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SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY, COMPETENCE AND VALUES OF PRISON OFFICERS IN SLOVENIAN PRISONS

In this paper the authors present the provisions of Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, on the basis of which they have established the self-assessment of the work load, competence and values of prison officers in Slovene prisons. The results show that the prevailing tasks are typical for workers in total institutions – inspections of rooms and units, rounds, various forms of supervision. Furthermore, the dominant activity is supervision of prisoners during walks and meals, and verification of presence. The persons participating in this study also mentioned the frequency of their conversations with prisoners, which is intended to have a therapeutic effect. Simultaneously, they also cooperate in the treatment with other services and experts in their institutions. Other tasks listed by prison officers include: distribution of medications, mail and supervision of telephone calls. In order to be more competent they would like to receive more training in the following fields: martial arts or self-defence, foreign languages, communication, andragogy, group dynamics, computer sciences, criminology, criminal investigation and psychology. With respect to the values of the observed persons we established that their answers on the scale of morally questionable behaviour imply that prison officers are persons whose value compass is directed by laws, but that they are also lenient with those who are different. The paper deals also with effects of in-prison socialization and possibilities to mitigate negative socialization of prison officers.

INTRODUCTION - UNDERSTANDING PRISON OFFICERS AND THEIR ROLE

"What makes a good officer?... I don't know. It must be a pretty hard balance because I mean you've got to try and develop your interpersonal relationships with others so that you can control an environment without resorting to violence every minute of the day. And you've got to be aware of security requirements as well. I think... you need somebody who's very comfortable with themselves so that they feel secure enough... I'm sure a lot of it comes with experience and time in the job and... you know, learning from the past errors and so forth, but I think you need people with brains... I don't think it's just a matter of being able to turn up here... I think there's a lot more to it." (Liebling, 2001:1)

Staff were gatekeepers, agents of criminal justice, peacemakers, instruments of change and deliverers and interpreters of policy (Liebling, 2001:37).

Working in a specific institution, working conditions and with specific populations require well selected personnel, good basic and advanced training, anti-stress programmes and supervisors. Work in prison is one of high-risk jobs because prison officers have to deal with people who have been sentenced to imprisonment and the imprisonment brings problems to prisoners. Prisoners and prison officers are people who have to live and work together (sometimes for several years, sometimes for decades), knowing the roles of each group.

Gilbert (in Liebling, 2002: 47) divides prison officers into four groups:

- *the professional*: is open and non-defensive, makes exceptions when warranted, prefers to gain co-operation and compliance through communication, but is willing to use coercive power or force as a last resort;
- *the reciprocator*: wants to help people, assists them in solving their problems, prefers clinical or social work strategies, may be inconsistent when making exceptions, prefers to 'go along to get along' and tends not to use coercive authority or physical force when it is justifiable;
- *the enforcer*: practices rigid 'by the book' aggressive enforcement, actively seeks out violations, rarely makes exceptions, has little empathy for others, takes unreasonable risks to personal safety, sees most things as either good or bad, and is quick to use threats, verbal coercion and physical force; and
- *the avoider*: minimizes offender contact, often does not 'see' an offence, avoids confrontation and coercion, views interpersonal aspects of the job as not part of the job, often backs down from confrontation, and blames others.

In addition, factors common to the 'role model' prison officers are as follows (ibid):

- having known and consistent *boundaries*. It did not matter so much precisely where these boundaries were, provided they were effectively communicated to prisoners and consistently policed;
- a quality for which we were unable to find a better term than '*moral fibre*' - confidence, integrity, honesty, good judgment (flexibility);
- an awareness of the *effects* of their own power;
- an understanding of the *painfulness* of prison;
- a *professional orientation*; and
- an optimistic – but realistic – outlook; the capacity to maintain hope in difficult circumstances.

After a literature review (Liebling, 2001: 45; Houston, 1999) we can conclude that role model characteristics of prison officers are as presented in *figure 1*.

The profile is an aspirational one – no one person can be all of these things. If there are attributes of the 'perfect' prison officer, can such an officer exist?

Selection and training of prison personnel is of a great importance because high expectations as presented in the previous figure can be achieved to a certain degree with the selection of candidates and proper basic and advanced training of prison officers.

