

**Trends in Corrections: Interviews with Corrections Leaders Around the World**, volume three, edited by Dilip K. Das & Philip Birch, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2019, 270 pp., £94.99, hardcover, ISBN 9780367345105.

The third volume in the series *Trends in Corrections: Interviews with Corrections Leaders Around the World* by Dilip K. Das and Philip Birch continues an ambitious project undertaken in the previous two volumes. Seeking to provide both the academic and professional communities with a deeper understanding of best practice in correctional systems by comparing approaches from various countries, this book manages to collate insights over ten chapters from Lithuania, Slovak Republic, United States, Honduras, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, and South Africa. Both editors have many years of experience in the field and are experts on correctional and policing practices, while the contributors have longstanding correctional careers in the countries they present.

The information in each section is derived from semi-structured interviews conducted with seasoned correctional leaders by contributors familiar with the specific country settings. The interviews follow a similar format throughout the book, which enables comparisons to be made across countries. After a brief introduction, the correctional official's career is presented. This is followed by accounts of the changes the leaders have experienced, their personal and correctional philosophies, the problems and successes they have encountered, the ways in which they integrate theory and practice, existence of evidence-based approaches in their respective systems, transnational relations, and their general assessment of the current state of corrections in their countries. A common thread running through the chapters is the varied understanding of the purpose of corrections. For example, while the United States appears to prioritise deterrence to achieve the safety of society, Honduras and Japan emphasise rehabilitation, achieved by such means as housing solutions or vocational training. The latter is a perspective I share as an expert in German and British correctional services. As described by the colleague from Slovak Republic, we strive to balance rehabilitation, the safety of society,

and reduction in the use of imprisonment. The current book allows reflection on personal opinions and relate them to differing contexts.

The interviews are framed by an introduction and a concluding chapter that summarises the challenges into four distinct categories: (1) correctional responses to national independence, (2) responses to scandals within the criminal justice system, (3) tackling overcrowded correctional facilities, and (4) navigating the privatisation of prisons. There is a notable lack of evidence-based approaches among the various correctional systems, and several corrections leaders acknowledge that the link between theory and practice is often under-developed. Nevertheless, they seem aware of the importance of grounding their work in theory. The barriers appear to be limited resources such as the minimal research scope of American facilities' teams, difficulty in evaluating certain services such as Japan's challenges when assessing elusive concepts such as the effectiveness of vocational interventions, or dependence on foreign research, as is partially the case in Slovakia Republic.

I was surprised to learn from this book about the lack of an evidence base for correctional practice. It is evident that the scientist-practitioner model I am accustomed to through my forensic career in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom is not yet standard everywhere. Furthermore, my work that is focusing on crucial new developments such as changes in conceptualisation and approach to the Trans community in correctional services or the rise of extremism potentially remain unaddressed in other contexts. Instead, it appears that several countries are still catching up with research on risk linked to recidivism, which in other contexts has already been integrated into standard practice. It raises questions of how we can share insights better without pushing a Western perspective or ignoring cultural differences. For example, in Honduras spirituality is a main pillar of rehabilitation, while Thailand is countering historical prison stereotypes by opening their facilities to the wider society. These are matters that European research often fails to address, but they likely have an impact on the effectiveness of correctional systems in the countries where they are used.

The greatest achievement of this volume is its highlighting of the intricacies described above, fostering a global awareness, and bridging the gaps in international understanding. This is accomplished by featuring the experience and knowledge of corrections leaders, which are often under-represented in research. Das and Birch use their international knowledge and networks of experts to represent a wide variety of countries. It provides a refreshing view in a research area usually dominated by Western scholars. Despite the diversity of perspectives, however, the book never becomes frustrating because the unifying structure permits comparison among the interviews. This encourages readers to compare their own systems to the ones presented and allows them to reflect on their own practices. The cross-cultural comparison is further aided by the commentary linking individual country practices to the bigger picture.

That said, this book is a demanding read that requires the reader to engage with the various contexts provided across the chapters. It is not enough merely to read the volume, but to answer the questions posed for the correctional system that a reader works in. Only then will the features that before reading might have been perceived as foreign be appreciated as commonalities. These differences and familiarities might contain new answers and insights that are specific to a reader's work and country. The book is evidently aimed at anyone who can benefit from these reflections. Apart from corrections professionals and their leaders, academics and students working to support correctional systems and needing to identify new research needs will find this book useful. *Trends in Corrections* provides a rare insight into the minds of corrections leaders across the world and should be an essential read for all those who are interested in corrections and eager to improve their own work in this field.

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