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OUTCOMES AND RESULTS STUDY**

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# Lights and Shadows of Job and Social Rehabilitation of Prisoners. REINCORPORA Program Outcomes and Results Study

Miquel GOMEZ SERRA<sup>1</sup>, Nuria FABRA FRES<sup>2</sup>, Asun LLENA BERNE<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

This article describes the research findings about the outcomes of *Reincorpora*, a program addressed to the labour and social reintegration of people serving imprisonment sentences. Firstly, it outlines the theoretical framework and points to the main features of the program. Quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (interviews and focus groups) techniques were combined in order to design the investigation. Data provided by the holder institution of the program were analysed. Focus groups and interviews with social entities, technicians and inmates were conducted, and questionnaires were sent to the social organizations. The following article highlights some of the most relevant findings, in particular those aspects that enable successful pathways to employment, including citizenship, educational level, and work experience prior to entering prison, matching previous employment with the educational and training profile of the insertion process or the fact of having completed the training program. Some conclusions and proposals for improvement are identified. Thus, the importance of educational and training processes stands out, since there is a direct link between the fact of having achieved the training program and labour insertion process. This relationship is strengthened when it has followed a strategy to prepare for an occupational sector where there are real possibilities of the demand for jobs. Age, nationality, previous work experience or educational level influence positively or negatively in the employment process. Those results emphasize the importance of personal characteristics and the need for a more intensive individual support. Another conclusion of the analysis is the relationship between the individual's occupational careers before entering prison with the posterior job insertion.

*Keywords:* correctional institutions, socialization, social skills, job skills, delinquent rehabilitation programs, work education programs.

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## **Introduction**

The research evaluated the effectiveness of social and educational measures established by the program, regarding the reintegration into the workforce of people who are serving a penalty involving the deprivation of liberty. Quantitative and qualitative methods were combined, not only with the objective of assessing the state of the matter and the program's degree of effectiveness, but also to identify possible strategies for improvement and innovation.

Several European studies show that post-penitentiary recidivism is reduced through rehabilitation programs over the enforcement of sentences, as well as social and labor reintegration once the sentence has been completed. In the current context of reduction of public funding in social programs, "la Caixa" Foundation's *Reincorpora* Program is one of the few that seek to promote actions aimed at the reinsertion of convicts and ex-convicts into society and the labour force. This is why it is relevant to identify strengths and weaknesses with the aim of introducing improvements to increase its efficiency. Moreover, imprisonment sentences have undesirable effects on people's social and working lives, which get more serious and intense as the length of those penalties increase. The European Union (EU) considers that prison stays of more than three years are long-term internments because of their effects on the socio-personal evolution of prisoners and, in the case of Spain, more than 50% of internments have an average length of more than 7 years. We must also take into consideration the current social and economic context that affects employment rates in a very sensitive way. Spain has one of the highest unemployment rates in the EU. This socio-economic context, and especially unemployment rates, has a greater impact on socially vulnerable groups, as in the case of people who serve or have served custodial sentences. Therefore, in the first part of the article, the theoretical framework will be outlined and the program will be presented briefly. Afterwards, the methodological design of the research and, subsequently, the main results will be explained. Finally some conclusions and proposals for improvement will be pointed out.

## **Theoretical framework**

When presenting the theoretical framework of this research, four key areas of study were considered: the complexity paradigm and educational coaching; rehabilitation and the withdrawal process of criminal behaviour; the study of key competences in employment insertion; and the concept of good practices in job placement. The first two axes will be developed initially, since it is understood that they show a greater relation with the results presented in this article.

Our first theoretical reference is the concept of complexity as understood by Edgar Morin (1994; 2003; 2011a; 2011b) and that authors such as Bonil and Pujol (2005) apply to educational phenomena. According to this position, any socio-educational design should be a place for connection and dialogue between three complementary perspectives: thought, values and action; and that this position offers a view that adds meaning to the educational process. Therefore, we are interested in highlighting pedagogy of doubts and questions in which the participation of all subjects of the educational act are necessary, instead of pedagogy of certainties and answers.