SELECTION AND TRAINING OF PRISON OFFICERS

The selection and training of personnel working in penal and correction institutions carries great responsibility. According to the UN and European Council collections of documents (Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners: 32, translated in Slovene), special attention should be paid to the new role of prison staff, which has been changing from that of a guard to a member of an important service in the society requiring capacity, suitable education and good cooperation between group members. This new definition should be also reflected in the endeavors to increase the number of specialists, e.g. physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, teachers and instructors, among prison staff. However, the introduction of increased specialization could hamper a uniform approach to the treatment of prisoners and also create problems in coordinating the work of different specialist staff members. Our objective is to ensure that all specialists as a group participate in the treatment of prisoners. It is also necessary to ensure that all specialist services share a common view of the

Figure 1: Role model characteristics of prison officers

<p>1. Physical characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good physical condition - satisfactory strength to answer to hard working conditions - ability to act with reasonable self-confidence and personal authority - verbal skills <p>2. Mental capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to think - able to hold many things in mind at the same time <p>3. You should have the ability to:</p> <p>(i) Learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - have the ability and need to learn new things - be receptive to new ideas and alternative solutions - understand consequences and connections in what oneself and others do - come up with ideas and proposals and be able to see them through - view and assess complex situations and deal with them <p>(ii) Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be alert and aware of yourself through observations and information - be able to see, understand, evaluate and account for a situation without distortion - be able to overview several activities at the same time without confusion - be able to 'control' own attitudes and prejudices when people act in ways that disturb or annoy you, and to keep these people in order <p>(iii) Make decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use new information, understand it, form your own opinions and make your decision - be loyal to decisions already made - be flexible and able to change opinion when the circumstances change <p>(iv) Solve problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - be able to mentally prepare information to solve problems - try to reach solutions which will be understood and accepted - relate to others in way that bring opinions from them - be satisfied with half-solutions when perfect solution is impossible <p>(v) Do administrative tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handle 'paperwork' exactly and quickly - be organized - understand and accept the necessity of routine work 	<p>4. You should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interact with others - bear difficult emotions - seek to understand other people's thoughts and emotions - be sensitive in personal interaction - be interested in one's environment as much as in oneself - stand out as trustworthy - live in the fact that from time to time it is hard to see the overall context - live in the negative societal picture of the prison officer and imprisonment - have a sense of humour - lead others and create respect around oneself without becoming aggressive - have self-confidence and self-esteem - handle conflict situations - communicate ideas clearly and easily and influence others - give clear signals that cannot be misinterpreted by other person, and make sure that the receiver understands the signals - acquire verbal and non-verbal signals from different individuals and groups with varied cultural characteristics - build trust by one's actions - possess self-confidence - acquire positive energy outside the institution - be professional enough to act 'sensibly' under pressure from colleagues and prisoners - live with and to strengthen relationships with others - stand alone without support when the situation demands - say 'no' when the situation demands - be reliable, trustworthy and responsible for the tasks given to you - be flexible enough to handle more than one duty and long irregular working hours - understand different people's attitudes and behaviour and be able to express the reasons for their attitude and behaviour - keep going, even there is no pressure on you to do so.
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treatment through a committee or by means of coordination, or in some other way. In this way the prison staff can gain a deeper insight into the various aspects of a problem under consideration.

The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners¹ stipulate that supervising personnel must have suitable education qualifications and characteristics in order to perform their tasks efficiently, and continue with education and training. Expert evaluations of professional capacity, and intellectual and physical abilities are recommended in these Rules. The candidates accepted must be offered the possibility of a trial period during which the competent authorities may form an opinion on the candidate's personality, character and abilities (ibid: 34).

Prison officers must have a suitable professional education, and their training should be organized in the following three phases:

The first phase is organized in the prison, in order for the candidate to learn about the problems associated with the relevant type of work and for his superiors to establish if this candidate has the required qualities. During the initial period we should not burden a candidate with the responsibility, but rather appoint a regularly employed staff member for constant supervision. Prison directors should organize basic training courses for candidates, focusing on practical issues.

