

## **Rehabilitation of Inmate Young Offenders and the Education system: Offenders' Perspective in South Africa**

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Unemployment, lack of education and few opportunities are, but few of the factors that lead to young people in South Africa and elsewhere turning to crime. These young people face the law after being caught and they get incarcerated in the correctional service centres. It seems that many of educational programmes aimed at rehabilitating young inmate offenders seem not being effective as some of these young inmate offenders become hardened criminals through institutionalization in correctional service centres. This paper thus, explored the views of inmate young offenders of the benefits of educational programmes they derived while incarcerated in South Africa. The young inmate offenders' age ranged from 17 years to 27 years, 5 females and 8 males. A qualitative phenomenological research method was used with a sample of 6 inmate young offenders to describe young inmate offenders' views of benefits they derive from educational programmes in correctional centres. Based on the available and access to the participants a purposive sample was employed for this research study. An open-ended questionnaire instrument which contained a set of a variety of questions on benefits of educational programmes were completed by the research participants. To conduct this study in line with ethical considerations, permission was given by the university's ethical committee and later the Department of Correctional Services allowed the study to be conducted in their correctional centres. Data that was thematically analysed discovered educational programmes offered and availed to inmate young offenders to be beneficial. The study showed that although formal education was offered, the educational programmes faced many other challenges which were also mentioned in other studies and even in this study the offenders pointed them out, e.g. lack of resources and shortage of staff. The study also revealed that the rehabilitation programme played a critical role in reducing gang formation and fights in the entire inmate community. The collaboration of the state, community, family members of the offenders, churches, traditional leaders and non-profit organisations is required in rehabilitation of the IYO.

**Keywords:** inmate young offenders, rehabilitation support, educational programme

In his research, Ngobeni, (2015:88) mentions that in correctional centres offending juveniles who have turned into criminals have a chance of being turned into law-abiding citizens. Du Plessis and Lombard, (2018) point that in accordance with the Department of Correctional Services' aim of "correcting" and "rehabilitating" inmate young offenders various vocational and training programmes are offered, especially to under-privileged young adult offenders. Cilliers and Smit, (2007 and Moore, (2016) remind that correctional centres are by their nature places of punishment, rather than a learning environment or centres. This imply that, instead of being reformed or rehabilitated, many inmate offenders become hardened criminals while incarcerated. Haney, (2003) warns that many inmates doing time in many prisons in the world experience psychological trauma. According to Haney, (2003) many incarcerated inmates struggle to adapt and adjust to life in prison. For example, Cook, Smith, Tusher and Raiford, (2005) in their study on self-reported cases of inmates in prisons 'traumatic experiences refer to emotional pain, stigmatization, homelessness, unemployment, to mention but a few. Despite these scenarios drawn in the above, the correctional centres are tasked with rehabilitating young inmate offenders through various educational programmes.

According to the Correctional Services Act, 1998 rehabilitation or correction is combination of correcting behaviour that led to the offence, developing the human potential for service to the community and the self with aim of promoting social responsibility and accepted values in the society. Mdletye, Coetzee and Ukpere, (2014) further highlight that the processes of rehabilitation encompass the departmental responsibilities of government and the social responsibilities of the nation. Cullen, Johnson and Mears, (2017), state that rehabilitation "is the way of determining how an offender can be offered treatment to deal with his/her future behavioural patterns regarding his future criminal life". Mdletye, Coetzee, and Ukpere, (2014) similarly, demonstrate that focus of rehabilitation should be focused on how incarcerated inmates in a correctional service are exposed to various development services and vocational training programmes. Murhula, (2019) augments by suggesting that the DCS should look at rehabilitation programmes as a way of reducing future criminality and producing a productive member of the community.

