

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

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The text highlights a global problem with the prevention paradigm of punishment. Although from different normative frameworks, in most legal systems the idea that punishments, such as imprisonment, is justified insofar as they are effective means of crime prevention is ingrained. General and special prevention, however, seem to be presupposed, and there is a significant lack of evidence that such prevention is being carried out. However, in this context, the text needs to clarify a number of issues.

First of all, the text starts from some theoretical assumptions that need to be clarified, especially on education and non-recidivism. As the author points out, there is little literature on the subject, but the situation does not improve if it is not clear what is meant by education in prison or why it is assumed that non-recidivism is the central aim of the justice system. What I mean is that the text implies that the aim of general and special prevention is indeed what justifies the institution of prison and that it is therefore legitimate to ask how best to achieve prevention. However, this is not obvious, especially when we note that our legal systems also have retributionist, rehabilitative, restorative, etc., aims, all trying to coexist in the same public policies. Education in the framework of special prevention can lead to a very narrow view of the problem of the criminal phenomenon, as well as of education itself, because it gives it a merely instrumental character. It is therefore essential to clarify what is meant by education (formal education, development for work, generation of skills and competencies, etc.) and why, from this conception of education, it would be the most appropriate means to prevent people from reoffending. If this approach is not clear, it is difficult to understand where the author's contribution fits in; moreover, this could explain the few results that are reached.

Secondly, there is a methodological issue to consider. The research question, it seems to me, does not fully correspond to the methodology of the paper. That is, I have doubts that the general issue, the effectiveness of prison education programmes in preventing recidivism, can be answered by looking at the literature. While the research question is limited to whether or not there is sufficient literature on the relationship between prison education and recidivism, it is not clear why, if there were an abundant literature, it might lead to a relevant result (lack of education programmes? deficiency of existing programmes? disinterest in testing prevention goals?). Thus, it could be asked whether this type of evidence should not also include official information, research by international organisations, direct information from people who have been in prison, etc., in order to get a better idea of the relevance of the correlation between educational programmes and prevention aims. The author should further limit the scope of the study, as well as delimit the space studied, taking into account the profound differences between countries and regions.

Thirdly, the results and the discussion derived from them can be strengthened. The results of the desk research are very limited. They result in a very small number of papers, but, given the theoretical difficulties noted above, perhaps this result could change with a new and more appropriate search. This small number of papers would point to the hypothesis that there is not enough evidence on the relationship between education in prison and recidivism, but, as I have already pointed out, there are many sources of information that are being left out, so it would be very risky to confirm the hypothesis with the results obtained. Moreover, the discussion does not problematise these results and moves towards a reflection on the need for more humane and holistic approaches to prison. The rehabilitation model, at least as a regulative ideal, has been in most of our systems for too long. Hence we do not speak of prisons, but of social reintegration, rehabilitation, or readaptation centres. However, this does not add anything decisive to the aims of the text, nor does it make clear what follows from the statement that there is little research on the relationship between education in prison and recidivism.

I hope that some of these comments may be of use to the author. Lots of enthusiasm and thank you very much for adding your thoughts to such an important topic.