During the second phase the candidate should attend school or courses organized by the central prison administration. The latter is also responsible for the practical training of prison staff in their profession. Special attention should be devoted to understanding the attitudes towards prisoners, which must be based on the fundamental principles of psychology and criminology. Training courses should, among other matters, cover chapters on penology, management structure in prisons, criminal law and related subjects.

In the first two phases, training should be organized for groups, since it is easier to observe whether they are prepared for this kind of work, and it also facilitates the organization of training.

The third phase targets candidates who have successfully passed the first two phases and shown personal interest in this work. In this phase the candidates perform the actual tasks. They must be monitored and their capacities evaluated. They must be afforded the opportunity to attend more demanding courses in psychology, criminology, criminal law, penology and related subjects.

The Rules also define the significance of in-service training, i.e. to maintain and improve the level of knowledge and professional capacity after assuming a post and during employment by attending more demanding courses in work-related topics. In-service training of prison officers must focus on issues of principle and problems concerning methods, and not solely regulations and rules (ibid: 37).

IMPORTANCE OF VALUES

Values have recently been increasingly studied by philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists, since they are an important motivation factor with great impact on human life and, of course, work.

Rokeach (1973) who is the most frequently quoted author in the field of value studies, defines values as "enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of con-

duct or end-state of existence". According to him the value system is an enduring organization of such beliefs.

Research into values in Slovenia, has been primarily carried out by Musek (1993). He speaks about value categories which are our objectives. In addition, values are regarded as generalized and relatively permanent perceptions of objectives and phenomena that:

- are highly appreciated,
- refer to the broad categories of subordinate objects and relations,
- guide our behaviour.

The majority of authors distinguish between a triple nature of values, namely their motivational, cognitive and emotional aspects. Values are combined into systems in which they are categorized, and simple values combined with complex ones up to the level of macro categories of values.

The motivational aspect of values is important for our research. Although values are by definition something that we desire and respect deeply, a difference has been often observed between declared values and actual behaviour on the one hand, and the actual situation on the other.

As mentioned above, values are enduring beliefs, but this does not imply that they cannot change. Changes occur during maturation. According to Rokeach (1973), hedonistic values decrease with age, whereas personal values tend to increase. Musek (1993) similarly observed that young persons set higher hedonic (comfort and pleasure) and potential (success) values, whereas older people are oriented towards Apollonian (family, religious) values.

However, values do not solely depend on maturation but also on experience gained during development. The experience of working in the prison changes the attitude of officers. Most research has been on the socialization of inmates once they enter the prison. Research indicates that inmate values are not only imported from the external world, but they arise in an effort to mitigate the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1968). Kauffman (1988) points out that officer values also arise as a function of in-prison experience, most of which is negative. Experience gained at a work place is the factor that modifies and designs an individual's value system. Therefore we may anticipate also that prison officers, as a professional group, may have created a specific value system reflecting the work itself and, of course, the characteristics of this professional group. Prison officers are definitely among professional groups whose work is frustrating and stressful. They are constantly in contact with more or less asocial individuals expressing through their behaviour the ideals and values that are mostly in conflict with the values of prison officers or the values of society in general.

In addition, we must be aware that prisons are total institutions – where due to the way of life, organization of work and inter-personal relations – it is possible to speak about values that are different from those of the majority population in a certain society.

Goffman (according to Flaker and Urek, 1988) defines a total institution as an institution that is usually perceived as a place (building, room, area) where an activity is regularly carried out, where an institution so to speak comprises all the aspects of an individual's life cycle (work, entertainment, recreation, etc.). Because of this they can be called total institutions. The fence erected by these institutions between themselves and the external world symbolizes this total coverage. These institutions are physically distanced from the rest of the world (using walls, forests, swamps, fences, etc.). In our

society institutions can be classified into five broadly defined groups: institutions for those who cannot take care of themselves and are not dangerous (institutions for the blind, the old, the poor, orphans); institutions for those who are unable to take care of themselves and are dangerous to the community (hospitals with TBC patients, psychiatric institutions); institutions protecting the community against certain danger (prisons, camps for POW); institutions in which certain jobs are performed (ships, military barracks, boarding schools, work camps) and institutions for religious retreat (monasteries). These institutions have the following in common: all the aspects of work are carried out in the same place and under the same authority; each phase of a daily activity is carried out in front of a large number of people who are treated equally and requested to do the same tasks simultaneously; there is a timetable for everything imposed by the superiors through a system of explicit rules and a body of officials; different imposed activities form a uniform rational plan aimed at attaining the official goal of an institution.

