

An Examination of Special Needs Education Aspects Embedded in Juvenile Rehabilitation Programmes in Kenya and the Resultant Rehabilitation Outcomes

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Abstract

Juvenile rehabilitation in Kenya has experienced many changes and reforms since its inception by the colonial government, in this view; the purpose of this study was to examine the correction of offenders in juvenile rehabilitation institutions with the aim of exploring the embedded special needs education aspects, and the resultant levels of success versus recidivism. The objectives of the study were; to explore the policy guiding juvenile rehabilitation in Kenya, to examine tools and procedures of assessing offenders, to find out the curriculum for juvenile rehabilitation employed in Kenya, to establish the transitional services available to exitees, and to investigate the status of juvenile rehabilitation in relation to inclusive education. A mix of Phenomenology and Descriptive Survey research designs were used to explore lived experiences of juvenile offenders, and the current status in juvenile rehabilitation in Kenya respectively. Data collection instruments comprised interview guides, questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion guide, and Content Analysis guide. The study population constituted approximately 1747 children, 9 Managers, 9 Children's Officers, and 400 staff members from public juvenile rehabilitation institutions in Kenya. Kiambu and Nairobi Counties were selected purposively because they hold the only two Reception and Assessment Centres for either gender. In total, two rehabilitation institutions were purposively selected from each county based on their functions and gender; they included Kirigiti, Kabete, Getathuru and Dagoreti. The total research sample was 138 respondents who comprised, 54 boys, 36 girls, 4 managers, 4 Children's Officers, and 40 staff members. A pilot study was done at Othaya Rehabilitation Institution to establish validity and reliability of research instruments. Qualitative data analysis utilising principles of thematic analysis, and descriptive statistics for quantitative data were used in data analysis. The research findings indicate that the Children Act is the main policy guiding juvenile rehabilitation, and that some international statutes to which Kenya is a signatory have not been ratified. The assessment tools and procedure for assessing juvenile offenders were found to be inadequate and lacking the capacity to identify all causes of problem behaviour. The study show that children are assessed by any officer on duty, regardless of their qualifications, this may lead to misdiagnosis. The study revealed that there are no provisions on curriculum for juvenile rehabilitation; consequently, each institution designs its own content. The current exit strategies were found to be inadequate and unable to deter exitees from reoffending. Other findings indicate that post-institutional phase of rehabilitation was non-functional, resulting to recidivism levels of over 30%. The research shows inclusive rehabilitation was practised for children with special needs who offend even though this is occasioned by lack of appropriate rehabilitation school for children with special needs. The study recommended improvement of juvenile rehabilitation through formulation and review of policies, development of rehabilitation curriculum, and assessment tools, provision of aftercare services, and through utilization of special needs education practises in the overall function of rehabilitation institutions and programmes. A

framework for improvement of juvenile rehabilitation was developed. Finally, the study ended with recommendations for further research.

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