. It concentrates on the development and results of one organisation, without giving more than broad brushstrokes of any wider picture. To use a narrow lens and to develop a compelling and interesting 'read' shows the great strengths of this book and this writer. There is a compassionate approach to the subject drawing the reader in, and attention to detail that provides a satisfying experience.

Judith Rumgay is presenting an in depth account of the Griffins Society. She draws on archive material, interviews with members of the Griffins council, staff, residents, and professionals from other organisations to present the development of the organisation. The Society ran for three decades providing imaginative and innovative support for women in the criminal justice system. The story is presented in discrete segments, designed to illustrate wider arguments. The book charts not only the provision, but also how Griffin Society care changed the lives of all those concerned with it. So, chapter three rollicks through descriptions of the 'ladies who lunch?' that made the original concept of provision work, and the impact those ladies had on those around them. Chapter 6 is a sensitive account of the work and thought that creates change in damaged clients, taking account the specificity and small markers of change and the human cost. (This chapter may be particularly useful to people in caring professions and their allies). Chapter 5 takes a similar path when looking at ways in which women offenders are 'dangerous women or women in danger' There may not be news for practioners here, but the chapter does give a comprehensive and useful account of those ways of seeing clients and changing those views. I particularly enjoyed it, not because the material is new or groundbreaking but because Rumgay writes clearly and compassionately about an issue that is often difficult to present. It is a chapter that sheds light on some misunderstandings between conceptual frameworks and practice responses. The overall effect of these detailed and different chapters is to interrogate one form of philanthropy. That the writing seems to me to take a humorously tolerant view of the Griffin Society Ladies adds to the pleasure of the read.

The book does not intend to stop at the borders of the Griffins society. Rumgay herself asks

Can the example of the Griffins Society provide an answer to the challenges to contemporary philanthropic volunteering in offender rehabilitation: that

it is inadequate in its response to modern-day risks; that its motivation is suspect and inappropriately driven by self-seeking and sentimentalism; that it has a limited, bureaucratically constrained role in today's corporate structures for the delivery of human services? (pp231).

The answer in the book is clear. In Rumgays' view, and in the light of the evidence, the drive for social philanthropy shown had long term and valid affects. It is possible to read the review as being focused through rose tinted spectacles, but the evidence of change is clear. Rumgay herself denies partisanship:

'It was not the intention behind this evaluative study to produce an enthusiastic endorsement of the Griffins Society's enterprise' (p.6)

To some extent though, that is what she has done. More importantly, the book gives hints and reasons for change that can inform current practice. It may not be possible to found a Griffins society in today's climate, but it is certainly possible to learn from their approach.

However, to me there is a disappointment in the book. Just as its strength is concentration on one answer to major questions, its weakness is not to present the context in which those questions are asked. The three decades of the Griffins society coincide with major changes in British society brought about by a right wing government intending to roll back state welfare and encourage exactly the charitable philanthropy demonstrated by the Griffins. That government was led by a woman with none of the social privilege of the Griffins. The changes which undermined the Griffins included changes in the function and funding of social care that came from Thatcherism, and are not replicated in any previous social period. Those changes in themselves radically altered the climate. The book asks whether philanthropy can work in the criminal justice system, without also asking how the criminal justice system is affected by these changes in political ideology. Rumgay sees the women who became Griffins, representing as they did a particular social class, as being directly connected to women in previous decades that took on responsibility for helping the less fortunate from a sense of social duty. There is certainly a history of such strong and energetic women, but for me the question is whether that duty of class and requirement of privilege can continue into current experience. I would still read the book because it illuminates practice, but I would look for a wider conceptual explanation of change.

Dr Claire Beckett, Lecturer, Social Science & Humanities, University of Bradford

TRANSFORMING YOUTH JUSTICE: OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CHANGE

**Souhami, A. (2007), Willan pp221 £35.70 hdbk
ISBN 978-1-84392-193-6**

In the introduction to this book, Anna Souhami notes the extensive literature on the occupational cultures of criminal justice agencies such as the police, but the relative lack of attention that the culture of the youth justice system has attracted. This is at odds with the attention that youth justice has received in terms of policy changes and reform. The author, therefore, sets out to redress that deficit and also to explore a further neglected area, the nature of occupational culture itself.