The above statement indicates that the problem of young offenders is not a recent issue; it has been a serious issue for years and it is alarming, to say the least. According to Nethavhani (2002), young males between the ages of seventeen and twenty-five were engaged in more serious crimes such as housebreaking, murder, robbery, rape, and car hijacking. Recently, Makhurane, (2014) reported that in a period of less than two years, 75435 young offenders were on the wrong side of the law for various crimes that includes aggressive and

violent crimes. Makhurane (2014) shows the danger and involvement of young people by pointing out that the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) reported between 2012 and 2013 close to a thousand youth aged between seventeen and younger were reminded in correctional centres. In a more recent study, Makhurane, (2019) states that half of incarcerated youth offenders tend to fall into recidivism.

Makhurane (2014), projects that eighty percent of young offenders released in South African Correctional Services (SACS) are likely to return to crime due to high unemployment rate and lack of opportunities available to released inmates. To compound the problem, Matshaba (2011) further points that the number of awaiting trial or unsentenced young offenders is alarming and a cause for concern.

### **Literature Review**

Tangney *et al.*, (2016) indicate that research is on-point when stating that education received by inmates' offenders while incarcerated seem to be effective in changing their lives after prison life. Manger, Eikeland, Asbjørnsen, and Langelid, (2006) mention that literacy programmes, job-training programmes, and college programmes offered to inmates reduce recidivism significantly. This view is confirmed by Berry, (2018) and Terry, (2010), that education in prison was the best alternative approach because it reduced recidivism. Arguing for educational programmes in prison, Bayliss, (2003) states that educational programmes lessen reoffending by reducing crime and saving taxpayers' money and on a social benefit creates a potential safe and secure society.

Malouf *et al.*, (2014) suggests that education is not only helpful by helping the incarcerated inmate to reorganize his or her life after prison but can play a pivotal developmental role for access to higher education such as universities and colleges. Moore (2016) showed that the inherent importance of prison education programmes was noticeable in the sense it affirms self-dignity, self-worth of the person and develop critical thinking.

According to Makhurane (2014), the likelihood of reoffending rate among incarcerated people who received education while incarcerated was lower than for those who did not receive education at all. These findings by Makhurane, (2014) demonstrates that a positive relationship between re-offending and the nature of education received by an inmate offender. Consequently, it is preferable to offer inmate prisoners education and reduce the levels of re-offending to create a sustained safe community. Quan-Baffour and Zawada (2012) concluded that education programmes for prison education in South African context was a fundamental human right and it was proper to fulfil the

rights of inmate offenders. further argued that education had socio-economic value. Below are justifications for education for inmates' offenders.

- Xavier,Stephan and Brazier, (2019) and Green and Preston, (2001) posit that prison education encourages social unity because it allows prisoners to learn to become humane by developing cooperative skills that can sustain communal interdependence and concern for the welfare of others in the community.
- On the other hand, Magadze, Roelofse and Oliver, (2017) and Zondi, (2012) motivate that education facilitates the re-integration of offenders into the community as reformed members. And,
- Wiafe, (2021) states that former prisoners with relevant skills were likely to be employed in formal businesses.

### **The Nature of Education Found in Correctional Services**

Behan, (2014) posits that there are mainly two forms of learning education programmes in prison, that is, formal and informal education programmes. Bhatti (2010) describes informal learning in prison as learning through experiences of other prisoners through storytelling to one another. Bhatti, (2010), states that learning informally in prison can be a daunting task as it requires self-directed learning such as reading and reflecting. Bhatti, (2010) and Manger, Eikeland, Asbjørnsen and Langelid, (2006) point that space as a commodity is restricted in prison and as such a prison who intends to learn needs a lot of resilience. Davies, (2000) states that formal learning takes place through the provision of formal education programmes that are accredited in one form or the other. In view of Moore, (2016) formal education programmes are recognized officially by the correctional centre or prison and as such may lead to the certification of the inmate. According to Moore, (2016), the philosophy of the correctional centre is critical in determining the conditions and attitudes towards teaching and learning of the offered educational programmes. For, example, it may be deduced that if the correctional centre or prison sees the valued embedded in the offering of such educational programmes, inmates or prisoners will be motivated to enrol in those programmes. However, if the view of correctional centres is that prisons are fully for punishment, it will likely deter prisoners from learning. García and Madrid, (2004), Nations, (1991) mention that organizations such as The European Network for Research, Action and Training in Adult Literacy and Basic Education suggested that in teaching offenders, the curriculum should be broad and follow a holistic approach. Again, Nations, (1991) points out that the intervention programme should link offenders with the community. The suggestion is that teachers in correctional centres should strive

