
Prison Libraries in Poland: Partners in Rehabilitation, Culture, and Education

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the rehabilitation programs of the Polish Prison Service, which incorporate various types of cultural, educational, and library activities. The main focus is on the author's analysis of rehabilitation programs in existence between 1981 and the present. The changes in the laws that govern these activities are described, as well as how the organization of the Polish prison system and the current sentence structure determine how rehabilitation programs are provided in the correctional institutions. The goals and objectives of prison libraries are explored, as they relate to the rehabilitation process and activities. The library collections and access to library materials are discussed, as well as library premises and library staffing. The author's research data form the basis for the analysis of prison library development over the last thirty years. The article also discusses various innovative rehabilitation programs that have been implemented under the theme of "education through culture and art." These include, among others, cultural and educational programs to help substance abusers overcome their addiction and readjust to society, assertiveness training, and participation in cultural activities. These programs are also designed to enhance the offenders' literacy skills and to encourage their creativity and potential talent in music and fine arts. Finally, the article describes prison theater activities, literary clubs, and activities that promote reading (e.g., book exhibits, author talks, and the reading of books over the prison broadcasting system).

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The events of the 1980s in Poland, and in particular the rise of the Solidarity movement and the signing of the "Round Table Agreements" in 1989, marked the beginning of a seminal sociopolitical change. As a result, not only Poland but also other countries in Eastern Europe regained freedom after years of totalitarian oppression and were free to decide their own sociopolitical system and future development. The freedoms and activities that had been taken for granted in democratic countries—and only dreamed of in Poland—could finally become real. The many changes that followed affected all parts of society, including the entire criminal justice system.

The transformation of the Polish prison system is most noticeable in regard to its new legal foundation, the organizational structure of the prison service, the sentence structure, and the inmate rehabilitation programs. Since the end of World War II, Poland had been following the punitive model for how offenders served time in prison which, of course, affected how prisoners were treated and what rights they were granted, including the right to obtain information and access library services. Despite early attempts to move away from this punitive model—with the introduction of open or semi-open prisons, the implementation of education and alcohol treatment programs, and new ways of cooperating with other public agencies—it was not until 1989 that the Polish prison system could escape from the political role imposed on all facets of its operation by the totalitarianism of the Polish State (Machel, 2003, p.163).

After the 1989 change in the political system, measures were taken to totally reform the prison service and to adopt a model of social reintegration and rehabilitation in place of the existing punitive model. These major policy changes are outlined in the new language of the Criminal Executive Code (Ustawa, 1997a; 2009) legislation concerning the Prison Service (Ustawa, 1996) and the rules that govern serving the sentence of deprivation of liberty (Rozporządzenie, 2003b) and pretrial detention (Rozporządzenie, 2003c). The new legal foundation created a favorable framework for achieving specific rehabilitation goals of the inmate population. It also opened the doors for using education, reading, and other therapeutic methods to facilitate the reintegration of offenders into society. After Poland's 2004 accession to the European Union, efforts also began to revise the Prison Service Law according to EU requirements.

New policies were introduced that affect how an individual serves a prison sentence. A series of different sentence "regimes" were implemented that take into account the needs of the individual offender: (1) the program regime; (2) the therapeutic regime; and (3) the regular regime (Rozporządzenie, 2003b, §53). The program regime includes juvenile and adult offenders who agree to participate in a variety of structured activities. The therapeutic regime includes "offenders with non-psychotic

psychiatric disorders and other persons addicted to alcohol or intoxicating or psychotropic drugs, as well as offenders with physical disabilities who require special care" (Ustawa, 1997a, Art. 96). The regular regime includes those who have failed to comply with the requirements set forth in their individual treatment plan or who have refused to participate in such a plan (Rozporządzenie, 2003c, §57). These regimes determine how offenders can spend their free time and what activities they have to pursue in order to prepare for their return to society (Ustawa, 1997a, Art. 95).

