



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LACK OF EDUCATION AS A CAUSE OF RECEDIVISM AMONG JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

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It is generally accepted that the purpose of the reformatory is one of rehabilitation. In a study of six reformatories in the southwest, in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Missouri and Kansas, three of these six have deviated so far from their original purpose of rehabilitation, that the rate of recedivism was in one instance over 90 per cent. On the other hand, among those reformatories that were abiding by their original purpose, the rate of recedivism in one instance was less than 18 per cent.

Rehabilitation may be termed the reeducation of the individual through character building, personality adjustment and intellectual instruction. Antisocial behavior is never fortuitous, it is always a function of the behavior patterns of the individual; that is, his attitudes toward himself and society; habits of reacting to property, persons, laws; evaluations of social standards; understanding of his own acts, and their consequences and relationship to other persons, and of emotional drives that motivate his behavior. An educational program whose main and avowed purposes are the rehabilitation and re-socialization of the delinquent, the readjustment of his personality and development of his character, must keep in mind all of these factors.

In a study made by Nathan D. Peyser of 453 cases in the New York City Reformatory, he states: "It appears in the cases here studied that school failure accompanies delinquency more frequently than does any other condition, including poverty, broken homes, physical defect, mental defectiveness, psychopathic condition, or even truancy." Dr. Peyser does

not infer here, however, that school retardation is a direct or sole cause of delinquent behavior in all of the cases studied. It is undoubtedly the direct cause in some cases. And, it does not show that there is some common factor underlying both delinquency and school retardation.

I will consider here two schools, or reformatories, each the direct anti-thesis of the other in its educational program for the rehabilitation of the inmates. The procedure for establishing my conclusions as to the causes of recedivism was based on the use of the *Stanford Achievement Tests*, Form No. v (Reading Tests). This type of test was used on the assumption that the child that cannot read, or comprehend what he has read, is more susceptible to recedivism. By this I mean that, in as much as school work is based primarily on the ability to read and assimilate what one has read, the child is unable to adjust himself to school life unless he can keep up with the progress of his classmates. The two greatest factors in the environment of the child are the home and the school. If the child is unable to adjust himself to his school environment, which in a sense is his social world, the potentialities for delinquency and recedivism are greater than if he has a poor home environment.

Aside from the tests, I also used, as a means of gaining an understanding of their problems, a printed questionnaire which was sent to 18 teachers in all of the institutions studied. The questions asked were:

1. In what subjects are boys most interested?
2. What seems to be the weakness in their previous education?
3. What can you say of the general intelligence of the boys under you?
4. What special work do you advocate for the education of the delinquent youth?

The two schools which I shall offer as examples of reform school education are the State Training School for white boys, Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, and the State Juvenile Training School, Gatesville, Texas. The study of the Pauls Valley school where 191 boys were examined, reveals the following facts:

The average age of the boys was 14.5 years. The average school grade was (Norm) 5.1. The school was, during the period of the study, from April to December, 1933, one of the most poorly equipped institutions for rehabilitation of delinquent youth. It boasted four instructors, of which only one had any special training or preparation for teaching in an institution of that type. The only facilities for teaching were poorly equipped rooms that contained a few blackboards and an insufficient number of seats. The curriculum may be generally termed as 'Readin,' 'ritin' and 'rithmetic. The variation of ages in the classes was so great that in the second grade the average age was eleven years, in the third grade it was practically sixteen years, and in the fourth grade, about fourteen years. These variations continued all through the grades. The first three grades were the only ones in which the school grade correlated with the tests norm. All of the other grades, that is from the fifth to the ninth, varied from one to two norm grades below the school grade. For example, The norm for the ninth grade was 6.7; for the sixth grade, 5.3.

There were no vocational subjects except in a few instances where a boy was fortunate enough to gain employment in one of the institution's mechanical shops or the bake shop. Of the 225 boys in the institution, less than twenty were given an opportunity to learn a trade. Attendance at school was not compulsory, nor were there classes beyond the ninth grade. Practically all of the boys were employed on the Institution farm.

Obviously, in this one institution education was far below its rightful standard.

Since there were no records kept of the boys, either on entering the Institution or on leaving, it was difficult to make any definite studies of recidivism. Therefore, it was necessary to follow through a study of a hundred cases of boys that were released in the period from January to June, 1933.

Of this hundred boys, within the period of the first six months 50 per cent were returned to the Institution. From June to December, 1933, forty more were returned to the Institution, making a total of 90 per cent. The cases studied were those of the first hundred boys to be released during the period of the first six months. It may be of interest to know that there were no recreational facilities of any type within the Institution.

A study of the Texas Institution throws an altogether different light on our topic. Of the 239 cases examined or tested, the average age was 16 years, and the average norm grade, 7. In Texas I did not find variations between grades as at Pauls Valley. The fourth grade was about one year younger than the third grade. This was the only variation of this type. In every grade tested, from the third to the ninth, the norm grade was higher than the school grade except in one instance, that of a sixth grade, which correlated exactly with the grade norm for that grade. In some instances the grade norm was as much as two grades above that of the school grade. An example of this is the fourth grade, in which the grade norm was 5.8.

The school facilities were equal to that of many of the better schools of Oklahoma or Texas, public or private. At the time of my study, December, 1934, more than eleven teachers were employed in the school, not including the recreational and vocational instructors. The child attended grade school for one-half day and a vocational class, where he was taught a trade, the other half day. The course of study was from the first grade through high school. The school was incorporated as an Independent School District of the State. Hence the work was recognized by any other school that the child might attend after leaving the Institution. Attendance at school was compulsory and every child was required to gain at least a Common School education. Where the child had the ability for advanced work, every opportunity was made for him to carry on with that work.

The rate of recidivism was less than 18 per cent. It is of interest, therefore, to note that unquestionably there is a correlation between recidivism and education.

The questionnaire which was sent out to the teachers was answered as follows:

1. *Subjects of most interest.* History, manual training, geography and arithmetic held places in the order given.
2. *Weakness in previous education.* The concensus of opinion was that it is irregular attendance, and inability to read or understand what is read.
3. *General intelligence.* A majority of those that answered believed that these children were below normal in intelligence.
4. *Suggested curriculum.* Manual training was regarded as the most important subject in the training of these youths.

In reference to the general intelligence, if we are to infer that intelligence is based on an ability to carry on the normal school activities, the results of the testing in Texas show rather clearly that under the proper conditions the delinquent child can and will respond to education. Educa-

tion is not alone an intellectual process, but develops abilities to acquire a correct attitude toward society and to maintain oneself in society. Manual training is regarded as being of the greatest importance in the training of these youths, but manual training along with an adequate amount of intellectual training produces a balanced citizen.

My findings in other institutions lead to the same conclusion as did those from the study of Oklahoma and Texas; that is, the rate of recividism correlates with the program and facilities for education.