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for the development of the offender's personality, education should be relevant to offenders' needs and abilities, and facilitate re-socialization into the society.

Keen and Woods, (2016) and Magos, (2014) are of the view that worldwide education has become a norm and compulsory particularly for those prisoners who are still at the school going age. Keen and Woods (2016) mentions that in the United States of America in Vermont City, schooling is made compulsory for incarcerated offenders under twenty-two years of age who lacks a high school diploma. Like in many countries in the world, Makhurane, (2014) confirms that the Department of Correctional Services South Africa has also prison education compulsory for all offenders of school-going age. Moore and Mokhele, (2017) and Magano (2015) states that in South African correctional centres a holistic approach to access of formal education for juveniles is important for their later reintegration into the society and avert recidivism. Mdletye, Coetzee and Ukpere, (2014) and Pike and Irwin, (2008) augment that the holistic approach to access to formal education is an enabler to facilitate better livelihoods of juvenile inmates with suitable social skills and technical skills. Behan (2014) is of the opinion that offenders' holistic development addresses important competencies for the purpose of rehabilitation such as social development, social consciousness, vocational and technical training, recreation, sport that will enable offenders to effortlessly reintegrate into communities and function as productive citizens.

### **Formal Curriculum**

McKay and Quan-Baffour (2009), Pike and Irwin, (2008) state that formal education in correctional centres is part of the mainstream school and university education. For juveniles who have not completed their basic education and training and further education, mainstream education, they will fall under mainstream school curriculum whereas, those prisoners with basic, post-primary or secondary, high school will pursue college or university certificate, diploma or degree curricula (Pike and Irwin, 2008). Bohloko, (2006) describes formal education as the process of teaching and learning provided, regulated and controlled by governments. This therefore means that offenders in formal educational programmes, and tertiary education, follow a certain set curriculum. Mbanjwa and Johnson, (2018) mention educational programmes offered by the Department of Correctional Services in South Africa for juvenile offenders include Basic Education and Training (ABET), literacy, ABET level 1 - 4, and Further Education and Training. ABET which deals with lifelong learning and development of adults and leads to nationally recognised certificates. Mbanjwa and Johnson, (2018) point that ABET focuses on imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and all inmates are legally compelled to complete ABET programme. Johnson, (2015) warns that

while correctional education is said to be highly integrated with mainstream education, the high unemployment rate, particularly amongst the youth and school-leavers leaves much to be desired in terms of whether the education is responsive to society's needs or whether there is a balance between demand and supply.

### **Informal Education Programmes for Inmates**

Cilliers and Smit, (2007) state inmates should choose an alternative life from crime to face the harsh of life. As a result, neither formal nor informal education programmes are never sufficient. Magano, (2015) mentions that to buy time, the inmates routine varies from being involved in the informal curriculum which includes sport, recreation, arts and cultural activities, life-skills and library. Makhurane (2020) contends that if juvenile prisoners are provided with the sustainable life skills it would be an easy task to reintegrate them back into their respective communities. Anger management is one of the important programmes for juvenile inmates to undergo to prepare them for different life confrontations. Watts, 2010, Woodward, Sloth-Nielsen & Mathiti, (2007). Furthermore, Cullen, Jonson and Mears, (2017 and Johnson (2015),inform that informal correctional education programmes include life-skills activities that embrace re-socialisation where offenders are provided with skills that help them to do self-examination of their lives. Meek and Lewis, (2014) state that some of the recreational or informal training facilities that are catered for include sport such as soccer, cricket, rugby, card games, table tennis, boxing, chess, pool, volleyball, as well as library, needlework and hairdressing. It is hoped by the correctional services authorities that these activities will be able to stimulate new ideas and perspectives about life outside the prison or correctional centres.

