

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.

Research on the subject of prisoner rehabilitation is an important topic in order to develop evidence-based policy. Along with this, I find in this study a lot of problems.

1. A very poor literature review. First, the author of the article refers to only one reason for recidivism: "The longer the sentence...". There are many obstacles for prisoners that make successful integration difficult and ultimately lead to recidivism, among them large debts, difficulty finding permanent employment with a good income, family problems, returning to a criminal environment, a background of addictions, and more.
2. The main subject of the research is education in prison - but here too, there is no theoretical or research reference to the benefits of education. There is no distinction at all between the different types of education programs that exist in prison - such as formal and non-formal. The review is very out of date and is based on sources from a decade ago. In addition, it is important to explain the unique situation of the prisoners, some of whom have no formal education, some cannot even read and write, and most of them do not have professional certificates. That will help understand the importance of prison education.
3. The author of the article writes: Based on this theoretical..." basis, but there is no theoretical nor research basis in the literature review. Just general claims.
4. A research question refers not only to prison education but also to vocational training, but in the literature review, there is no reference to this.
5. Method - 10 studies were examined, but they are very different from each other. The programs they describe are different, the prisoner population has different characteristics, so it is not clear how the studies were compared when, apart from the subject of the study, the other items are very different from each other. It seems that, apart from the fact that all the studies examined prison education programs and their relationship to recidivism, there are no similar points between them.
6. Results - a very general presentation of results - these are more conclusions than results. The method was listed as a qualitative analysis - I did not see any qualitative analysis in the results chapter. What were the main themes?

For example: "Other studies focused on the factors that influence the effectiveness of prison education programs, such as the quality of the program, the characteristics of the participants, and the context in which the program is implemented."

What is the meaning of each of them? For example, what does the "quality of the program" mean as a factor for its effectiveness? In addition, how was recidivism examined in those studies? Number of arrests of the ex-prisoners? A new conviction or new prison time?

7. Research rationale - In recent years, quite a few studies and meta-analyses have been done that examined rehabilitation programs, including education programs, and their effect on recidivism. These studies made a distinction between types of education and vocational training programs, characteristics of prisoners, and referred to the way in which "recidivism" was measured. The present study lacks all these data.

It is important for the author of the article to emphasize the rationale behind the research, what the research is supposed to innovate, or what differed this study from others that were made before. But for that, I suggest for the author to expand the literature review.

Hope my review helped.