The Polish Prison Service, which is administratively located under the Ministry of Justice, is divided into divisions that include the prison facilities and detention centers. At this time, the Prison Service consists of sixteen regional inspectorates. At the end of December 2008, these inspectorates supervised a total of 156 correctional facilities, including eighty-six prisons of various types and seventy detention centers. It was found that the prison population at these institutions ranged from 90 to 1,500. Most of the facilities had a population of between 301 and 600. The detention centers could hold from 50 to 1,600 inmates, but most held fewer than 300 individuals. The total prison population was 82,785, of which about 3 percent were women. Fifty-six percent of the inmates were serving sentences between one and five years. Twenty-nine percent were serving sentences of less than one year. Those with long-term sentences (25+ years or life) made up 2.5 percent. The age breakdown was as follows: 19–30 years (42 percent); 31–39 years (24.5 percent); 40–51 years (21.7 percent); 52–60 years (9.1 percent); over 60 years (1.9 percent). The smallest group (0.8 percent) included those aged 15–18. The inmates were mostly Polish citizens, with less than 1 percent being foreigners (Statystyki, n.d.). For the sake of comparison, in 1981 there were eight administrative regions with a total of 146 prisons and detention centers. The prison population was considerably higher, totaling 128,953 (Zybert, 1991, p. 67).

An important purpose of the Prison Service is "for every prison and detention center to institute rehabilitation programs for inmates serving sentences, primarily by providing them with work activities to acquire professional skills and knowledge, as well as cultural and educational opportunities" (Śłużba, n.d.). The regional inspectorates are responsible for the organization, implementation, and success of these programs and activities, although the central Penitentiary Office, operating under the direction of the Central Board of the Prison Service, has final authority over all prison operations.

PRISON LIBRARIES

The legal basis for the operation of offender libraries in prisons, detention centers, reformatories, and juvenile detention centers, is provided by regulations of the Minister of Justice, specifically: (1) the Regulation of December 20, 1999, which states the rules for the organization of library

service within the incarceration facilities, as well as for cooperation with public libraries to implement this service (Rozporządzenie, 1999); (2) the Regulation of August 14, 2003, on the interaction between prisons and detention centers (Rozporządzenie, 2003a); and (3) Ordinance No.2/04 of February 24, 2004, by the Director General of the Prison Service, listing the regulations for the organization and operation of correctional services and describing the responsibilities of prison security staff and other institutional employees, including those working in the treatment departments (Zarządzenie, 2004).

The director of each correctional facility is responsible for the organization and management of the prison library. The director sets policies for the internal operation, the development and maintenance of the library, and the number of service points. The director is responsible for providing the library space, as well as for allocating sufficient funds for the necessary equipment and materials collection. The director determines the rights and responsibilities of library users and ensures that library-specific rules are developed. He/she is also required to make sure that appropriate training is provided for library staff (Rozporządzenie, 1999).

Each library constitutes an integral component of the overall prison operation and, as such, plays an important role in the rehabilitation of inmates. The entire library operation and all aspects of the librarians' work are related to this goal of prisoner rehabilitation, including collection development and the provision of reader services that meet the needs of individual offenders. At the same time, the prison library must also take into account the limitations of the available space and existing security constraints. In addition to the main library, service points are provided, as necessary, in the living units and on medical wards, and in the school and treatment departments. The book collections at the satellite service points are usually deposit collections maintained by the central library and exchanged on a quarterly basis. The deposit collection books are selected by a teacher or a librarian. The prison library also collects professional books available only to institution staff. The Ministry of Justice regulations mentioned earlier define the nature of the cooperation between prison libraries and public libraries, and this cooperation usually takes the form of interlibrary loan and professional guidance in library management.

Because the main purpose of the prison library is considered to be its role in offender rehabilitation and education, library resources are mainly focused on providing support for the following activities:

- Reading as a constructive use of free time, as a method to reduce stress, and as a means to minimize undesirable behavior
- Meeting emotional needs and intellectual interests
- Increasing basic and advanced knowledge
- Developing positive personality traits

- Developing aesthetic sensibility and appreciation of art and education
- Developing cognitive skills
- Preparing for life and work after release
- Meeting the professional needs of prison staff (Zybert, 1991, p. 91)

PRISON LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The quantity and quality of the library collections reflect the degree of importance given by the prison administration to the role played by books and reading in the rehabilitation and reeducation process. The actual responsibility for the selection of individual titles, however, rests with staff directly involved with the library operation.