A practical example of a life skills programme or training according to Woodward *et al.*, (2007)is a collaborative effort between the universities of South Florida and Western Cape. The ideas behind this inventiveness were threefold, namely, to improve the capacity and skills of young offenders,to enable their successful integration into the communityand to provide them with positive personal and social opportunities.

Woodward et al, (2007) found that immersion in music assist pathways for young inmates to make music and be tolerant and respectful of diversity along racial lines. A similar programme done by Sloth-Nielsen, Woodward and Mathiti, (2007) demonstrated that informal education programme like music has the potential to enhance the life skills of juveniles and reduced the likelihood of association with delinquent peers and of becoming involved in activities which are against the law.

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Studies done by Tangney, Folk, Graham, Stuewig, Blalock, Salatino, Blasko and Moore, (2016) sexuality education, substance and drug abuse programmes building of a healthy self-esteem, dealing with anger or management are some of the core informal programmes that offered to inmates to take responsibility of themselves and that of others. Masina, (2019) and Murhula, (2019) add that conflict resolution, civic training and citizenry based on human rights ethos through street law or legal education are correctional services programmes that fosters personal responsibility, active involvement in decision-making, taking responsibility for own progress, fostering of leadership and community involvement.

### **Aim and research question of the study**

The aim of this research study was to discover the views of inmate young offenders of benefits they derived from educational programmes offered by correctional services. This stance was purported by the aim to improve on educational programmes deemed to be beneficial to young inmates' offenders when they are released from correctional centres. The research question which guided this study was how young inmate offenders view correctional services educational programmes towards the improvement of their livelihoods in line with their future when they have served their time.

### **Method**

Maree, (2007)'s approach to qualitative research which focuses on the phenomena that occur in the real world was used in this study. In the context of this study the natural setting was the perceptions of inmate young offenders' views on the benefits of educational programmes offered in correctional centres. To meet these requirements, researchers used open-ended questionnaire at the different sections at DCS to obtain a real understanding of how they perceive education and training curricula programmes.

### **Research context, participants, setting**

This research study was conducted in the Department of Correctional Services in the Bizzah Makhate centre. Thus, the findings of this research study are limited, and context based on the information provided by inmate young offenders of benefits of educational programmes. The population in this research study consisted of a convenience sample of 13 inmate young offenders. Their ages ranged from 17 to 27 years and there 5 female and 8 male young inmate offenders.

### **Data collection**

According to LeCompte, (2000), McMillan and Schumacher, (2010) researchers need to consider which data collection method is the most

appropriate for the population in the research question. In this research, the research utilized open-ended questionnaire. The open-ended questionnaire used with the intention to explore the participants 'views, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes about benefits of educational programmes while incarcerated.

### **Data analysis**

Data was thematically analysed using open-coding procedures (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). These procedures involved systematically organising, categorising, and summarising data; followed by describing it in meaningful themes. Themes were assigned codes to condense the data into categories. For the data reporting we used randomly assigned numbers as de-identifiers.

### **Ethical consideration**

According to Ryen, (2011) research ethics are universal and concern issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of individuals. The researchers obtained permissions to conduct the research both from the University Faculty of Humanities and the Research Directorate of the DCS and Department of Education (BMMA). It was noted that correctional centres are highly controlled facilities for safety and security reasons; hence ethical issues were taken very seriously for this study. One can only reach confidentiality, anonymity, the right to participate and withdraw between research participants and the researcher in a normal free world. Contrarily, in correctional facilities, such principles are highly controlled, compromised and affected by various factors (Luyt, Muller, Bruyns & Jonker, 2010).