Houston (1999: 83-87) discusses the importance of values in prison and their impact on behaviour of the staff and prisoners. In correction, staff values revolve mainly around staff solidarity, safety of personnel and perceived dangers.

Kauffman (in Houston, 1999: 85) describes how members of the guard force stick together and become a tightly knit its own rules and code of conduct. Violation of the rules is likely to cause the group to invoke sanctions to one degree or another. Kauffman identifies nine norms that reflect the values of the prison officer subculture. The nine values are presented in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2: Nine norms that reflect prison guard's values

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Always go to the aid of an officer in distress.</i> This is the norm upon which officer solidarity is based. It reflects the perceived danger of an institution and the need to look out for each other if one is to survive. 2. <i>Don't "lug" drugs.</i> According to Kauffman, the reason for this norm is not a revulsion to the use of drugs but rather it points to the dangerousness of the job. An inmate high on drugs is dangerous and may cause injury or even death. 3. <i>Don't rat.</i> There are two prongs to this norm: (a) never rat on an officer to an inmate, and (b) never cooperate in an investigation of an officer in regard to mistreatment of an inmate. Violation of either is a betrayal of the group. 4. <i>Never make a fellow officer look bad in front of prisoners.</i> Violations of this norm violate appearance of solidarity against prisoners. Officers believe that prisoners will exploit divisions among staff and that one should never hand a prisoner the opportunity to drive a wedge between the staff members. 5. <i>Always support an officer in a dispute with a prisoner.</i> This is a positive counter-part to norm 4. Even though one may disagree with an officer's action, support of him or her is imperative if solidarity is to be preserved. 6. <i>Always support officer sanctions against prisoners.</i> Correctional officers often have a good deal of discretion in dealing with prisoners, and often an officer will sanction imposed by another officer either too lenient or too harsh. Regardless of one's opinion, support of the sanction is necessary. Occasionally, the officer is faced with a quandary when violence is involved. A sense of professionalism in the case of violence should be the rule. 7. <i>Don't be a white hat.</i> One should never be sympathetic to prisoners or identify with them or their needs. According to Kauffman, this is the most easily violated norm. It's difficult for officers and detail supervisors who work alongside prisoners for months or even years at a time not to come to know each other well and even to respect one another. In this instance, staff with seniority and who enjoy the respect of fellow staff can, and do, violate this norm. Examples include bringing in cigarettes for prisoners on one's detail at Christmas or a plate of cookies to share on special occasion. Most officers know how far one can go in violating this norm, and usually there are no problems. |
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8. *Maintain officer solidarity versus outside groups.* Kauffman was able to identify this norm because the institution had been under fire from the media, courts and the legislature for some time. She points out that this rule even applied to administrators and family. The purpose of the norm was to promote officer solidarity. Officers felt that no one understood what it is like in the institution.
9. *Show concern for fellow officers.* This is an ideal that is rarely lived up to. Two aspects of this norm are: (a) never leave another officer a problem, (b) help your fellow officer with problems outside the institution. No sanctions are applied for violation of these norms, but the belief that one can count on fellow officers make this job more bearable.

In the following part of the paper, we will deal with self-assessment of professional capacity, competence and values of Slovenian prison officers. The Law on the execution of penal sanctions (2001) defines basic skills that prison officers must obtain before starting a job in prison, permanent training and re-evaluation of prison officer's work abilities and skills. In addition to this, before starting a job in prison, every prison officer must swear that he/she will perform his/her job with respect and honour.²

Slovenian legislation is in accordance with international treaties, standards of the UN and recommendations of the Council of Europe regarding treatment of prisoners and training of prison officers.

In addition, we will try to compare daily activities of Slovenian and English prison officers (Liebling, 2001).

METHOD

Sample

Fifty two prison officers employed in Slovene prisons participated in this research. The majority (35) completed secondary school and the rest (22) a two-year university course. The majority (50) are men, there being only two women. The age ranges from 25 to 45.

