
Correctional Education: How Education Reduces Recidivism Rates For Juvenile Delinquents

Juveniles and their involvement with the criminal justice system have become an important issue in our modern-day society. Formerly incarcerated youth are at a high risk of recidivism, in fact, over half are re-incarcerated within three years of release. To combat against the high rates of re-incarceration, there needs to be a system that's put in place that ensures that these formerly incarcerated youths will be rehabilitated. Studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between correctional education and recidivism rates for juvenile offenders and that youths who participate in correctional education programs while incarcerated will have better post-release outcomes. By providing juveniles with correctional education will also increase their likelihood of employment, and this is linked to low rates of recidivism because they can support themselves without resorting to criminal activities. Correctional education for juvenile offenders will ensure that fewer youths will engage in further criminal activities. Correctional education is important because it reduces recidivism among juvenile offenders since it provides them with opportunities to change their personal behavior and values.

Incarceration during youth is a crucial point of intellectual development and that due to these factors, formerly incarcerated youth are at a high risk of recidivism, in fact, over half are re-incarcerated within three years of release. Former Attorney General Loretta Lynch stated that "Too often, justice-involved individuals who have paid their debt to society confront daunting obstacles to good jobs, decent housing, adequate health care, and quality education" (Pace, 2018). Lynch goes on into explaining that youth need the necessary knowledge and skills to secure employment, which will help them to integrate into their communities. According to "Education Services in Juvenile Corrections: 40 Years of Litigation and Reform" by Peter E. Leone and Pamela Cichon Wruble, "On any given day, approximately 61,000 youth are in detention and commitment facilities in the United States". According to "From Correctional Education to School Reentry: How Formerly Incarcerated Youth Can Achieve Better Educational Outcomes" by Sonia Pace, "Each year, approximately 100,000 youths are discharged from juvenile justice facilities and return to their communities to face a myriad of challenges, including difficulties with high school reentry and diploma attainment" (Pace, 2018, p.128). These outcomes suggest that there is an ineffective system that is currently in place. These formerly incarcerated youths often experienced trauma and neglect before their incarceration and have a significant need for mental health services and substance abuse treatment and that they are also more likely to experience poverty and to have financial responsibilities. In addition, Pace found that twenty-three percent of incarcerated youth have learning disabilities. It is estimated that seventy-five percent of the 150,000-youth detention in

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2009 were high school dropouts, and many were not fully literate. Correctional education is important because it reduces recidivism among juvenile offenders since it provides them with opportunities to change their personal behavior and values.

Juvenile correctional education has been a part of the United States criminal justice system for centuries and it has been evolving to adapt to changes that are occurring. According to “The Metamorphosis of Juvenile Correctional Education: Incidental Conception to Intentional Inclusion” by James H. Keeley, “Juvenile Correctional Education has been evolving in the United States for over 360 years”. Juvenile correctional education first began during the Massachusetts Colony in 1642, which operated under a servant/foster care type of placement (Keeley, 2004). Education for juveniles was wrapped in the cocoon of the dominant justice system throughout the history of the United States because its emergence was initially indistinguishable since education was incidental to other incarceration management and treatment modalities. A clear distinction in providing education to juveniles appeared during the Refuge House and Reform Era of the Nineteenth Century, where the judiciary and social reformers touted education as a basis for new types of institutions such as reformatories and industrial schools. These changes are especially important since it established education within juvenile justice with a focus on basic and practical skills and were generally accepted by correctional authorities and social reformers that this level of education was the most appropriate for these juvenile offenders (Keely, 2004). The federal government took a major step in correctional education through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing handicapped youth the right to special education services, and it was explicitly extended to incarcerate persons under the age of 21 through the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. These steps that are taken by the federal government demonstrates ways that the government is attempting to combat against these issues.

Furthermore, in 1990, education programming in the juvenile institutions was expanded when a national project, Law-Related Education, grew as a result of funding from Department of Justice’s Office of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This demonstrates that issues regarding juvenile offenders are widely recognized and also the need to educate juvenile offenders. Research indicates that educational attainment is highly correlated with rates of re-offending, and that higher levels of academic competence are associated with lower rates of recidivism. According to the article “Why prisoner education is key to reducing crime” by Mike Riggs, “Educating people while they’re behind bars makes them a lot less likely to return to prison once they get out”. Riggs uses references from the RAND Corporation, and they have determined that “Inmates who participated in correctional education programs were 43% less likely to become repeat offenders than inmates who didn’t” (Riggs, 2013). The statistic again shows that there is a clear correlation between correctional education and recidivism. While these steps will not deter all youth from further troubles, well-developed education programs for youths will ensure that fewer youths will persist and engage in criminal behavior.

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In addition, according to “Professional Development: A Capacity-Building Model for Juvenile Correctional Education System” by Sarup R. Mathur, Heather Griller Clark, and Naomi A. Schoenfeld, “Youth in correctional facilities experience a broad range of educational, psychological, medical, and social needs. Professional development, a systemic process that improves the likelihood of student success by enhancing educator abilities, is a powerful way to positively affect student outcomes”. This is significant, as mentioned by Sonia Pace that incarceration during youth is a crucial point of intellectual development and that due to these factors, formerly incarcerated youth are at a high risk of recidivism, in fact, over half are re-incarcerated within three years of release (Pace, 2018). By providing education for youths that are in juvenile correctional facilities will most certainly lead to positive effects since this is a crucial point of their intellectual development. Furthermore, according to “Does providing inmates with education improve postrelease outcomes? A meta-analysis of correctional education programs in the United States” by Robert Bozick, Jennifer Steele, Lois Davis, & Susan Turner, “Educational curricula can assist by providing course content that helps develop moral reasoning, which in turn should attenuate the impulse to engage in criminal behavior postrelease”. By understanding their consequences through these academic courses that are offered in prisons, juveniles will be less likely to engage in criminal behaviors upon their post-release. In acquiring new bodies of knowledge via academic courses, prisoners can potentially gain the theoretical context that can expedite their transition to more mature developmental states.