### **Results and discussion**

The number of male inmate young offenders was more than female young offenders. This was the observation that was evident at the site of data collection where this study was conducted. This revealed to the researcher that male lawbreaking seems to be more frequent than female law-breaking, especially in youths. This finding seems to be consistent with Shagufta, (2020) and Heidensohn, (2013) finding in terms of gender which indicated that male criminality was more popular than female criminality in all the criminal justice systems around the world. In the South African correctional system, more than 96% of sentenced offenders are male. Female youth offenders constitute only 2% of the general population of youth offenders. Inclusion of only male inmate young offenders for this study was the more feasible option for the researcher. The thematic analysis resulted in four themes: (i) Benefits to the individual, (ii), benefits to the correctional centre when it comes to educational programmes, (iii) Benefits to the society and (iv) Improvement of educational programmes.



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### **Theme 1: Benefits to the Individual**

Theme one was a result of the question ‘how do you see educational programmes at the DCS benefiting you’. The responses of inmate young offenders were mildly positive. For example, they felt that was a little benefit on that part. However, the following responses were a bit positive as they focused on the character of the individual inmate young offender: Some of the responses were:

*“The programmes uplift me morally, spiritually and make me feel more responsible adult in future, when I am released, I see that the educational programmes will keep me away from my old ways, for example, away from participating in gangster activities and other negative acts. The programmes will help me from offending again and that will shape my future”*

An 18-year-old inmate young offender mentioned that there was a need to improve on delivery mode of the educational programmes being offered:

*“Currently the educational programmes offered are ABET and are part-time, it will be better if these programmes were done on full time schooling for young offenders. The educational programmes are meant to equip inmate young offenders to be able to face the outside world when they are released from the correctional centre. After a period attending the programme, I feel more rehabilitated and my attitude and behaviour have changed”*

However, a 20-year-old inmate young offender cautioned that the current formal educational programme is one size fits all. He mentioned that:

*“Currently the formal educational programme for young offenders is not relevant but waste of time for them because they are doing ABET instead of full-time schooling”*

A salient point finding from the above excerpts was the ability of the educational programmes to force inmate young offenders to introspect positively. For, example, to be able to discern from good and bad, being responsible adults in the future, keeping away from gangsterism activities. This assertion is consistent with literature it revealed education aids inmates to get skills and knowledge necessary to take economic responsibility of their lives and that of their families and avoid criminal activities (Fitz, 2013; McAree, 2011).

## **Theme2: Benefits to the Correctional Centre**

When asked on how the educational programmes benefit the correctional centre both the educators and officials the responses were the same on things as it reduces gangs and fights. A 16-year-old responded that educational programmes:

*“Educational programmes reduce things like gangs and crime in the correctional centre, it distracts offenders from participating in gangster related activities, as a result assaults become less. They empower the offenders and helps the correctional centre to meet their targets and they benefit both the officials and inmates because it develops them educationally and socially”*

Another 17-year-old inmate young offender mentioned that:

*“It develops the system from punitive to become real correctional centre, ‘It helps in reducing the number of offenders in correctional centres”*

The finding seems to be relevant to Sultan, Khurram and Hussain, (2018), Moore and Mokhele, (2017) stating that educational programmes benefits the correctional centre greatly, reduces gangs leading to less assaults, the centre gets to meet its targets most especially if they able to rehabilitate fully it reduces offenders in correctional centre. This means the less offenders the better the resources and money can be used for other purposes. The findings of the study are like what Moore, (2016) stated recidivism is an enabler to reduce crime and safe government expenditure.