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were used to obtain the data. First, the "Questionnaire for work analysis", created by dr. Milan Pagon (1999), addresses the following areas of work: tasks and duties, education and training, experience, analytical skills, equipment, materials and documentation, contacts with others, supervision of work, consequences of mistakes and other aspects of work.

Second, data were also collected with a scale of morally questionable (controversial) behaviour (Harding, Philips 1986, in: Robinson, J.P., Shaver, P.R., Wrightsman, L.S., 1991: 742-745) which is intended for assessing moral judgments on certain matters encountered by adults in their everyday lives, or about which they have formed an opinion.

There are 22 items of morally questionable behaviour on the scale. Behaviour is assessed using a scale from one to ten denoting agreement with the admissibility or in-admissibility of behaviour.

On the basis of a factor analysis, the authors of the scale established that it measures three aspects of moral behaviour:

- the personal – sexual aspect refers to the moral judgment of life and death, and sexual relations;

- the aspect of personal interest combines the items of an individual's personal integrity and honesty;
- the legal – illegal aspect consists of the items of formally prescribed behaviour.

The scale was applied to a large number of persons from ten European countries during a study of the value system in Europe.

It was established that, primarily, the young are more tolerant in moral issues, are better educated, are left-wingers and declared themselves nonreligious or atheistic (Harding, Philips 1986). These findings imply an assumption that 'older' (senior/realistic) workers are supposedly more conservative and rigid in the studied moral issues than the young (junior/idealistic).

Data collection

Data were collected in the autumn of 1999 and spring of 2000 in cooperation with the Prison Administration at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Slovenia. The questionnaires were sent by mail. Out of 100 questionnaires, 52 were returned and entered into the data base.

RESULTS

The work of prison officers

The work of prison officers is somewhat mundane and their primary responsibility is to prevent escapes and fights or other types of mayhem. The work of prison officers goes beyond guarding and preventing fights. The following results imply the most prevalent daily activities of prison officers.

We selected those answers that were most frequent and best reflect the actual situation, namely the workload and tasks of prison officers in Slovene prisons. The answers were classified with respect to frequency, and no changes were made as to the contents. The total number of answers does not match the number of respondents, since some answers were missing and in some instances several answers were given.

The most prevailing daily duties of the studied prison officers concerning prison security are inspection of rooms, units, communal room; inspection work posts, changing rooms and wardrobes; rounds; supervision over food distribution; night checks and supervision of the courtyard.

Prison officers supervise prisoners while on walks, during meals, by verification of presence, personal inspection, while accompanying prisoners, controlling telephone calls and controlling them at work.

Prison officers are also involved in treatment of prisoners and participate in discussion groups, provide prisoners with crisis assistance, are active in work with prisoners and participate in implementation of treatment programmes. Prison officers also cooperate with expert services and provide them with observations of prisoners, cooperate with other departments within the institution, attend expert group meetings and participate in problem solving meetings.

Beside control and therapeutic activities, prison officer's daily tasks are also to distribute mail and medications to the prisoners.

Regarding analytical skills, a prison officer does about the same job as a dormitory tutor or a military officer – collects data on the number of prisoners, reads reports of other departments/experts, assigns prisoners and takes care of discipline.

Prison officers do not perform their job in a social vacuum. In addition to close cooperation with fellow prison officers, they are also involved in many activities of other departments (health, treatment, administration, etc), so they cooperate with physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists. In addition, they cooperate with social workers and 'educators', prisoners' relatives, criminal investigators and others (priests, ombudsman, representatives of embassies).

Skills of prison officers

Prison officers who participated in this study assess the need for additional training/education in the following domains (ranking from the most to the least important): self-defence, foreign languages, communication skills, andragogy, group dynamics, use of computer, criminology, criminal investigation, psychology, penology, solving drug related problems, administrative procedure, criminal law, psychiatry, first aid and anti-stress techniques.

Time needed to carry out the work of a prison officer.

The studied prison officers of Slovenia estimate that it usually takes at least a year of practice in prison to carry out the work of a prison officer in a professionally competent manner. Prison officers take basic training, then go to prison where work for another six months and finish the training outside the prison. After finishing the training a prison officer starts working as relatively competent staff member in prison.

