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## Role of Public Associations in Educational and Social Work in Penitentiary Institutions

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### Abstract

*Introduction:* the article considers problems related to the development of public associations in the penal system. These associations should not only contribute to the social growth of the system, but also act on a deregulated, proactive basis. *Purpose:* to analyze ways of functioning of public associations in the Russian penitentiary system. The research *methodology* is based on: 1) the study of legal foundations for public association functioning; 2) the intent analysis of self-representations of the Federal Penitentiary Service in relation to public associations, which includes information from open sources, statements of authorities, analytical reviews and other non-corporate publications. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are used to process the texts. Online statements suggest internalization of the topic and its active reproduction in a broad social discourse, with references to the history of the phenomenon and its significance for symbolic reproduction. The semantic coding of the topography of public associations is structured by analogy with a “black box” with different inputs and outputs: 1) a strong positive emotion towards public associations in the management level, 2) a certain critical position towards public associations at the grassroots level. Classification of intentions, patterns, and determinants helps change the focus of the study, which makes the analysis interesting and productive. At the same time, public associations have always been in the sphere of media attention in connection with the democratization of institutions, targets for increasing the manageability of systems. *Results:* 1) the practice of public associations is studied, taking into account the position of educational and social work with personnel; 2) problematic issues in the field of functioning of public associations are systematized; 3) solutions to the problem of crime prevention with the participation of employees of the penal system are formulated.

**Key words:** penal system; public associations; educational work; social work; volunteerism.

## 5.8.1. General pedagogy, history of pedagogy and education.

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### Introduction

The popular saying “people are the new oil” redirects our attention to human resource in a knowledge and communication society. The topic is extremely important for management trends, improvement of the security system of the state and society. Various aspects of the problem of the influence of public associations have been studied by a number of authors: 1) public control in modern Russia (V.N. Anikienko, V.P. Belyaev, R.V. Gornev, S.M. Zubarev, T.V. Milusheva, Yu.V. Soboleva, V.K. Samokhvalova); 2) legal aspects of public control (V.V. Grib, L.V. Karnausenko, E.V. Markina, T.N. Mikheeva, R.R. Rakhimova, I.V. Rukavishnikova); 3) impact of digital transformation on public control (N.S. Lisina, N.V. Kuznetsov), 4) citizens’ appeals as a tool to boost effectiveness of interaction between the population and the authorities (A.E. Lapin, N.I. Borisov), 5) public control in the penal system (N.V. Popova, E.A. Safonova, V.V. Fedorov).

The Federal Penitentiary Service, as a large-scale federal structure, is interested in using the resource of public associations. Volunteering and curative activities have stood out as public initiatives due to their resourcefulness [1]. Personal involvement, a sense of unity, empathy, belonging, solidarity, and service are personal qualities of activity without financial benefit, which makes volunteerism an important social phenomenon and draws attention of the state.

Public organizations are created in the process of civic synergy, spontaneous joint interest, unexpected needs for improvement, security, information, social and semantic order. They are built on a deregulated, free basis, with simplified entry and exit procedures, and may disintegrate after solving certain general issues. There are quite a lot of types of public organizations. We will highlight those that may be of interest to law enforcement agencies: charitable, volunteer, religious, sports, creative, professional, cultural, youth, student,

women’s, observational, educational, expert, club, environmental, economic, scientific, and ethnic. They can take various organizational forms: circles, associations, unions, communities, fraternities, councils, NGOs, foundations, movements, and parties. Organizational structures, order of membership, types of activities, and goals are changing, but one thing remains unchanged – public organizations solve social problems without pursuing profit. At the same time, external public associations may have their own interests in obtaining status, consolidating a brand, maintaining influence, aggregating contacts, and carrying out social intelligence for other structures. Public associations operating in institutions of the penal system cannot have goals independent of the organization or those aimed at causing damage to the service.

Public associations are an integral, actively manifested system with certain functions (depending on the direction) and interaction between individuals, groups, structural units, designed to meet socio-political, economic, social and spiritual interests and needs of people.

Public associations include public organizations of various directions, which are based on compulsory membership, created by citizens to protect common interests and achieve their statutory goals in the socio-cultural sphere.

Distribution of voluntary public associations takes into account specific features of the direction and content of their work (public organizations, public movements, trade unions, charitable organizations, children’s and youth associations, informal groups and associations, women’s organizations, veteran public formations, confessional formations, scientific and scientific-technical educational societies, environmental organizations, etc.); the composition of participants (children, youth, adults, pensioners, etc.); forms and methods of activity. Public associations also include veterans, for example the Union of Veterans of

Afghanistan, the Union of Veterans of Chechnya, the Union of Veterans of the SVO, the All-Russian Public Organization of Veterans of the Penal System, etc.

