

# The Benefit of Prison Education: Inmate Students' Self Reflection

Ila Rosmilawati  
Universitas Sultan Ageng  
Tirtayasa, Banten  
irosmilawati@untirta.ac.id

Suherman  
Universitas Sultan Ageng  
Tirtayasa, Banten  
suherman@untirta.ac.id

Dadan Darmawan  
Universitas Sultan Ageng  
Tirtayasa, Banten  
dadan.darmawan@untirta.ac.id

**Abstract---**At present, the Indonesia child prison shows a commitment in the effort to change the condition of the convicted person through the process of education. The education process held in the prison is expected that child prisoners will have provision after they are leaving the correctional institution. The purpose of this study is to understand the important and benefit of prison education in Indonesia as perceived by inmate students. Data for this study was gathered from 60 inmate-students from lower and upper secondary prison-based school participated in in-depth interviews. The method of qualitative analysis used within this research is thematic analysis. Inmate students reveal that a common curricular feature of the prison school was the opportunity to earn "easy credits". They are also appreciating the opportunity to catch up on missed months or even years of school, enabling inmate students to make significant progress toward secondary school graduation. The prison school was in many ways a positive experience in which the students received attention for prison staffs and achieved academically.

**Keywords:** inmate students, prison education, correctional institution

## I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation on earth and the third largest democracy. Of its 240 million inhabitants, one-third is aged under 18 years. A recent UNICEF [1] report found that 40 million children in Indonesia live in households whose per capita consumption is less than US\$2 per day. Many of these young people are imprisoned for petty crimes such as small theft, or minor offences such as vagrancy, truancy, begging and drug missus. University of Indonesia's Judicial Watch Society gathered data by reviewing 1276 district court rulings from 2010 to 2015 on various cases, such as robbery, murder, battery threats, blackmail, fraud and embezzlement. Currently, young people under 18 years old make constitute 3.2 % of the total prison population. They are spread either in child correctional institution of in adult prison. The Indonesia prison system is overseen by the Directorate General of Corrections (*Direktorat Jenderal Permasyarakatan*), which is under the Ministry of Justice and Human Right (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi manusia*). Before the court judges send the young people to the prison, there are three options for child under 16 years: (1) return to

child to caregivers; (2) transfer the child to government custody; or (3) sentence the child to prison but deduct one-third the adult sentence. In Indonesia, children with the law should be treated differently to adult, and that any court trial should sensitive to the needs of the child. Children or youth between 10-18 years of age could be sentenced to a maximum of 10 years imprisonment.

For young inmates in child prison (or known as *Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak/LPKA*), the ministry of National Education expands the "special educational services" to get access to education. This education expansion is part of the commitment of Indonesian government to implement the national policy in lifelong learning as state in national law Number 20 Year 2003 article (5) point (5) "every citizen has the right to improve his/her education quality along his/her life". This prison-based school facilitates young inmates to maintain their educational participation, and perhaps can give impact in bringing young prisoners back into society. Not only in term of resettlement, but more so in terms of the value placed upon education to shape their own educational future and life chances.

Much literature has portrayed the education department in prison as a more positive environment than the rest of the prison. Wilson[2] completed several ethnographies investigating literacy and numeracy for young people in prison, identified the education department as a "third space" which "offers a space where a prisoner can be transformed into a student" (p. 199-200). Crewe et al. portrayed the education department as an 'emotion zone', one of several caring places within a prison which allowed prisoners to show their emotions and have some respite, temporarily, before going back to the "reality of imprisonment" on the wing[3] (p. 68). Reuss and Wilson suggested that education in prison at any level could provide prisoners with more choice and control[4]. Young prisoners are seeking the educational opportunities available in a prison are in great need of reframing their understanding of their life experiences and discerning a new line of action after release.

## II. METHODS

This study used an inductive approach and employed perspective transformation[5] as a theoretical framework. A total 60 inmate students

from upper secondary prison-based school participated in in-depth interviews selected by purposive sampling technique. The criteria of participants in this study were adolescent aged 15-18 years with a minimum prison period of 6 months. The study was conducted in *Sekolah Istimewa* LPKA Klas I Tangerang in Banten Province and *Sekolah Terbuka* LPKA Klas II Bandung in West Java province. These two prison schools are in child prison; means there is no adult prisoners. Ethical consideration were carefully attended to, informed consent, confidentiality, obtaining the necessary permission, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, obtaining the necessary permission, privacy, anonymity and encouraging participants to speak freely without fear of repercussions[6]. Method of data collection uses in-depth interviews and class observation. Research team also participated in students' school activities and did some teaching at school whenever opportunities arose. These observation and conversations were then build narratives. During the in-depth interview, all young inmates shared their stories and their viewpoints regarding the educational programs they embarked on during their incarceration. Interviews was held in the classroom or other school area such as library, teachers' room and counselling room.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is one of the most important rights for young people. Being in prison does not mean that the right to receive a proper education, health care, have a social life and access to information should be denied, especially to these young inmates. According to Indonesian law, Indonesia is obliged to fulfil the educational needs of every single citizen without exception; regardless of their gender, ethnicity, race, religion, age and even social and economic circumstances. Inmate students reveal that a common curricular feature of the prison school was the opportunity to earn "easy credits". They are also appreciating the opportunity to catch up on missed months or even years of school, enabling inmate students to make significant progress toward secondary school graduation. The prison school was in many ways a positive experience in which the students received attention for prison staffs and achieved academically. Below are some findings and discussion based on the inmate students' experience in prison-based school.

