

Restorative Justice Programmes in South African Prison Environment: A Qualitative Enquiry

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Abstract : This study investigates the effect of restorative justice programmes offered to offenders in prison environment (Correctional Centres) during their rehabilitation. The study looks specifically to programmes offered by a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO), Phoenix Zululand (PZ) in twelve (12) different prisons in Zululand, South Africa. Document analysis, interviews and participant observation methods were used to test whether the work done by Phoenix Zululand is in line with the remarks made on restorative justice as encapsulated in the White Paper on Corrections 2005 in South Africa. Also tested was whether a better understanding of restorative justice programmes assists in coming up with better strategies to change the behaviour of offenders. The study findings discovered that the work that is done by PZ is not in line with the remarks made in the White Paper on Corrections. Also the importance of a full comprehension of what one is doing in order to be effective in rehabilitation. However, rehabilitation that is aimed at only changing the decision-making processes of offenders not to reoffend, does not serve as a total rehabilitation programme. Rehabilitation is only successful if ex-offenders, whilst still in prison, have developed market-related skills and become employed or self-employed. Restorative Justice Programmes offered by PZ, although they play a critical role, appears to be lacking in equipping offenders with skills for effective reintegration into society and, subsequently, self-reliance.

Keywords : offender, rehabilitation, restorative justice, prison

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