Public organizations, movements, associations, foundations, unions, initiatives, centers, and clubs are structures that are united by the umbrella term “public associations”. They may or may not be registered, but in fact they are initiative, self-governing, voluntary, and non-profit institutions. All these public forms are united by the desire to implement common projects and interests.

The main problem of public associations of the Federal Penitentiary Service, as well as other departmental structures, is that they are not always created from below, as they should, but are used instrumentally, for reporting to supervisory commissions, the prosecutor's office, and the central office. There is an acute problem of psychoemotional burnout [2], professional deformation [3], stress, density and speed of communications [4] in the work of law enforcement agencies. One of the motivations for joining the service is social guarantees; however, in conditions of increased regulation and work pressure, any other work may be perceived as undesirable. Personnel management requires special attention and tact when encouraging employees to participate in departmental competitive events. For example, an employee experiences a syndrome of professional and emotional exhaustion from overworking, and the HR department insistently offers him/her to take part in the Star Destinies couples competition, not taking into account (not knowing?) that the couple is on the verge of divorce due to burnout at work. This causes emotional dissonance. Or a female employee has to take part in the Miss Penal System contest, which not only requires additional financial and time expenses (creating a script, styling, artistic photo in an evening dress, high-resolution video materials), but, most importantly, desire and attitude. This cannot be considered an initiative. All the initiatives offered to employees are well developed. The main problem is that they cease to be a tool for shaping corporate social life when they become mandatory. In other words, the competition, which is supposed to inspire and increase self-esteem, turns into a headache and

exhaustion. Career assertiveness and unprofessionalism in promoting socially proactive forms can create additional problems in the team. Among such voluntary and compulsory initiatives is the dubious procedure for joining the “Colonels club” through the financing of a corporate feast.

Being correctly organized, the Miss Penal System contest discloses creative, image, and social capacities of the Federal Penitentiary Service, because participants demonstrate national costumes, which emphasizes the international character of the federal service and show skills of official activity and physical training, as well as choreographic skills. Many women in the penal system have bright talents and want to take part in such a contest [5].

In conditions of constant excess hours, employees may react negatively to certain types of public associations (women's council, council of young specialists, etc.). In such conditions, only trade unions are in demand. Their activities are aimed not at getting vouchers and organizing sports events, but at addressing acute social issues, such as obtaining housing, accounting for working hours, etc. However, such grassroots trade unions for the rights of security forces are banned in many countries, including Russia, since law enforcement agencies and the army must ensure order, they cannot be destabilized. Issues of labor rationing, burnout prevention, and economic compensation for special conditions of service should be resolved without creation of public associations for the protection of labor rights, through memos, parliamentary inquiries, and expert assessments. It is impossible to bring the military community to the point where it creates public associations that are disloyal to the state. It is clear that the issue of shortage and low wages is complex and cannot be solved with money alone. However, there is a reliable method to remove the problem of professional burnout of employees by reducing paper load, eliminating unnecessary, “representative” functions, and creating a more effective regular management system without redundant reports [6].

Does it mean that public associations have no future due to the workload of employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service? The situ-

ation is not simple. Public associations have great potential in the situation of a set society, the subjects of which are all subordinates in the hierarchy of the Federal Penitentiary Service. When users of a corporate resource participate in making decisions about its use, they are more likely to follow the rules they helped create. A strong social bond contributes to the employee's long-term embeddedness in the corporation, his/her responsible behavior, and loyalty to the organization. Thanks to public associations, the organization earns social capital, which can be used in more efficient performance of tasks and processes, spent during overcoming difficult periods of the business cycle. Horizontal links provide an off-market effect of sustainability and efficiency. The synergetic effect of the social is the answer to the question of why institutions of a non-market, non-administrative nature are required, they contribute to sustainable resource management. Productivity, trust, various forms of cooperation, stability, collectivism, legitimacy are the fruits of grassroots forms of interaction [7].

Public associations make formal structures friendly to citizens. However, the right decisions descend on overloaded employees who "don't have time for women's councils".

There are initiative groups that are successful in their public activities. The Women's Council in the Directorate of the Federal Penitentiary Service in Stavropol Krai unites employees with an active life position who are not indifferent to the fate of colleagues. It performs a variety of tasks, such as assistance to widows, families with many children, assistance in improving living conditions.

Promotion of official discipline strengthening and establishment of a comfortable moral and psychological climate is the merit of the Women's Council. It deals with difficulties in the family, misunderstandings with management, disturbing signals, and leisure activities. The Women's Council participates in the discussion of plans to improve activities of penitentiary institutions and consists of 96 active members of regional associations [8].