Values of prison officers

Below you will find the results of descriptive statistics which were compiled into a "moral portrait" of Slovene Officers (see Table 1). Generally the officers who responded to the questionnaire are a moral lot as one can see that as the statistic moves to the right, the more the officer finds the described behaviour as morally reprehensible.

Table 1: »Moral portrait« of Slovene prison officers

Claim	admissible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	inadmissible
1. To enjoy benefits to which you are not entitled	☺☺					☹☹			8.2			☹☹
2. To avoid paying tickets for transportation	☺☺					☹☹			8.2			☹☹
3. Tax fraud	☺☺					☹☹		7.8				☹☹
4. To purchase stolen goods	☺☺					☹☹			8.5			☹☹
5. To take somebody else's car	☺☺					☹☹				8.8		☹☹
6. To use cannabis/hashish	☺☺					☹☹			8.1			☹☹
7. To keep the money that you have found	☺☺					☹☹		6.8				☹☹
8. To lie for your own benefit	☺☺					☹☹		7.4				☹☹
9. Married – to have a love affair	☺☺					☹☹						☹☹
10. Sex with minors	☺☺					☹☹			8.4			☹☹
11. To accept bribes	☺☺					☹☹				8.8		☹☹
12. Homosexuality	☺☺					☹☹	5.7					☹☹
13. Prostitution	☺☺					☹☹						☹☹
14. Abortion	☺☺			3.2		☹☹						☹☹
15. Divorce	☺☺		2.5			☹☹						☹☹
16. Fights with policemen	☺☺					☹☹			8.3			☹☹

17. Euthanasia	☺☺					☹☹ 5.4							☹☹
18. Suicide	☺☺					☹☹	6.4						☹☹
19. Not to report on damage done	☺☺					☹☹			8.3				☹☹
20. To threaten workers who refuse to go on strike	☺☺					☹☹			8.4				☹☹
21. To kill someone in self-defense	☺☺					☹☹ 4.9							☹☹
22. Assassination	☺☺					☹☹			8.5				☹☹
Total mean	☺☺					☹☹	6.9						☹☹

On the basis of descriptive statistics results in ordered series, the following sequence was established of morally inadmissible behaviour of prison officers (ranking from the least acceptable to admissible):

- Acceptance of bribes
- Taking somebody else's car
- Assassination
- Buying stolen goods
- Sex with minors
- Threatening workers who refuse to go on strike
- Not reporting damage done
- Fighting with policemen
- Avoiding the payment of a ticket for transportation
- Enjoying benefits to which you are not entitled
- Using drugs (cannabis, hashish)
- Tax fraud
- Lying for your own benefit
- Keeping the money that you found
- Suicide
- Homosexuality
- Euthanasia
- Married, having a love affair
- Prostitution
- Killing somebody in self-defence
- Abortion
- Divorce

The mean of the assessed admissibility or inadmissibility of morally questionable behaviour totals 6.9 with very small variability. The median is 7.4 and the mode is 7. This allows us to presume that the values of Slovene prison officers as a professional group are very homogenous. The latter is also evident from the small standard deviations from the mean.

According to the prison officers nearly everything that is prohibited by law and sanctioned is inadmissible (fraud, theft, bribes) including the morally questionable behaviour that can be observed in society, in the form of minor human weaknesses (free transportation, lying for your own benefit, keeping the money you found, etc.). Different and less desired behaviour (homosexuality, prostitution – with the exception of the use of drugs) was more moderately assessed. The officers were also tolerant towards the right to abortion and divorce, but this is acceptable also to the majority of people in our environment.

A reasonably high degree of intolerant attitude – in particular towards behaviour restricted by regulations and laws – was observed in prison officers; this matches the conditions of their work, which is predominantly supervisory and restrictive. The reasons for their low level of tolerance could be found in their primary personality structure or in the socialization in the professional environment as well as work requirements. We may assume that their value system affects both their performance and their relations towards prisoners.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of the analysis of the self-assessment of professional capacity, competence and values of prison officers in Slovene prisons show that their predominant activity is to supervise prisoners and provide security in prisons. The officers also mentioned discussions with prisoners, assistance to prisoners in crisis and cooperation with expert services in prisons. Among other tasks, the distribution of consignments was ranked first, followed by the distribution of medications and supervision of telephone calls.