The policies governing the selection of and access to prison library materials state that some materials should

- be designed for the use of only the offenders;
- be sanitized or disinfected when provided to offenders in medical wards;
- be used "for reference only" in the reading room, if such a space exists;
- be used for professional purposes exclusively by officers and employees of the Prison Service.

Building a "library collection development" policy and recommending titles appropriate for incarcerated persons is an important and challenging responsibility. These tasks are assigned to the people who manage and operate the libraries, that is, the facility educators. Inmates may also recommend specific titles, which is often done by those who are avid readers or active in literary clubs. Due to financial restraints, however, not all requests can be satisfied.

The most useful books are those that not only help the inmates survive their time in prison, but also help them deal with anger and other negative feelings that may have contributed to their commitment of crimes. Therefore, materials that facilitate the therapeutic and educational process and enrich cultural experiences are to be emphasized. Although no restrictions are imposed on what titles are held in the library, there are restrictions on what materials are made available to inmates. It is recommended that the libraries select not only regular fiction and nonfiction materials, but also multimedia titles, as well as textbooks and other reading materials required for educational programs. It is also recommended that the libraries include foreign language materials, primarily course books for use of the prison school. Since only very few foreigners are serving time in Polish prisons, little effort is given to develop collections of recreational materials in other languages. In individual cases, foreign language materials may be acquired from community organizations, foreign consulates, or various nationality groups. Library materials are either purchased or received as gifts from

private individuals, prison officers, other libraries, and various foundations and NGOs.

A 2008 survey showed that the prison libraries held 1,635,466 volumes, compared to 1,433,000 volumes in 1981 (Zybert, 1991, p. 67). The data indicate that fiction currently accounts for about 81 percent of the collections. The 1981 data showed that about 70 percent of the collections consisted of fiction (Zybert, 1991, p. 62). The 1981 study was conducted to determine how many volumes per inmate were held by each prison library. The average number turned out to be 11.1 volumes. This figure, however, is misleading, since it also includes multiple copies of textbooks and other required school materials (Zybert, 1991, p. 67–68).

The existing Ordinance No. 2 (Zarządzenie, 2004) does not specify the size of collections nor the ratio of books per person in the prison library. However, the Ordinance No. 2 defines the minimum number of books per one inmate in the library service point. Ordinance No. 2 (Zarządzenie, 2004) states that the collections of the satellite library service points should vary in size according to the number of existing users, but that the minimum number of volumes should be at least ten per inmate and that these collections should be exchanged at least quarterly. Thus the differences in the size of these libraries and library service points are conspicuous. Analysis of the accumulated research material shows that in 2008 the number of volumes per inmate was in the range between 6.1 and 114.4 volumes. The average rate in prisons and detention centers at that time was 19.76 volumes per person. If the collection found in the library cannot satisfy the needs of the inmates, access to literature may be increased through interlibrary loans, which is stipulated by the above-quoted Polish regulations. It should be noted that in recent years prison libraries, like other Polish libraries, started to withdraw outdated publications, unread books with obvious political slant (such as Lenin's works), collected in the libraries for propaganda reasons, which also strongly influenced the average number of volumes per inmate.

Inmates should also have access to newspapers and magazines provided by the prison administration, and funds are to be included for this purpose in the facility's budget. Inmates may also subscribe to newspapers themselves or receive them from family. Where inmates are restricted to their housing units (closed units), daily newspapers are delivered to the cells. In semi-open or open facilities, daily newspapers and magazines are available in the common room. Survey data show that in 1991 an average of four newspapers and five magazines were subscribed to with institution funds (Zybert, 1991, p. 68–69). In 2008, however, the total number of newspaper subscriptions had significantly decreased, and many facilities had none at all. There were also very few magazine subscriptions. More inmates, however, had their own personal subscriptions.

It is interesting to note the opinions of librarians in both 1991 and 2008 regarding the size of collections in their prison libraries. In 1981, 57 percent of respondents thought that the size of their collections was sufficient, 42.4 percent thought it was too small, and 0.6 percent thought it was too large—in these cases mainly because of a decrease in the inmate population at some sites (Zybert, 1991, p. 68). Asked the same question in 2008, 73.1 percent of respondents thought that the collection size was sufficient, 23.7 percent thought it was too small, and 1.9 percent that it was too large. These numbers show a perceived improvement over this period.