Souhami's task is to analyse professional identities and occupational culture in the midst of organisational change. Her ethnographic study was undertaken as multi-disciplinary Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, replacing the previous arrangements largely based upon local authority social services departments. In order to do this, she observed and interacted with one Midlands youth justice team over 14 months from May 1999. This covers the 12 month period before YOTs officially took up their responsibilities in April 2000 and the period immediately after during which a range of new powers and court orders became available.

Inherent in this research is the question of ambiguity in the culture of the youth justice social work team that existed before creation of the YOT and that formed the basis on which the YOT was built. The identity of the original team was constructed around a sense of difference and separation from the rest of social services rather than a consistent internal consensus about the values and purpose of social work with young offenders. This lack of clarity about the special 'functional territory' of social work and its particular expertise had made the predominance of social work intervention in youth justice so open to challenge from the New Labour administration. In addition, Souhami identifies the difficulties that social workers found in defending their previous youth justice practices, which were certainly less interventionist and less bureaucratic than the practices being introduced under YOTs but also – and critically – less easily evidenced and justified.

Souhami analyses this Midlands team using a framework developed by Martin and Meyerson (1988; 1987), which suggests that organisations have three perspectives that tend to dominate their thinking and self-concepts. These are 'integration' based on a sense of consensus and sharing, 'differentiation' emphasising diversity and overlapping subcultures, and 'fragmentation', prioritising areas that are unclear, inconsistent or dichotomous. These are not mutually exclusive, but may be present at the same time, although one perspective – the 'home perspective' – may be dominant at any given point.

Using this framework, Souhami charts the stages through which the team progresses, from its original strong 'integration' stance to a different type of team organisation and team culture, as the team encompasses different professionals and moves to a new dedicated office space. What emerges is a sense of the fragility of the occupational identity as seen through the reflections, the anxieties and the pains of this group of practitioners. The office routines, day to day practices and jargon that reinforce identity as youth justice practitioners necessarily alter to suit the new circumstances and old certainties must be left behind. The extent to which practitioners are made to move out of their 'comfort zones' comes most sharply to the fore in the attempts of management to engage practitioners in group work, an explicit move away from traditional individual casework models.

Where the book is strong is in its narrative flavour and sense of progression over time. Although identities are protected, the perspectives of different practitioners are introduced and the direct comments do bring immediacy and interest to the subject matter. The book is organised into three sections. Part 1 sets the scene with a succinct account of New Labour's youth justice reforms and an introduction to the culture of the study team, including its reaction to the first non-social worker to join the team (a police officer). Part 2 deals with the process of change, addressing ambivalence, resistance and anxieties in the absence of a clearly articulated vision for the future. Part 3 discusses the new team as it begins to settle and its further challenges as team boundaries expand.

What also is interesting are some of the continuities and what Souhami identifies as fundamental tensions at the heart of the youth justice system. These include the debates about the extent to which children and young people can be held responsible for their actions, how early and how much intervention is appropriate, and the dilemmas about care and control. These were all being debated by the new YOT just as much as they were debated months before by the social workers in the youth justice team.

However, the context and the position of the YOT in relation to the external world is different to the earlier youth justice team and one of Souhami's purposes was to explore the impact of external political events and structural changes on team cultures and the way that teams think of themselves. This is clearly brought out from a practitioner perspective and the reader can follow some of the individual 'journeys' made by practitioners. It would have been enhanced further by more comment from managers about their perspectives on culture and their attempts to challenge or to develop culture, particularly at operational level.

Altogether this is a fascinating read not just for criminologist or criminal justice practitioners, but also for practitioners and managers in the children's services sector. They are beginning to grapple with the meaning of change and the sorts of challenges to professional boundaries and identities seen in this study, as they move towards models of integrated working and children's trusts arrangements. Souhami will give them food for thought as they progress their changes and develop new professional relationships.

Anne Robinson, Senior Lecturer in Youth Justice, Sheffield Hallam University

ERRATUM

Please note the publisher of Farrow,K, Kelly,G and Wilkinson,B (2007) *Offenders in Focus: Risk, Responsivity and Diversity* was incorrectly attributed in the Book Reviews section of Volume 5 Issue 3 of the British Journal of Community Justice. It is of course published by The Policy Press, Bristol.