In order to improve their competence, prison officers would like to receive more training in the following fields: martial arts, foreign languages, communication, andragogy, and different techniques for conflict resolution and easier work in a total institution. In their opinion, it is necessary to work for 1-2 years in order to become competent at the job.

The predominant daily tasks include: verification of presence, assignment of jobs, supervision of prisoners and their activities, ensuring compliance with the house rules. All these activities are very similar to those performed by teachers in homes for secondary school students, officers in military barracks and other similar institutions where strict rules apply.

Pečar (1988: 130) wrote that a comparison between the compliance of behaviour and the regulations or rules constitutes the basic role of the mechanisms of formal supervision. This is the key activity of any mechanism that is for our purposes associated with this role. Thus the many different activities of numerous professions, including those of prison officers, are highlighted. They all constantly observe, evaluate and – in the form of corresponding "feed back" – react to the client's behaviour with available means for individual phases or procedures in the supervisory activity. This activity is also reflected in the study results on the values of Slovene prison officers.

Pečar (ibid) states that the bottom line in a supervisory activity is to observe people at what they are doing. On the basis of an investigative formula dating back centuries a scheme was designed a long time ago telling us what we need to find out in order to be able to say that something in the behaviour of the client – the observed person – is really what enables the officially guaranteed possibility of interference in the privacy of an individual on the grounds of suspicion that he committed an unlawful act (in our case these are the reasons for personal investigation, investigations of work places, changing rooms, wardrobes/cupboards, supervision of food distribution, etc.).

Pečar (1988: 193) also speaks about the significance of the supervisor's personality, since in case of discretion – when decisions are being made on how to treat a prisoner – the personality of a supervisor plays an important role. He/she may be good or bad, merciless or not persistent, relaxed or introverted, kind or arrogant, just or unjust, impartial or honest, accepted or undesired and the like.

The responses on the question about the desired training courses in this study manifest the deficiencies expressed during self assessment in relation to quality performance of a prison officer's work: martial arts or self defence were most frequently mentioned, which might indicate the desire to be more self-confident, physically more fit and better capable of mastering prisoners. The wish to speak foreign languages, gain knowledge of social skills, understanding of the treated population and the ways to assist prisoners were in the second place. This raises the question – as with other professions dealing with risk groups – of what comes first: the motive of help, or supremacy, or the wish to demonstrate one's power, both physical and mental.

Professionalisation should also be noted, since it is closely linked to professional education and training and is an imperative which should lead control mechanisms to treat deviance more successfully (Pečar, 1988: 205). Professionalisation is two fold and has an impact, both on an individual in the organization in which he performs his job and on the organization that was assigned the task of carrying out responsibilities concerning supervision and deriving from law.

Professional education and training are increasingly becoming more indispensable and dependent – be it for policemen, criminal investigators, prosecutors, judges or prison officers. Different qualifications are required for enabling experts to perform their work. In addition to specialization for specific tasks in criminal justice, a comprehensive programme for learning about the functions and roles of supervisors, individuals and institutions alike, should indeed be considered.

It is necessary to emphasize that regarding moral values of Slovenian prison officers, detailed studies were performed (Meško et al, 2000 and Meško et al, 2002). Both studies show that moral orientation of Slovene prison officers was very much conservative compared with police officers and students of criminal justice. The comparison of prison officers of Michigan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia shows that in all three cultures conservative orientation characterizes prison officers while other studied groups (police officers and students of criminal justice) seem to be a little bit more liberal in their views but not necessarily in their behaviour. To draw the final conclusion based on the literature review, our survey and experiences in prisons (Meško, 1997), we can state that prisons are quite a similar social system regardless whether being Slovene, English or American. Prison officers have to learn 'survival' skills because the majority prisoners leave prison after a certain period of time. The majority of prison officers seem to be 'imprisoned' much longer time than an average prisoner. This is the case especially in Slovenia.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Adopted by the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Geneva in 1955, and approved by the Economic and Social Council by its resolution 663 C (XXIV) of 31 July 1957 and 2076 (LXII) of 13 May 1977
- 2 Officers must give the following pledge: "I solemnly pledge that in the course of performing tasks of protection and supervision, I will carry out my tasks in a conscientious, responsible, humane and legal manner, and will respect human rights and basic freedoms".

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