Access to Library Materials

The degree of access to the prison library largely determines how successful the library program is as a component of the institution-wide treatment and educational programs. At the same time, library access depends on the internal operation of the facility, as well as availability of staff and the organization of staff assignments, including the responsibility for library operations and the promotion of reading activities.

The security classification of the offender and his/her assigned punishment “regime” determine this individual’s rights and responsibilities, including living accommodations, daily discipline, and contact with the outside world. These factors also affect the inmate’s participation in cultural and educational activities, and the opportunities to read newspapers, magazines, and books. In this context it should be mentioned that many offenders are not regular readers and perceive their need for reading materials as negligible. For many offenders, their first or only contact with books occurs while they are serving time. Other factors affecting the extent of library use are the attractiveness and relevance of the collections, lack of information about the available library materials, and lack of reader guidance for new or unsophisticated readers. In 1981, 48 percent of inmates used the library (Zybert, 1991, p. 69). In 2008, this figure was 58.6 percent—a gradual increase.

The policy governing what library materials offenders are permitted to read has undergone changes in recent years. Thirty years ago, inmates were banned from accessing crime-related literature and materials that reflected negatively on law enforcement, as well materials depicting cruelty, brutality, or eroticism. Also banned were publications with content considered potentially detrimental to prison discipline and safety (Zybert, 1991, p. 70).

Before the political changes of 1989, many materials with political content, especially of antisocialist nature, were not acquired by the libraries and were certainly not made available to inmates. At present, the prison library collections emulate those found in public libraries, and the inmates can borrow anything in the institution library and also have access to interlibrary

loan. However, regardless of what cultural or educational pursuits the inmates are involved in, the law still prohibits them from accessing pornography or content that advocates violence and antisocial behavior or threatens the healthy development of juveniles (Zarządzenie, 2004, § 5.1). The educators in charge of the library select the library materials. This work mainly occurs when the library is first being established. Staff materials are clearly marked as such and are not made available to inmates.

Inmates generally visit the institution library (main service point) to obtain materials, but sometimes—due to facility limitations and lack of library space—they have only indirect access to library materials. Where direct access is provided, the inmates can browse the collection and use the available catalogs to select materials. Where only indirect access is available, the inmates select titles from a short holdings lists in binder format brought to their cell.

In 1981, direct access was provided at 60.3 percent of the sites, indirect access at 39.7 percent of sites, while 13 percent of these provided both direct and indirect access, depending on the status of the inmate (Zybert, 1991, p. 70). In 2008, direct access was provided at 43.6 percent of the prison sites, indirect access at 42.3 percent of the sites, while 26.9 percent of the sites provided both direct and indirect access. The number of books an inmate can check out at a time ranges from one to six, although in some cases there is no limit. Circulation periods range from two to four weeks; these numbers have not changed since the 1991 survey.

Library Catalogs, Library Premises, and Library Hours

Library materials are only accessible and useful to the extent that information about them is readily available. It is therefore very important that prison library collections be cataloged and technically processed according to professional standards. Unfortunately, this area of operations has for various reasons been neglected due to the lack of qualified staff, limited hours of library operation, and the inability to access the necessary bibliographic information from the prison. At this time, these problems are being solved through cooperation with outside libraries.

Earlier directives recommended that all libraries keep alphabetical author lists of their library materials and, where possible, a simplified subject catalog. The author's 1981 research showed that many libraries kept more than one catalog. In addition to the author catalog, there were often separate subject and title catalogs. The author catalogs were the most popular with the inmates. Author catalogs were available in 93.2 percent of the prison libraries, title catalogs in 29.5 percent, and subject catalogs in 46.6 percent (Zybert, 1991, p. 71).

Current directives require that all prison libraries have author and subject catalogs available and that the satellite library service points provide short holdings lists in binder format. Currently, 87.2 percent of the

prisons libraries have author catalogs, 34.6 percent have title catalogs, and 58.3 percent have subject catalogs. Computer-based catalogs are becoming more common, and at 36.5 percent of sites these are already available or will be so shortly. Adequate premises and equipment specifically designed for library functions are equally important for operational efficiency and program effectiveness. Due to overcrowding in Polish prisons, however, working conditions in the libraries have generally been poor and below the recommendations made by the *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Prisoners* (Lehmann & Locke, 2005, p. 7–9).