## **Theme 3: Benefits to the Society**

The inmate young offenders also mentioned that educational programmes are of benefit to the society. Many young offenders are released on parole, thus educational programmes give an advantage when the offender goes to the parole board. It is also the duty of the officials from time to time to visit the offenders in their homes to check for progress on their education. Agba, Okpa, and Ogar, (2020), Nagin, Cullen and Johnson, (2009) mention that many cases there seem no synergy between educational programmes offered in prison and those outside prison. This shortcoming leads to inmate young offenders being cases of recidivism (Cullen, Jonson & Mears, 2017). Most responses were positive stating points on it improves the economy because the inmates who are fully rehabilitated can go back to their communities and use their skills to even create jobs using skills learnt while in the correctional centre. An 18-year-old offender response was as follows:

*“The offenders will come back and educate the society about what is taking place in correctional centres and by that they will be useful to the society, rehabilitation and social re-integration of offenders” the “skills that I receive from the correctional centre*

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*will assist society in creation of jobs and the development of livelihoods. I think, educational programmes give a positive feedback to our communities, reduces acts of crime and violence and the offenders become positive law-abiding citizens”*

Education reduces recidivism which translates to crime reduction and a safe society where ex-convicts return. This perspective is centred around the notion of prisons being referred to as centres of corrections (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

### **Theme 4: Improvement of Educational Programmes**

In this theme, inmate young offender participants seemed to have a vision for correctional centres on how they can improve the educational programmes. The following responses were from a 23-year-old and 21-year-old inmate young offenders:

*“Extra educators should be employed and have a system like in schools, were you have HOD’S controlling the files of all educators and facilitators should be followed, Offer educators workshop. There is a need to build a proper structure within the centre whereby offenders who attend educational programmes will go during normal school time. There is a lot of disturbances for cells to be converted to classrooms.” Security officials and educators should have a common understanding that education, just like other programmes offered at the prison facility is just as important for rehabilitation of offenders”. Install internet for offenders to research on google because they are not allowed to go outside the correctional centre” (E6).*

The responses of inmate young offenders in the above passage are not in line with correctional services or prison life. Moore, (2016:89) warn of the notion that the time spent in correctional centres should not regarded as an indulgence, but inmate young offenders should feel that their freedom is limited and controlled all the time.

### **Limitations of the study**

As accessibility is one of the possible problems in conducting research in correctional services with its security procedures and regulations are rigorous. This unintentionally might affect the how data and type data collected; it is uncertain what the response rate will be on completion of the open-ended questionnaires through the various correctional services (Apa, Bai, Mukherejee, Herzig, Koenigsmann, Lowy & Larson, (2012). This means that depending on how the responded was affected or touched by what the study is trying to investigate the researchers must consider that different respondents process ideas

differently and the situational elements also must be considered indicating the complexity of the research. Also, there may be inhibiting factors in carrying out this research (Makhurane, 2014), states that the human instrument is as fallible as any other research instrument. The researcher as human instrument is limited by being human – mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal bias interferes.

### **Conclusions**

The findings of this study discovered that one of the major challenges faced by the IYO when it came to educational programmes, was that they were always surrounded by various risks at the correctional centre, for example, gangsterism, fights, etc. that hindered their studies. In order to combat this, it was recommended that the centre should allocate a section specifically for inmates who are participating in educational programmes full time. Results of this study showed that the family of one of the participants had seen a change in him and that participants were rehabilitated after attending educational programmes. It is recommended that the DCS implement parents and family preservation programs in collaboration with all the other major stake holders, i.e. the police, correctional officials, social workers and community members. For inmate young offenders who are participating in educational programmes and showing rehabilitation, the DCS should provide additional forms of incentives. This study showed that they currently have an incentive of early parole. The DCS can add special awards or implement a merit system to encourage mass participation.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations presented in this section are based on the findings of this study. The educational programmes for offenders within Correctional Centres are taking place in various correctional centres, though not perfect, evidence shows that do nurture rehabilitation of learner inmate young offenders. None of these recommendations are prescriptive but will be relevant to the South African correctional system, in terms of potential implementation. The following recommendations were made: On arrival the young inmate offenders' induction about educational programmes needs to be improved by the DCS. Enhanced understanding of the fundamental aspects of educational programmes will encourage offenders to participate. This will facilitate the DCS objective for offender rehabilitation through the educational programmes in correctional centres.

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