An Exploratory Study on Educational Interventions in the Rehabilitation of Children of Prisoners

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Abstract:

Creation of responsible citizens is an social activity. Education plays a vital role in such a process. It becomes highly relevant when it comes to educate the children of prisoners. The law offenders in prison create a stigma attached to the children. Research reveals the impact is significant enough on such children to become potential criminal. This paper has attempted to identify the means to use education as a tool with proper blend of various elements of education to make such children as responsible value creators for the nation.

Key words: Incarcerators, Juvenile education, Children reforms, rehabilitative education

Children of imprisoned parents are described as the forgotten victims of imprisonment. The children are affected adversely when father or mother goes to prison. The criminal justice processes rarely considers the realities before the children and the concentration is on the individual guilt or innocence and punishments. During the phases of enquiry, arrest to trial to imprisonment to release to rehabilitation in to the community, neglecting the children can result in their rights, needs and best interests being overlooked or actively damaged. Society as a whole including the judiciary look at the reduction of causal factors of creation of offenders in the future. This calls for creation of suitable socio, psychological, economic and educational ambience for such children of prisoners and inculcate proper values, skills and abilities in them by the schooling process. This study focus on making use of education by scientific principles to make the children of the prisoners as responsible and enabled citizens

Education is a powerful tool for creation of responsible citizens, reducing poverty, unemployment and inequality, improving health and nutrition and promoting sustained human development led growth (World Bank 2004:69). In the last five years, the government has been focusing on the Education Sector through increased fund allocations. This amount would be spent under various schemes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Mid-day meal scheme, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and teacher's education. Being the second largest populated country in the world, India also has the immense and in-depth knowledgeable human resource according to ILO report, 2007.The planning commission of India in the vision document for 2020 expressed explicitly that a significant change is required for the holistic development of children’s primary school education phase. Azim Premji foundation of school education Training and research has published based on an extensive research that teachers and parents should evaluate the children not just by academic performance.

In India, we have the national policy on education explicitly expressing the rights of the children to have education. The UN Convention on Rights of Children expresses the rights of the children to have education among other things without any discrimination irrespective of the status of the parents according to article 2.2 of the convention. Also, the National Plan of Action,2005 has included the children of difficult circumstances to be included under the policy. The Bangkok rules and Juvenile Justice( Care and Protection) act also advocate for the care and nurturing of children of prisoners

REVIEW OF LITTERATURE:

The National crime record statistics indicate about 3.72 Lakh inmates which includes 1.28 Lakh convicts in the Indian Jails. 83.6% of the total convicts are in the age group of 18 to 50 with
families left behind in most of the cases. In the case of Tamilnadu state, in the central and district jails of 9 each with 13099 inmates, about 5200 are convicts with 82.1% of them in the age group of 18-50 years. As said earlier, most of them have the children left behind.

The imprisonment has brought in dramatic change on the inmates as well as their families. The families do carry with them the sense of otherness and exclusion that is created by the immediate society. Parenting the children in such a situation of breakdown of relationship is very difficult. There exists the vacuum in the areas of parenting issues and education of the children on the part of the families of the prisoners and it is necessary to have suitable initiatives to overcome the problem (Pugh, 2005).

During the formative years of the child, proper education and child parent contacts are essential which otherwise lead to undesirable consequences, reveal the research (Mills, 2004) The children as a potential human resource of the future need proper parenting. This becomes highly significant with added attention in the case of the children of prisoners. This calls for the prison services to include parenting according to Hartworth and Hartworth in 2005.

Whitehouse and Copello (2005) affirmed that the families of the prisoners particularly the children face the high degree of stigma. Fear, isolation and create enormous stress in them and as a result the children develop apathy towards the society. Similar views are ascertained by Murray (2005), incarceration of parent can effect children in a variety of indirect ways including reduced family income, home school relationship, stigma, shame and decreased social support. Earlier researches conducted by Fisherman (1990) and Bloom Steinhart assert the above findings. The imprisonment of a parent creates a highly disturbed childhood for the children during and the early and late formative years. (Smith et al 2003). Extensive longitudinal research studies carried out by Mumola (2005) reaffirms the above. Research evidence suggests that there is a strong evidence of association between parental imprisonment and adverse outcomes for children. Children of prisoners have three times more risk compared to others for delinquent behavior and mental healthcare (SCIE 2008). The similar view is expressed as an outcome of the research carried out by Philips et al (during 2002, 2004 and 2007). Children of the prisoners are given discriminated treatment by the society paving way for alienation from the main stream and making them vulnerable for unlawful activities (Belagaukar).

