

# Review of: "The Effectiveness of Prison Education in Reducing Criminal Recidivism: A Systematic Review"

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**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

Many thanks for offering this article for review, and for your significant work in this important area of research and of policy development.

The comments below are all ways in which I think the article could be strengthened - I think that as a topic, it has significant merit and that your approach is appropriate and well-described.

There are some sections that do not logically follow, which you may want to address. For example, where you state: 'It becomes essential, then, to achieve a deep understanding of the factors that lead individuals to reoffend after having served a sentence of deprivation of liberty, to design and implement comprehensive Psychopedagogical interventions that seek to stimulate the cognitive transformation of prisoners.' However, this presumes that the factors that lead to recidivism will be cognitive ones. You go on to state 'With a new personal identity as law-abiding citizens,' but without evidence that this identity change is relevant to recidivism (for example, looking to a different literature, some addiction models would propose that retaining an identity as an addict is a key part of avoiding future addictive behaviours).

Your introduction states that you aim 'to qualitatively evaluate the most recent literature published on the topic, in search of empirical evidence', but then in the Methodology, you include qualitative and mixed methods studies – both of which are of value, but their value is not empirical.

In other sections, additional references would help to strengthen your position (for example, a reference for 'The longer the sentence, the more difficulties prisoners find in reinserting themselves into their families, the labour market, and society in general upon their release from prison').

You do not always give enough information for the reader to follow your line of thinking. For example, 'All this with the intention of shedding light on the prevailing panorama at the international level in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, with the aim of contributing to decision-making in this regard, especially in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.' This was the only mention of Latin America and the Caribbean, with no explanation of why these particular areas are being considered. I am also unsure why you chose studies published in English and Spanish, and why you chose the five-year timeframe.

I am also not sure of the cohort of people you are interested in. In some places, you mention 'human populations incarcerated in correctional institutions.' This could include people remanded pre-conviction, plus in some areas, children

of those convicted. In other sections, you mention 'convicts' or 'inmates' – these would again refer to potentially different populations.

I was surprised that nearly half of the included studies were theses, and I wondered what you made of this. Have the theses been subject to peer review, or have articles from the theses been published?

You make various claims about the importance of education, but you do not give a rationale for why you state this. You may want to look to a different literature; eg, in your conclusion, you mention human rights, but you could link throughout to the human rights literature, or perhaps look at what other factors education links to (eg, quality of life?).

In the conclusion, you make the claim that the lack of link between education and recidivism is due to lack of resources – I am not sure this is supported by your findings in the papers you reviewed and by your noting of the multi-faceted nature of recidivism.

Many thanks for exploring this important area.