In general, there are three models of interaction with public organizations in the Federal Penitentiary Service: developed, moderate and minimal. The most developed model is inherent in educational organizations, since cadets under-

go training there. In other words, cadets of the Federal Penitentiary Service are the main target resource and consumer of the services of public organizations (veterans, officers, and museum councils). A moderate model is represented by regional departments of the Federal Penitentiary Service, due to the fact that they consistently implement all decisions and initiatives of the central office. A minimal model is implemented in most institutions of the penal system (with rare exceptions, where there are enthusiastic social workers). Correctional facilities, prisons, and inspections are focused on their main functions, and there is neither strength nor time left to maintain public associations. This raises the question of the role of public associations in educational and social work with personnel and prevention of offenses committed by employees. It is proportional to the degree of presence of public structures in the organization.

Thus, problems of public associations appear when the principle of initiative is violated, initiatives are not public, they do not come from below. It may be objected that it is not worth waiting for an initiative from employees. This is not quite true. Many veterans show a sincere interest in public service. Scientific schools and scientific circles in educational organizations of the Federal Penitentiary Service are initiative and based on the enthusiasm of teachers. Processes of self-organization of social activists in collectives also constitute positive examples. Let us consider several activity areas of public organizations.

Mentoring. Such a social form as mentoring is designed to stabilize activities of departments, reduce shortages, number of penalties, dismissals in the first year of service [8]. Positive experience to organize mentor councils has been gained: 1) the work of mentor councils significantly facilitates control of the inclusion of a young employee in official activities; 2) the effectiveness of mentoring depends on the level of training of mentors themselves; 3) a mentor training program consists of lectures, seminars and practical exercises; 4) mentors councils have authority in institutions, as they deal with social issues, such as purchase of sports equipment, repair of the gym, improvement of working conditions and services; 5) mentoring, methodological work and training of mentors are encouraged by the leadership [9].

Activity of public councils. Despite the fact that public councils take pains to assist convicts (improve material and living conditions, assist in re-socialization), they do not forget about employees and help conduct children's programs, military field games, and events to promote a healthy lifestyle. It also contributes to strengthening institutions of order and civil society [6].

Media personalities are involved in activities of public councils, which improves the image and functionality of the penitentiary system. Thus, famous psychologist M.I. Khas'minskii served in law enforcement agencies at one time, then faced the need to overcome a serious illness, and after recovery embarked on the path of helping people through the tools of crisis psychology. As an expert and media personality, he creates a positive image resource for the Public Council at the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia. Mikhail Khas'minskii chose interaction with employees of the penal system as the main direction, because, he believes that this people who determine the state of the penitentiary system. The psychologist, visiting institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service, shares knowledge useful both in professional and daily life, conducts seminars on suicide prevention, family values; informs the leadership about problems of officers and enlisted personnel [10].

There are other forms of interaction with public organizations" 1) invitation of veteran snipers [11]; 2) individual educational talks [12]; 3) meetings with the leaders of the service [13]; 4) interaction with law enforcement agencies [14]; and religious organizations [15]; 5) cultural events [16]; 6) invitation of social activists [17]; 7) support for grassroots initiatives [18]; 8) assistance in improving living conditions [8].

Thus, various forms of work of public associations act as a factor in strengthening the discipline of penal system employees. Veteran, officer, and cadet museum councils are especially important for educational and social work with personnel and prevention of accidents involving employees. Cadets have to answer to formidable and caring colonels.

Some problems with the functioning of public associations are connected with extra duties of employees, overpressure, and the desire to obtain positive reporting.

### *Conclusions*

Public associations in the penal system are called upon: 1) to improve the manageability of institutions, using the initiative from below; 2) to assist in solving social and household problems; 3) to meet various leisure needs.

Public associations are local, do not have legal rights, territorial administration, and operate at the particular institution. Their number in the penal system exceeds five thousand units, and they unite more than 60 thousand employees.

The conducted assessment of public associations operating in institutions of the penal system, their participation in educational and social work with personnel and prevention of offenses on the part of employees allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- ethical public initiatives such as mentor, course, faculty, and cadet councils and officer meetings should be ranked first by importance;
- the work of veteran councils should be recognized as significant;
- familiarization of new employees with public associations helps join the team and adapt;
- the use of public associations (officer meetings, cadet associations, mentoring) contributes to the prevention of corruption, acquisition of positive service experience and neutralization of negative trends (suicide, disciplinary violations, administrative and criminal offenses);
- the negative opinion that the role of public associations is exaggerated, their real impact is gradually fading away, employees are forced to join them, and real grassroots enthusiasm is a fiction is an emotional hypertrophied reaction;
- a more detailed consideration of the issue demonstrates contribution of public organizations aimed at education and transfer of experience. Veterans are acutely aware of reforms of law enforcement agencies and difficulties young employees face. Many of them are ready to find time, words and personal attention for the teams where they have worked for a long time;
- positive changes in the behavior of an employee who is prone to misconduct are possible through interaction with public structures, provided they are informally filled with values;



– the reluctance of employees to take part in public associations can be overcome if employees of educational departments have professional knowledge, initiative, creativity, empathy, and motivation;

– it is important to reward employees for educational work during the quarterly review of results of official discipline and non-admission of illegal acts.

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