

An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Juvenile Justice in Rehabilitating the Youth in South Africa

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Abstract : The incidences of youth who engage in unlawful or criminal activities are of great concern for the criminal justice system and government in South Africa. In terms of the juvenile justice system in South Africa, under-age youth who have been found guilty and sentenced to serve a jail term cannot be sent to the same detention facility as adults. The juvenile justice system is meant to protect young offenders from physical, emotional and mental exploitation by adult prisoners. Under-age young offenders should be assisted and exposed to educational, entrepreneurial and behavioral programmes that can equip them with the much needed skills that will turn them into law-abiding and economically productive citizens. The aim of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the justice system in South Africa in the rehabilitation young offenders. A qualitative method was used. The study used the non-probability purposive sampling to select the respondents. In-depth interviews, focus groups, observation and thematic coding were used to collect and analyse the data respectively. The study population consisted of social workers and offending youth. The sample comprised of 16 respondents (i.e. 4 social workers and twelve offending youth (6 males and 6 females). The study indicated that there is worrying recurrence of the anti-social behavior by some of the young offenders. According to this study, the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in the rehabilitation of the offending youth can be achieved by paying serious attention to follow-up services, participation of families of the offending youth in the diversion programmes and by improving the socio-economic conditions in the homes and communities of the offending youth.

Keywords : juvenile delinquent, juvenile justice system, diversion programmes, rehabilitation, restorative justice

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