



Prison education and the potential to support rehabilitative and recidivism of individuals incarcerated for a sexual offence

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Where my research started

Education tutor

Education tutor in an East Midlands prison – this was a mixed prison that housed all offences – remand and convicted

Started my teaching career on the prison education induction process

Worked in the mains education block, teaching Business skills (taught everything except cookery!)

Several years later a new block opened for people charged/convicted for a sexual offences

Education block started with a variety of classes, by the time I left there was only one class running



Teaching prisoners charged/convicted of a sexual offence

Personal anecdotal experiences - Difference in behaviours and less disruptive learners – educated – employed

The levels of education limited to level two and can be restricting if someone already has GCSEs/ A level qualifications and there are concerns regarding the literacy and numeracy qualifications offered by providers, whether they were adequate, or recognised by employers and higher education providers (HC, 2022)

Quite often the learners had higher qualifications than were being offered and many had a previous employment history (Tovey *et al.*, 2022)

Prison education can – Improve the employability of prisoners and thus reduces reoffending (HC, 2022), help cope with their sentence and limit the damages of prison life (Behan, 2014) and engaging with prison education has been linked to lower reoffending rates (Prison Reform Trust, 2022).



Findings

- Data collected by the prison service does not distinguish between offences, to go through the prisoner population would be extremely time consuming and very costly.



Prisoners who do not engage with education

Prisoners who do not engage – they believed it was second class education because the levels of qualifications were low, and the quality was not the same as the outside. Also, because they were now *sex offenders*, they were stuck with a label that no one would employ.

'The maths teacher is the former motor mechanics teacher, so these aren't necessarily the people that had gone into teach maths or study, you've got a science teacher teaching business, so I think that's part of the problem you've got in prisons is that I don't think the same standards are always there'

"There's a lot of people who have the mindset that well it won't do me any good especially in this prison being a sex offender...they've[prisoners] got the mindset that it doesn't matter what I do because I'm a sex offender and they are automatically labelled'

Prisoner who engage with education

Education was basic and unchallenging for some, but it was the lesser of two evils, better than the alternative and it relived the boredom. However, it gave them hope as they believed education proved that they were actively rehabilitating.

'The prison education is set-up, its set-up for people who are the very bottom up to an ok level, there isn't anything to develop higher than an ok level'

'[education] does two things it passes the time very quickly which it has passed quickly, and it also keeps you alert and stops you vegetating'

'What I'm trying to do, is trying to do all the things I can to make it, in increasing my chances of being successful and that's why I think education is really important, I think the more that you can do in here, the higher probability of succeeding on the outside'

Stakeholders

Prison education gave the prisoner false hope as they actively encouraged prisoners to engage with education but they were always aware of the risk. In addition, the levels of education was seen as a barrier to their prisoner cohort.

'We're telling prisoner that they can do this, they can do that and maybe they are only going to get a job on a production line putting a cherry on a Bakewell'

'I think it's the limited amount of education that we can provide I think that's a barrier, you got these people with all these A Levels and it's a barrier'

'Yeah, but they could actually be doing the fantasy secretly...learning how to be creative and be contextualising learning...kind of fuelling their sexual fantasies or abusive sexual fantasies'

Summary

The prison population is diverse and offering a 'one size fits all' approach to prison education does not meet the needs of those who wish to participate. Prisoners convicted of a sexual offence may need additional or a different programme of study relevant to their conviction due to restrictions.

Coates, following her review in 2016, recommended that governors use their budget to fund qualifications at Level three and above. However, this has not happened as the current provision in prisons are very similar to the level and choice under the previous contract (HC, 2022)

The stigma that is associated with sexual offences is problematic and has negative repercussions for prisoners. They are seen as high-risk prisoners who are constantly looking to reoffending.

Recommendations

To provide prisoners with qualifications that are level three or higher to enable them to become employed or continue with education once released because basic level qualifications are insufficient to enable individuals to gain meaningful employment in today's job market (Flynn & Higdon, 2022).

Prison education can enable prisoners to make positive contributions toward their own rehabilitation (Blagden, *et al*, 2017). To have an educational programmes designed for each individual prisoners so they can study at the level to benefit their needs when they are released.



Thank you
for
listening

Any questions ?

References

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