In 1981, 44.3 percent of prisons had a library area of less than 30 square meters, and only 9.6 percent had an area between 81 and 150 square meters. Of the 146 prison libraries operating in that time, only 17.1 percent offered a reading area. The remaining 82.9 percent of libraries lacked reading rooms (Zybert, 1991, p. 81).

Unfortunately, this situation had not improved by 2008. Of all prison libraries, 46.8 percent had premises with an area smaller than 30 square meters, and 9.6 percent had an area between 81 and 150 square meters. In comparison with 1981, however, more sites (32.1 percent) now provided designated reading areas (ranging from 2 to 45 square meters), often located within the common rooms.

Library hours vary from prison to prison, depending on facility type and security classification. In 1981, library services were available to inmates anywhere from two to forty hours per week (Zybert, 1991, p. 70). This situation had not changed by 2008.

Inadequate library hours undoubtedly affect the effectiveness of library services and the promotion of reading. It should be noted, however, that reading promotion is often an important component of other cultural and educational activities conducted by prison staff not directly involved in library work, and is also supported through internal radio and television broadcasts.

Library Staff

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, the actual role the library can play in the inmate rehabilitation and education process is dependent on the qualifications of library staff and the number of hours they are assigned to work in the library. Each facility has staff assigned to the library, and these people are employees of the Prison Service.

Current prison regulations do not identify the specific position of “librarian” but mention the position of “prison educator” as being in charge of the library (i.e., library educator). In practice, however, a number of institutions delegate the operation of the library to other categories of prison staff, such as cultural educator or school teacher, postpenitentiary assistant, sports instructor, or other employees. The library educator is responsible for organizing and operating the library. Responsibilities include developing

and maintaining the collections, lending of materials, record keeping and preparation of reports, and the organization of the library premises (main library space and satellite service points). The library educators also provide services like reading promotion and reader guidance (e.g., literary events and contests, exhibits, and broadcasts). In accomplishing these tasks, they are expected to cooperate with public library staff, as well as with other institution staff who are involved with cultural and educational programs. Rarely is the library educator assigned full time to the library operation, and most must also perform other duties. The author's surveys of 1981 and 2008 both show that the time devoted to library work ranged anywhere from thirty minutes to eight hours daily or "as needed," or three times a week with no precise time period indicated. Consequently, most library operations and services are not as effective as they could be. Most Prison Service educators who are in charge of libraries have university degrees—usually in pedagogy, but not in librarianship. Some have special training in rehabilitative pedagogy, which may include some forms of reading therapy. Such training may be helpful for working in the library but, unfortunately, does not qualify them for professional library work. The prison library educators, however, attend training provided by public library staff at the Centers for Prison Staff Development (Ośrodku Doskonalenia Kadr Służby Więziennej), or they participate in professional development activities offered by library organizations or institutions. Prison library educators also have access to a variety of training and professional resources, including principles of classification and cataloging and the creation of bibliographic records.

Prison inmates may be employed in the library. These workers usually perform lending activities and tasks related to the physical maintenance of library materials. They may also operate the satellite service points, the radio and television broadcasts, keep library records, and prepare special library events and broadcast programs. Inmate library workers are not allowed to keep book inventories or records of lost items, or perform similar "documentation" duties. Prison inmate workers usually do not have any professional library qualifications. Their effectiveness is mostly determined by their level of intelligence and interest in books and reading.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS AND RELATED EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In the wake of the 1989 political and social changes, the Polish Prison Service changed the nature of its cultural and educational programs and expanded their scope. These programs are now closely related to the mission of each prison facility and the needs of the different offender groups. Library activities are also planned according to the overall rehabilitative goals of the institution and the needs of the inmates. Thus, the role of the library is, among other things, to provide the offender with resources and information that will help them address the factors that

lead to the commitment of crimes and will help them succeed in life after release from prison. Given the fact that the majority of offenders come from a background of poverty, unemployment, and low educational achievement, it is not surprising that they are also culturally deprived and have little interest in or appreciation for what the library has to offer. The library is therefore challenged to introduce these offenders to new cultural and aesthetic experiences that can fill their free time while serving time and enrich their lives after incarceration (Zybert, 1991, p. 49).

