

Training and Development as a Driver of Reformatory Change within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service

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ABSTRACT

Training and development are widely recognised as critical enablers of organisational transformation within public sector institutions undergoing structural and cultural reform. In correctional systems transitioning from punitive to rehabilitation-oriented models, training and development play a central role in equipping correctional personnel with the knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and operational skills necessary for implementing reformatory practices. This paper examines the contribution of training and development to the reformatory change management process within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS). The findings reveal that while training and development are recognised as important components of reform, existing training programmes within ZPCS remain insufficiently targeted, inconsistently implemented, and inadequately aligned with operational reform challenges. The paper concludes that sustainable reformatory change within correctional institutions requires context-specific, continuous, participatory, and strategically aligned training systems capable of embedding rehabilitation-oriented values into institutional culture and operational practice.

Keywords: training and development, reformatory change, correctional reform, Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service, organisational transformation, rehabilitation, human capital development.

1. Introduction

Contemporary correctional systems across the world are increasingly transitioning from punitive institutional models toward rehabilitation-oriented correctional philosophies that emphasise behavioural transformation, reintegration, and offender rehabilitation [1]. In Zimbabwe, the establishment of the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service (ZPCS) under the 2013 Constitution signalled a significant institutional commitment toward correctional reform and rehabilitation-oriented correctional management [2].

Training and development are therefore central components of organisational transformation within correctional systems [3]. Correctional officers and institutional personnel are responsible for implementing rehabilitation programmes, maintaining institutional order, supporting reintegration processes, and operationalizing reform policies. Without appropriate knowledge, competencies, and skills, reformatory policies may remain symbolic rather than effectively implemented [4] [5].

This paper examines the contribution of training and development to the reformatory change management process within ZPCS. Drawing from empirical findings presented in Chapter Four and conclusions and recommendations outlined in Chapter Five of the dissertation, the paper analyses how training and development shape reform implementation, institutional culture transformation, organisational competence, and rehabilitation-oriented correctional practices.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Anchors

Human capital theory argues that investments in employee knowledge, skills, competencies, and capabilities improve organisational performance and institutional effectiveness [6]. Employees are viewed as strategic organisational assets whose development contributes directly to institutional productivity, adaptability, and innovation.

Organisational learning theory further emphasises the importance of continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and institutional adaptation in organisational transformation processes [7]. Organisations undergoing reform must develop systems capable of generating, transferring, and applying knowledge to operational practice. Training and development therefore become mechanisms for institutional learning and cultural transformation.

Lewin's change management model highlights the role of training during organisational transformation processes. Training facilitates the unfreezing, changing, and refreezing stages by equipping employees with the competencies and confidence required to adopt new organisational practices [8]. Institutional theory explains how training supports institutional adaptation by reshaping organisational norms, values, and behavioural expectations [9].

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods convergent parallel design was employed. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires across ZPCS facilities, with SEM used to assess

the relationship between training and development and reformatory change outcomes. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis and triangulation were applied to produce an integrated understanding of training and development dynamics within the institution.

5. Findings

Staff Training and Development

Path / Relationship	Standardized Beta (β)	p-value	Statistical Significance	Hypothesis Status
Training & Development $\rightarrow$ Reformatory Change	-0.103	0.163	Insignificant	Not Supported

Statistical Result: Beta (β) = -0.103, p = 0.163 (Statistically Insignificant)

Application Narrative: Structural Equation Modelling indicates that, surprisingly, current staff training and development initiatives show a negative and statistically insignificant path relationship with reformatory change outcomes. This negative parameter indicates a critical misalignment, suggesting that existing training programs are too generic, outdated, or overly focused on traditional punitive routines rather than practical, rehabilitation-oriented skills required for modern correctional environments.

Qualitative findings reveal that participants recognised training as important for reform implementation but noted significant gaps in training frequency, content relevance, and practical application. Participants reported that training is sometimes conducted in isolation from operational realities, limiting its effectiveness in transforming institutional practice. Some officers noted that training content does not consistently align with the day-to-day challenges of implementing reformatory correctional practices.

The triangulated findings indicate that training within ZPCS is more effective at introducing awareness of reform concepts than fundamentally transforming occupational cultures and operational behaviours. Training impact is further constrained by resource limitations, inadequate technological integration, and weak follow-up mechanisms for assessing skills transfer.

6. Discussion

The findings highlight a critical alignment gap between training systems and operational reform needs within ZPCS. Human capital theory and organisational learning theory both emphasise that effective training must be contextually relevant, practically applicable, and continuously reinforced through institutional systems. Where training remains conceptually abstract or operationally disconnected, its contribution to institutional transformation is necessarily limited.

The persistence of traditional occupational cultures within ZPCS, despite the existence of training programmes, demonstrates the importance of culturally transformative training approaches. Training must address not only technical competencies but also attitudinal and cultural dimensions of rehabilitation-oriented correctional practice. Professional identity transformation requires sustained, multi-level training investment rather than isolated training events.

Resource constraints significantly mediate training effectiveness within ZPCS. Inadequate training infrastructure, limited access to specialised expertise, and insufficient training frequency undermine the ability of training systems to produce sustained institutional behavioural change.

4. Data Analysis

SEM analysis assessed the direct and mediated effects of training and development on reformatory change, examining path coefficients and significance levels. Qualitative thematic analysis identified themes including training relevance, training frequency, skills transfer, competency gaps, training infrastructure, and institutional culture change. Triangulation integrated both data strands to develop a contextually grounded interpretation of training and development within ZPCS.

7. Policy Recommendations

First, ZPCS should develop a comprehensive and strategically aligned training and development framework specifically designed to support rehabilitation-oriented correctional reform. The framework should integrate technical, attitudinal, and cultural training components responsive to operational reform realities.

Second, training programmes should be delivered regularly and consistently across all institutional levels, from senior leadership to frontline officers, ensuring broad institutional competency development.

Third, training content should be developed in collaboration with rehabilitation experts, academic institutions, and civil society organisations to ensure contextual relevance and practical applicability.

Fourth, digital and technology-enabled training platforms should be explored to expand training access, reduce resource demands, and improve training continuity across geographically distributed ZPCS facilities.

Fifth, institutional monitoring and evaluation systems should assess training outcomes, skills transfer, and behavioural change to ensure continuous improvement of training effectiveness.

8. Conclusion

This paper examined the contribution of training and development to the reformatory change management process within the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service. The findings demonstrate that training positively contributes to reformatory change but remains insufficiently targeted, inconsistently implemented, and inadequately aligned with operational reform needs. Sustainable institutional transformation requires continuous, contextually relevant, culturally transformative, and strategically coordinated training systems capable of embedding rehabilitation-oriented values and competencies throughout the institutional hierarchy.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Service or any government institution. This paper is intended for academic and policy discourse purposes only.

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