#### 3.1 Access to prison-based schools

Education for youth in child prison is a core aspect of rehabilitation for delinquents and incarcerated young people. In Indonesia, all child prisoners had access to education if they wished and a wide range of learning opportunities was available, with especially basic and secondary education, and the creative arts. When child prisoner enters the prison for the first time, the prison administrator will

identify whether he/she has education experiences or not. For young inmate who never attended schooling or has been dropped out from school for more than 4-5 years, they will suggested to enroll in short-term training available in the prison. But, if the young inmate's retention period is shorter than one year, they will assess to enroll in the school level that suit them. Whatever type of education young inmates take, all are encourage to experience informal learning while in the prison, learning that occurs when the young inmate try to learn through their experiences[7]. The aims of both type of education is that learning in prison environment is at the root of personal change and growth. Education in prison setting is concerned developing the capacity of young inmate on developing personal understanding and the capacity for critical reflection. One of students, Muhidin said *"this is unbelievable... I never thought that prison has school inside. I never heard about it. I am really happy that I can continue my study here. I thought I have to quit from education because of what I did before (committed to criminal)."*

#### 3.2 The opportunity to earn easy credits

Many inmate students have psychological problem related to the self-esteem and they may question the value of education [8]. For these students, their engagement in learning in prison-school due to obligation and part of the activities in the prison. But, for some other inmate students, they more appreciate the educational opportunities offered in a prison. Most of these students enrol to the program by volunteering. These students realise the benefit of attending schooling even though they are in prison.

Most of students in prison-based school reported that schoolwork in the prison was easier than schoolwork in their school outside, which is perhaps one way that the prison school manages the transient and diverse student population. Adam, who always get trouble with Math and English in the previous school said *"Even though I have difficulties in learning when the first time I joined this school, but now I enjoy it. The teachers understand that not all students has good academic skills. It seems that the teachers do not force the students to get high academic result, but just pass the standard. That is enough for us. But, if you study outside, they will push you to reach the requirement school. This is the reason I always skipped school and was getting involved with criminal behavior."* The students also commented that a common curricular feature of the prison school was the opportunity to earn "easy credits". Almost all the students noted the possibility "easy credits" at some point in their interviews, most often in response to questions about things they like about the prison school.

#### 3.3 Developing social and human capital

Students reported appreciating the opportunity to catch up on missed months or even years of school,

enabling them to make significant progress toward high school graduation. However, students' motivations behind participation in prison school is not only associated with utilitarian objectives of prison education. The benefit of prison education is more on nurturant effect rather than instructional effect. The students could develop their skill such as problem solving, listening and communicating, critical reasoning, teamwork and activities, which usually indicate that an individual young inmate is developing social and human capital. Adam, one of students told that he is able to control his emotion better than before. In the last few years, Adam always see himself negatively, as a person who always make trouble in school and in the family. But now Adam appreciate himself and are trying to develop positive attitude during his incarceration. Adam's ability to improve his emotional and social wellbeing is part of the benefit of prison school on developing social capital in prison setting[9].

Education program for young law breakers should transform young inmates behaviours and habits into acceptable and just ones[10]. It needs introspection, self-evaluation and self-criticism from every inmate students about their own lives and behaviour. Some behavioural changes suggested by the inmate students in this study are more discipline about time, know how to behave to other people, and become more patient. This is in keeping with the goal of prison education, to improve in-prison behaviour and adjustment to prison, and to help young inmate avoid engaging in criminal activity and obtain employment after release.

### 3.4 A positive experience from staffs and educators

Despite the structural and institutional barriers to schooling, many students reported learning and enjoyment from participation in the youth prison school. While the educational profiles of these students illustrate histories of demeaning and marginalizing school experiences, the prison school was in many ways a positive experience in which students received attention from teachers and reported that they learned and achieved academically. Firman, one of students in LPKA Bandung mentioned that school day is the day that he always waiting for. He likes to talk to the teachers in the school time about academic and non-academic matters. When good relationship is built between students and teachers, the school environment feel relaxing and welcoming both students and teachers to engage in the learning process. Positive learning experiences were most often attributed to a constructive relationship with teachers.