Broadcasting System

The closed circuit broadcasting system often serves as the prison's cultural and educational center. The purpose of the system is to broadcast and rebroadcast radio and TV programs to individual cells—mainly educational, literary, musical, and entertainment programs. Inmates are employed by the broadcast station and work with program development and delivery.

Many of the broadcasts are produced in-house, either by educators and other prison staff or by the offenders themselves. The purpose of these programs is “primarily to highlight the role of culture in human life, thus enhancing humanistic motivation and behavior, and to assist in choosing values and taking responsibility for the consequences of one's actions” (Aktualności, 2009a). The broadcasts cover a wide range of topics, from religious and national holidays to legal and health-related subjects and issues on preparing for life after release. The educational broadcasts may have historical and religious themes or focus on famous personalities. At the Chelm prison, for example, the *Your Voice* Establishment Broadcasting Station broadcast 132 in-house produced programs in 2008 and, in cooperation with the “The Voice of the Gospel” Foundation, fifty-four programs with participating inmates (Aktualności, 2009a).

Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs

The library, as mentioned earlier, is involved in a variety of institution rehabilitation and social reintegration programs. These programs take a holistic approach to meeting the many needs of the offenders and preparing them for their return to society as “full” citizens. Activities are offered that enhance knowledge and improve work skills, and the offenders are kept informed about current political and economic events as well as job opportunities after release. They learn how to locate and apply for a job, prepare a resume, and how to interview for a job. Other rehabilitation programs are aimed at treating inmates with drug and alcohol addictions, since this dependency is often directly related to their crimes. These programs may utilize informational broadcasts, as well as group discussions and counseling. The participants learn how to deal with anger and aggression, to be assertive in a positive manner, to get along with others, and to develop empathy and sensitivity. One such program is entitled “Don't yield to violence” (Aktualności, 2009a).

Various addiction treatment methods are employed, including the U.S.-based "Atlantis" and the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) models (Zagórski, 1996, p. 520). Particular success has been achieved through a program where inmates with substance abuse problems work with young people with disabilities. The "Bona" program involves female offenders working with mentally disabled juveniles (GWL, n.d.). An important factor of these programs is the self-esteem that the offenders build through helping others (GWL, n.d.). Sometimes the programs involve theater or music performances by the inmates or by professional performers, for example, the "Mystery of Hope" inmate performance at the Chełm prison (Aktualności, 2009b) and the "Requiem of Lost Days" performed by a Kraków theater group. All these performances revolve around the theme of living a sober and meaningful life (Aktualności, 2009b).

Education through Culture and Art

Some prison rehabilitation programs are cultural in nature and have become known as "rehabilitation through culture and art." They aim to provide access to cultural resources and to motivate talented inmates to experiment with various forms of artistic expression—be it in the literary, musical, or visual arts. These activities not only enhance the participant's artistic skills, they also convey the importance of culture and art in human life. "Rehabilitation through culture and art" is an innovative program not only in Poland, but also in the rest of Eastern Europe. It was first introduced at the Siedlce prison, where the first prison cultural center was established in the late 1980s (EZ, n.d.). Under the auspices of Siedlce prison's cultural center, prison literary competitions called "The Limits of Solitude" have been organized nationally, and the best works are published in the cultural prisoner quarterly *Stygmata*, a journal that has been published since 1995 through the support and commitment of the Siedlce cultural and educational staff. Inmates with literary and drawing/painting talent across Poland have contributed to this journal under the mentorship of professional artists. *Stygmata* has become an important medium for the dissemination of quality art to people serving time in prison (EZ, n.d.).

An interesting reintegration program with educational and cultural content has been implemented in the Wierchowó prison. Here the inmates learn about government functions and the social and legal resources available to them in the community. They also learn about national heritage and the cultural treasures that are the products of history and national identity. Thus, the program strengthens both civic awareness and appreciation of cultural identity. The program uses films with patriotic content (e.g., Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble*), and the inmates are encouraged to read books on such subjects. Inmates

are allowed visits to museums and historical sites and to participate in patriotic music performances featuring professional opera singers (Patrzyńska, 2007, p. 15).