Also, the Child Saving Movement that began in 1850, with the reformers known as child savers, believed that children should be educated and protected (Keeley, 2004). This agenda that these child savers had can be directly associated with the belief that correctional education is necessary. By providing juveniles offenders with education, will inevitably reduce their recidivism rates, as the article “Why They're Doing Shakespeare in Prison; In California, Shakespeare is showing students and inmates about actions and their consequences” by Sean Elder states, “The playacting violence of Shakespeare has the potential to prevent the real kind”. Sean Elder has determined that there is a direct correlation between correctional education and recidivism and he refers to a statement that Philippa Kelly, one of the co-founders of the Making Shakespeare Real and Relevant program had made and she argues that “The awful thing about Othello is that, in the beginning, he is completely clear and fathomable to himself: He knows himself so well. And as the play goes on, he becomes unrecognizable to himself. It’s a fear we all have”. Kelly’s approach allows inmates that are participating in the program to understand their actions and their consequences. It is evident that the teachings of Shakespeare in prison has allowed prisoners to become more remorseful of their past actions. This is especially relevant according to Lesley Currier, one of the founders of a program called Shakespeare for Justice, where she states that “When inmates have the opportunity to do programs like this, it makes the entire prison safer”. Currier also argues that “In the case of Macbeth, where inmates discussed the nature of crime: Why does someone

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choose to break the law? What are the unintended consequences?" (Elder, 2016). The program allows these participants, especially juvenile offenders to reflect upon their past actions, as well as the consequences of their actions. Utilizing correctional education as a recidivism tool for juveniles is, therefore, something that is both desirable and beneficial.

The positive outcomes of education as showcased through the remorseful effects of Shakespeare will undoubtedly be beneficial for juveniles. By strengthening correctional education and reentry services will undoubtedly reduce future criminal involvement among youths that are once involved in the juvenile justice system (Pace, 2018). In addition, according to "Correctional Education and Recidivism: Toward a Tool for Reduction" by Lori L. Hall, "A general consensus among scholars suggests that correctional education plays a major role in the rehabilitation of inmates" (Hall, 2015, p.6). In addition, Hall (2015) found that education as a recidivism reduction tool can provide many benefits for the United States as a whole. The benefit of education refers to a reduction of costs associated with incarcerating offenders since education offers a reduction of strain on the offenders and their families and it serves as an economic boost for society. Therefore, correctional education reduces the likelihood of prisoners returning to prison. Utilizing correctional education as a recidivism tool is, therefore, something that is undoubtedly beneficial for juvenile offenders. Also, Hall (2015) found that effective correctional programs and studies have all unanimously concluded that correctional education, particularly college or academic, has a negative correlation with recidivism. By implementing effective forms of correctional education programs in prison will reduce recidivism rates. This is especially beneficial for juvenile offenders that are involved with the criminal justice system.

It is evident that there is strong evidence that suggests that correctional education will be beneficial for juvenile offenders, especially its negative correlation with recidivism as Hall suggests. In addition, there is a strong correlation post-release employment and recidivism, according to "The Effect of Correctional Education on Postrelease Employment and Recidivism: A 5-Year Follow-Up Study in the State of Indiana" by Susan Lockwood, John M. Nally, Taiping Ho, and Katie Knutson, "Education reduced recidivism and improved the likelihood of employment on release". A comprehensive study conducted by the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute concluded that employment is an important predictor of an offender's successful reentry into the community and recidivism as well. The study also argues that employment provides former prisoners with a consistent source of funding for necessary food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and other basic amenities. Employment also increases former prisoners with feelings of self-efficacy and self-sufficiency, building confidence in released prisoners that they can support themselves without needing to resort to criminal activities or reliance on family members. This study shows that by having education will increase the likelihood of employment among offenders so that they can support themselves without resorting to criminal activities. This ties directly to Sonia Pace's findings because it shows that juveniles, while obtaining an education in prison will be more likely to find employment when released from prison, therefore,

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reducing their rates of recidivism.

The evidence suggests that correctional education is important because it reduces recidivism among juvenile offenders since it provides them with opportunities to change their personal behavior and values. Leone and Wruble (2015) found that educational attainment is highly correlated with rates of re-offending and that higher levels of academic competence are associated with lower rates of recidivism. As mentioned by Sonia Pace that incarceration during youth is a crucial point of intellectual development and that due to these factors, formerly incarcerated youth are at a high risk of recidivism, in fact, over half are re-incarcerated within three years of release. By providing education for youths that are in juvenile correctional facilities will most certainly lead to positive results since this is a crucial point of their intellectual development. The teachings of Shakespeare in prison also allows juvenile offenders to become more remorseful of their past actions as Philippa Kelly, one of the co-founders of the Making Shakespeare Real and Relevant program had made and she argues that "The awful thing about Othello is that, in the beginning, he is completely clear and fathomable to himself: He knows himself so well. And as the play goes on, he becomes unrecognizable to himself. It's a fear we all have". Therefore, by providing youths in juveniles correctional facilities with education will reduce their recidivism since it provides them with opportunities to change their personal behavior and values.

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