Most inmate students in this study commented that many teachers and staff provide learning environment that works better from them compare to school outside prison. Inmate students are quite often vulnerable, some of them want to talk a lot with the teachers as they do not have adult figure, but others

need quite time for themselves. The prison educators in this study, know when the best time to provide a quieter environment in the classroom. In the other side, they understand the best time to provide a 'consultation time'. It is time for students who want to talk to their teachers about personal and nonpersonal matters. Inmate students recognized the positive experience from a good educators and staff in providing the joy of learning. For young inmate with long sentence, the existence of staffs and educators as role model could have crucial impact for their endurance to carry out punishment. They look to their teachers as the only people who have not give up on them. Many teachers in this study believe about their inmate students even through some are harder to work with.

### 3.5 Promoting education and employment success after release

High school in Indonesian child prison is structured for students to obtain employment or continue young inmate education after release. The students commented that high school in prison provides them relevant skills and abilities, especially for vocational programs. *Child Correctional Facilities* in LPKA Klas 1 Tangerang has collaboration with Honda, a private motorcycle company in Indonesia to provide the skills and knowledge of young inmates about mechanic. This knowledge and skills may enhance young inmates re-integration into society as better citizens. Diki, one of students said *"I really appreciate this school. I can imagine when I leave this place, I will have high school certificate. I can use this for applying a job."* Other student, Diki also showed his enthusiasm that he will apply for university after release as he will have high school certificate. Diki want to study law as he want to understand about the things about criminal and law. For him, this relate to previous experience as a prisoner.

However, young inmates may encounter challenges to continuing education or obtaining employment after release. Criminal histories might prevent the incarcerated students from being employed in certain job. In this regards, correctional administrators and educators should consider legal barriers and help incarcerated students with reentry planning and case management to support their employment and education endeavors[11]. Furthermore, mental coaching skills is needed to carried out by the correctional institutions to prepare the former prisoners to compete with others when they leave prison.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The embodiment of the fulfilment of the right to education in Child Correctional Institution is required to support the empowerment of human resources in the future as a pillar of development and life. Article 9 paragraph (1) of Act No 23 of 2002 states that

‘every child has the right to obtain education and teaching in the context of personal development and level of intelligence in accordance with their interests and talents’. Indonesian young inmate get benefit from their participation in prison-based school not only for education credential, but it giving the opportunities on exercising their mind with healthy and preparing them to transition back into society that is more important for every young inmates. This study used a qualitative approach to establish and indeed confirm that there are some benefit and positive relationship between high school based-prison and (i) the opportunity to earn high school credentials; (ii) the space to develop social and human capital among young inmates; (iii) the prison environment that provide a positive experience from prison staffs and educator during schooling experiences; and (iv) the promotion to obtain employment or continue education after release. Thus, it should not be doubt that education should be at the heart of the child prison system[12]. The paper conclude that participating in prison-based high school can contribute to a sense among young prisoners to become a part of the wider community and enable a positive experience of learning during incarnation. But, the study also acknowledges that there are some difficulties facing all educators and prison staffs as well as young inmates, in promoting enjoyment and satisfying learning opportunities in prison school.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] UNICEF, “Equity in Public Financing of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Indonesia,” Bangkok: Thailand, 2016.
- [2] A. Wilson, “‘I go to get away from the cockroaches’: Educentricity and the politics of education in prisons,” *J. Correct. Educ.*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 185–203, 2007.
- [3] B. Crewe, J. Warr, P. Bennett, and A. Smith, “The emotional geography of prison life,” *Theor. Criminol.*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 56–74, 2014.
- [4] A. Reuss and D. Wilson, “The way forward,” in *Prison(er) education: Stories of change and transformation*, Winchester, UK: Waterside Press, 2000, pp. 25–48.
- [5] J. Mezirow, *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*, 1st ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991.
- [6] L. Cohen, L. Manion, and K. Morrison, *Research Method in Education*. London: Routledge, 2009.
- [7] A. Rogers, *The base of the iceberg . Informal learning and its impact on formal and non-formal learning*. Toronto: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2014.
- [8] L. Kellam, “Target programs: An analysis of the impact of prison program participation on community success,” Albany, NY, 2007.
- [9] L. Lafferty, C. Treloar, T. Butler, J. Guthrie, and G. M. Chambers, “Unlocking dimensions of social capital in the prison setting,” *Heal. Justice*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2016.
- [10] K. P. Quan-Baffour and B. E. Zawada, “Education Programmes for Prison Inmates: Reward for Offences or Hope for a Better Life?,” *J. Sociol. Soc. Anthropol.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 73–81, 2012.
- [11] D. Brazzell, A. Crayton, D. A. Mukamal, A. L. Solomon, and N. Lindahl, “From the classroom to the community,” New York, NY, 2009.
- [12] D. S. Coates, “Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison,” London, 2016.