Another project under the rehabilitation-through-culture-and-art umbrella is called "Imprisoned Talents." Here the inmates present their artistic creations in a public forum and also perform music and songs composed by known Polish composers or written by themselves (Buczek, n.d.).

Rehabilitation through theater workshops and public performances has proven to be quite successful. This form of art therapy involves both professional actors and the offenders themselves, who often write the scripts (Aktualności, 2007). What makes these theater performances unique is that they are held inside a prison, that the actors and writers are people with a criminal past, and that the audience consists not only of other inmates, but also of the inmates' friends and families, prison staff, and members of the outside community (Wrona, n.d.). All activities related to the preparation and actual performances become a form of social inclusion that encourages group interaction and allows the offenders to talk about their own experiences and emotions. They acquire the skills "needed to form interpersonal and social relationships [and] are becoming more open" (Sosnowska, n.d.). The theater workshops permit the offenders to communicate with the outside world, and the outside world has the opportunity to see the offenders as more than just prisoners (Wrona, n.d.).

In 2008, more than a dozen theater groups were active in the prisons under the supervision of cultural educators and teachers and sometimes with the involvement of professional directors. "Po Drodze" ([On the Way]; Teatr, 2009), the first prison theater group, was established in 1998 at the Kłodzko prison by Krzysztof Papis, actor, director, and psychotherapist, who sees theater as a tool for social and political change. The first play at the Kłodzko prison dealt with domestic violence and was based on personal experiences of the inmates (Flankowska, 2000, p. 62–63).

The Kłodzko theater group has been very active over the last eleven years and has become a model for similar groups in other prisons (Wrona, n.d.) and (Sosnowska, n.d.). The popularity of these theatrical groups led to the creation of national prison theater festivals, e.g., the 2009 Brave Festival—Against Cultural Exile, which was held in Wrocław.

One recent performance at the Gliwice detention center was "Wrony na śniegu" (Crows in the Snow). The title comes from the poem *A Lyrical Conversation* by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, and besides featuring poetry, the performance included scenes from the author's play *The Little Theatre of the Green Goose*, which tells the story of prison reality with its loneliness, emptiness, and longing (Szymura, n.d.).

The prison literary club "Bartnicka 10" is held in high esteem because

of its social reintegration and educational activities that involve groups and organizations outside prison. The club was formed in 1997 and works with inmates in prison, as well as those who have been released and are involved in literary pursuits on the outside. The main purpose of the club is to enhance cultural interaction, coordinate literary activities in the prison, and organize meetings with authors and other cultural representatives. Through the club, inmates also have the opportunity to leave the prison to attend events in libraries, museums, art galleries, and literary societies.

The literary club members prepare themselves carefully for each meeting through materials provided by the prison library. They can also use Internet resources in a tightly controlled setting. Sometimes workshops are conducted by authors from the National Association of Writers. Occasionally, works by prisoners are published in local newspapers, which is very motivational and rewarding for the author. The Prison Service also publishes the *Gazeta Więzienna* newspaper, which contains many inmate writings. Some inmates have had books published by the prison authority or local cultural agencies.

A very interesting project implemented by the Bartnicka 10 Club is a multimedia Holocaust exhibit that was shown in several prisons, as well as outside locations. The exhibit included photographs of daily life behind the walls of the Warsaw ghetto shown against a background of debris and barbed wire and illustrated the famine and suffering of the ghetto inhabitants. The exhibit also included Jewish music and documentary film clips. Visitors to the Holocaust exhibit included Israel's ambassador to Poland (Seroczyński, n.d.[a]).

With the support of prison educators, the offenders have been able to publish local newspapers and magazines. Currently dozens of such publications exist, including *Gazeta Więzienna* (Włocławek prison), *Aby do wokandy* (Barczewo prison), *Przystanek* (penitentiary institutions of the Białystok Region), *Pasiaczek* (Łowicz prison), *Errata* (Koszalin prison), and *Naszym zdaniem* (Grudziądz prison).