Following the imprisonment of a parent, the children are often left feeling confused, guilty, scared and as if “the world has fallen apart” (Mazza K. 2002). Among the emotional and health problems the children often experience the with drawl from the society or secretive, displaying anger or defiance, attention seeking or self destructive behavior, low self esteem and poor educational performance (Niven et al, 2005).

Consequential effect on such children of prisoners include drug abuse, physical and sexual abuse, mental health problems and inadequate education (Philips and Glieeson). Also poor kinship, inadequate schooling and high degree of uncertainties result in non completion of school education by such children of prisoners. (Hairston, 2009)

An important study by Bromley Briefings Prison fact file reveal that 65% of the boys with convicted parent become offenders. This study necessitates to look in to the ecosystem for the development of children to become potential human resources for constructive role in the society. The study by Smith et al (2010) indicate that the criminal justice and social welfare policies continue to impoverish, disadvantage the relatives of the convicts particularly the children. During the early childhood (children of 2-6 years), Inappropriate separation and associated anxiety, Impaired socio emotional development and acute traumatic stress reactions among the children call for inculcating the sense of autonomy, independence and related initiatives. The middle childhood (7-10 years) experience the developmental regressions, poor self concept, acute traumatic stress reactions and impaired ability to overcome the future trauma and they need to be addressed by sense of industry and inculcating the ability to work productively. Early adolescence (11-14 years) experience the rejection of limits of behavior which necessitate to train them to have control on the expression of emotions. These interventional therapeutic behavioral measures were the outcomes of the research carried out by Katherine et al (1997)
Given the nature of the children of the prisoners, the education to be imparted to them must be on scientific lines with required care. To understand such a scientific base a review of the literature has been carried out on the discipline of children education.

The learning theory based on Cognitivism (intangible) and Behaviorism (tangible) are paid attention. The Behavioral models like Operant conditioning (response followed by reinforcers is strengthened) that focuses on positive and negative reinforcers (Hunter, 1980), Classical conditioning (learning based on stimuli) that highlights the impact of learning environment on child behavior (Schunk, 2000) and Social learning (self regulating) that emphasizes on learning through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1971) supports the idea of having a good infrastructure at school to achieve a positive behavioral change in the child. The Cognitive models unlike behavioral models emphasize on the mental events (Lefrancois, 1999) and this includes Information processing which finds that the content delivered at class room has to be structured for enhanced learning (Huitt, 2000;Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1992), Discovery learning that throws light on stimulating children to process the information by themselves and understanding the concept behind it (Jean Piaget 1960, Jerome Bruner 1966, Fosnot 1996, Biehler and Snowman 1997), Reception learning wherein the learning which happens through teaching that uses advance, Expository and Comparative organizers and starts from delivering general information and narrowing down to specific concept (David Ausubel 1963) is stressed upon gives an insight for the need of finest delivery mechanism in the schools.

The Triarchic theory (Sternberg 1988) identifies three intelligences of success namely, analytical, creative and practical but it emphasizes more on bridging gaps among socio-economic and ethnically diverse groups and not on the holistic development of the child. The Emotional intelligence theory (Goleman 1995) focuses on the cognitive part of the child where the success is measured by the child’s ability to understand oneself and the society thereby augment his learning but it is dark in the areas of the physical elements involved. The structure of Intellect theory (Guilford’s 1967) is viewed as comprising are five kinds of operations (cognition, memory, divergent production, convergent production, evaluation), six kinds of products (units, classes, relations, systems, transformations, and implications), and five kinds of contents (visual, auditory, symbolic, semantic, behavioral) which are expressed in a cubic form that results in 150 different components of intelligence. But the factors sound to be more subjective and complex to apply. The Primary mental abilities theory (Thurstone, 1938) instead of viewing intelligence as a single, general ability focuses on seven different abilities like Verbal comprehension, Reasoning, Perceptual speed, Numerical ability, Word fluency, Associative memory and Spatial visualization. Though these theories have explained the intelligence in different viewpoints the Multiple intelligence theory (Gardner H, 1983) for variety of reasons like its applicability in class room, mutually exclusive classification of intelligences and its tremendous contribution to both convergent and divergent cognitive factors succeed all these theories in this study. Gardner (1993) expresses quite elegantly, stating that "there exists a multitude of intelligences, quite independent of each other; that each intelligence has its own strengths and constraints; that the mind is far from unencumbered at birth; and that it is unexpectedly difficult to teach things that go against early 'naive' theories that challenge the natural lines of force within an intelligence and its matching domains."

Gardner believed that individuals learn best using one or more of several intelligences like spatial, mathematical, linguistic, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist.

Carol daunt emphasizes on the urgent need for computer based learning using camera, digital boards etc (Carol Daunt, 1999). This is supported by Gary where he focuses on visual support learning of stone-age man states that people can learn better when they are taught using visual aids than in the regular class room atmosphere (Gary, 2007). Jim Rose affirms that for good level of learning, language forms the crux and that can be achieved through developing reading, speaking, listening and writing skills (Jim rose, 2008). The study by Shinoda throws importance on Confident speaking and attentive reading that can be achieved through improved vocabulary and spoken English (Shinoda, 1990).

Finally the significance of Foreign languages is revealed in the report "Improving schools" (Jacey Lumby, 2007). Alfie Kohn identifies that individual activities given to child like experiments
and puzzles to be done at home activate their intrapersonal skill. Zipora study recommends Group activities to improve the interpersonal skills of the child (Zipora Shechtman, 2007). This is again stressed upon in the study done by Carolyn P. Panoofsky where he feels that there is a strong relationship between the class, pluralism in learning and personality formation. The other positive impact of group activity is that it avoids the discriminations in the overall performance of all children working in groups as found by Kosaku Yoshida (1994). The research done by Penney and Evans reveals that physical activity in the school curriculum has a wide recognition for their physical development (Penney, D. and Evans, J. 1999). To bring in the culture of sports and physical activities in the education practices in school, variety of teacher-led extra-curricular activities and Physical education classes are the best way as identified by Robson, 2001. Field trips help child learn in a more realistic environment as found by the booster program for kids conducted by New york University.

Certain research studies on school education practices and the lack of congenial factors for child development (Asokumar,2010,2011) are of great relevance here while we are trying to avert the possibilities of the children of the prisoners become offenders. The studies and research referred above done by many scholars, points that, for the betterment of the performance of the child in all intelligences the physical environment in school and the delivery mechanism have incredible role.

It is very much vital to relate what is happening at home and at school but parents are not in contact with the teachers for very many reasons (Rod R. Blagojevich, 2004). Hence good communication through meetings and conferences (Epstein, J. L. 1995), school being a more of open system that listens to voice of parents (Henry, M. E. 1996) and teachers’ effort to communicate with parents (Patrikakou, E. N., & Weissberg, R. P. 1999) is crucial for home –school relationship. Students learning results should reflect their performance in all areas and varied methods should be used for assessment as said by Venkatesh Umashankar and Kirti Dutta For this assessment should be an on-going process that includes studies, behavior, attitude and participation (Candace Williams, 2008).

Concern for the Society:

The children of the prisoners require special attention. That will ensure them to become responsible and capable citizens. If they are not properly attended to, the chances to become unlawful offenders is significant. Education is one medium by which these children can be inculcated with proper values on scientific lines. The term scientific lines refer to the several intelligences like spatial, mathematical, linguistic, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist. In the current system of education in various institutions where the children of prisoners are educated prevalence and extent of existence of such systems are not known. This study aims to investigate this particular aspect. The outcome of the study will provide opting suitable schools with recommended educational inputs for the children of the prisoners and reduce the potential offenders creation significantly.

Outcome of the study:

A research study was undertaken by the author and the salient features of policy implications for the social educators are provided and the methodological reasons are not highlighted here though it includes all the stakeholders in the society like judiciary, prisoner parent/s, educators, child psychologists, affected children, school administrators, peer group of children etc. Counseling Oriented paternalistic education system, inculcation of moral values, Positive Emotional support systems, Creation of positive outlook about the society through various methods, Self sustaining enablement activities, inclusion of such an activity as an agenda of Corporate social responsibility of corporations by adoption of such children besides the regular academic activities without any discrimination.

If the problems are not attended to, various implications of it includes the Possibility of creating more outlaws and criminals, deterioration in the quality of life, deceleration of morale, escalation in social regulatory costs associated with judiciary, police, and prisoners. Proactive policies would be better than reactive for the well being of the society for now and in future.
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