Essential for the success of the rehabilitation-through-culture-and-art initiative is continued support of the offender after release. Such assistance is provided by programs like "Help towards Self-Help" organized by the H. Ch. Kofoed Association for Social Work, Rehabilitation and Reintegration. This is the Polish version of the Danish school model by Hans Christian Kofoed. The Kofoed Association helps marginalized people and those with special needs overcome challenges and function in society.

Promotion of Reading and Knowledge

Prisoners often form their reading interests and preferences under the influence of other inmates and, to some extent, by prison staff. Library staff can promote the collections through book displays and "marketing" over the prison broadcasting system. New titles can be featured, and books

can be read aloud for the inmates. For example, in 2008 the Chełmno prison inmates had the opportunity to listen to twenty books, presented in 50-minute installments over the in-house (Aktualności, 2009a).

Education and treatment staff also encourage the inmates to read. At the Lublin detention center, staff steered inmates to titles that dealt with the topics of loneliness, illness, death, homelessness, and alcoholism, but also showed the importance of love and friendship in overcoming these problems. The therapeutic impact of such readings lies in the cognitive awareness of negative behavior and the capacity and willingness to change this behavior to positive (EZ, n.d.).

As part of another program, the Volunteer Center for Young Prisoners "Eleutheria" has published an audio book of stories read by prisoners. A component of this program lets inmates meet with family members, especially children, who then receive the recorded stories. This program has significant bibliotherapeutic impact, as it helps restore damaged family relationships and helps children overcome their fear of having a close family member in prison (Zwierzchowski, n.d.[a]).

Information and knowledge-based contests are popular among inmates. In 2008 alone, twenty-seven such contests were held. Topics may include history, geography, music, sports, cinema, literature, and legal topics. These contests inspire people to read and are very educational. Prizes often include books. Reading competitions and contests about knowledge and book content, such as *Who is reading, lives many lives . . .*, are aimed at the most avid readers (Aktualności, 2009a).

Cultural and educational activities in prisons are often organized in cooperation with the local community. Famous athletes, actors, writers, journalists, politicians, and social activists, who represent positive role models, are frequently invited to the prison. Many theater groups, music bands, and comedians also are invited to perform. In December 2009, the world-renowned violinist Nigel Kennedy gave a concert at one of the detention centers (Zwierzchowski, n.d. (b)).

Since the early 1990s, certain prisoners have been allowed to participate in cultural activities outside the prison, such as meetings with professional artists and events that promote artwork by the inmates. For example, inmates from the Włocławek prison present their own artwork and writings and participate in poetry readings at various public locations as part of the "Artists from behind bars" program (Seroczyński, n.d. (b)).

Frequent contact between prisoners and other people decreases the negative impact of incarceration and the prison subculture (Machel, 2003, p. 76). These connections also help change the public's negative image of prisons. So in addition to providing the prisoners with ways to find freedom through culture and to prepare them for a successful return to society, the programs and activities described above have wide-ranging impact on society as a whole (Seroczyński, n.d.[a]).

CONCLUSION

Looking back over almost thirty years of developments in the Polish prison system, it is hard to disagree with the opinion of experts that the steadily increasing overcrowding and nonhuman-centered treatment of prisoners, the practice of prisoner isolation, and the priority of economic factors over rehabilitative objectives have created a number of obstacles to progressive development (Machel, 2003, p. 164). These factors have also influenced the scope and availability of cultural and educational programs, including the development and growth of prison libraries, because "one can't organize adequate cultural and educational activities, if there is no library, no common room, and deficient technical equipment, furnishings and broadcasting equipment" (Machel, 2003, p. 54).

Although many conditions are still in need of improvement in order to achieve a fully effective prisoner rehabilitation system, today there is an increasing number of professionally qualified Prison Service workers, mental health staff, and educators who understand the importance of cultural and educational programs, the positive role of books and reading, and the healthy impact of creative expression. The commitment and determination of these staff members have contributed greatly to providing the offenders with options for constructive leisure activities and positive social development. The examples presented in this article demonstrate that it is possible to provide prisoners with access to culture in a manner that resembles life in free society, while at the same time maintaining authority and control over the correctional process that is supposed to lead to a life free of crime.

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