Complexity lies in the field of differences, of uncertainties, of unpredictable processes; we understand these processes not as factors of destabilization or confusion, but as processes that allow us to overcome contradictory dynamics. Those processes contribute with an integral and global view in which the various elements of reality, sometimes or even often contradictory, are part of a complex and global system. It is within this framework of transformation of reality that educational support becomes a basic and fundamental tool in people's processes of change. Educational accompaniment starts from the need for renewal, proximity and recognition of the other. An educational itinerary is therefore established, which starts from approaching each other, experiencing proximity and communicating. The person and the community are active agents and have full autonomy for personal and social change.

In a certain way we could establish a parallelism with the contributions of Philippe Meirieu (1998) and his Copernican revolution in education. Meirieu argues that the true protagonist of any educational process is always the other and that he/she is free and autonomous, as well as responsible, in the decision-making processes that affect fundamental aspects of his/her life. Complexity and educational coaching are part of how we understand education. In the case of the research that we present, we have tried to build a dialogue between the various participants (institution, public administration, social organisations and affected people).

Our second theoretical foundation is formed on one hand by the concept of rehabilitation and on the other hand by the idea of the withdrawal of a criminal behaviour. Rehabilitation is a process that makes a person who has had a criminal history in the past perceive this as a behaviour that is no longer compatible with his/her current identity and wants to build a new non-criminal identity (Maruna, 2001). Criminology has extensively studied the abandonment of delinquency. It is not possible to establish direct and universal reasons for this, which places it within the framework of complexity (Lebel *et al.*, 2008). Thus, we can meet people for whom the mere fact of having complied with a criminal measure is reason enough to initiate a change of behaviour. However, it can also be motivated by an understanding of the damage done to the victims, or the ability to visualize

how the fulfilment of the sentence affects their own personal organization or the effects on the people in their immediate surroundings.

Other authors explain the change as being due to factors that are external to the person. These factors include the establishment of a new social capital that can be brought about by various events: the beginning of a new relationship, having a child, getting a job opportunity, establishing new neighbourhood connections or new networks of friends and social relationships (Laub & Sampson, 2003). In this context, we would be talking about an improvement of their social capital (Putnam, 2003). However, withdrawal of criminal behaviour can also be linked to the improvement of human capital, working on new or existing capacities that affect basic aspects of their lives, such as education, work, problem-solving, emotional control or communication and empathy (Zamble & Quinsey, 1997; McGuire, 2002; Braga, Piehl & Hureau, 2009), as well as the creation of human capacities that find primordial elements of change in the overcoming of addictions (Sen, 2010; Nussbaum, 2012).

Also, life's transition points may be reasons for withdrawal (Shover, 1985; Moffit, 1993; Massoglia & Uggen, 2010). Maturation at the end of adolescence or youth, family responsibilities or the death of a relative may be associated with the psychosocial maturation of the subject and the development of his/her capacity to analyze, understand and value the consequences of the acts committed. Finally, social support (Farrall, 2002), which allows and facilitates new opportunities for work, housing, social relations, educational promotion or participation in the community, should also be pointed out.

The abandonment of delinquency and the change of vital organization are not explained by an isolated or determinant fact, but by the conjugation of different factors. The process of building a non-criminal identity is a complex and extended process that requires accompaniment and support to achieve a new personal and social organization. Hence, studies on the abandonment of crime point to different key elements such as the prisoner's willingness to change, the existence of facilitating personality factors, the presence of specialized services, social and family support, or access to education, employment and social opportunities.

There is no agreement on the relevance of specialized support during withdrawal processes. Some authors point out that, in the personal story of the prisoners, their social bonds are stronger and more relevant than professional accompaniment. Partially, this can be explained by the fact that many people who comply with prison measures manifest distrust towards professional networks, giving them a role of control rather than support. We can conclude that rehabilitation, withdrawal and post-reinsertion are not processes that depend solely on the offender, but are processes in which educational support is a key factor. The interned must be willing to change and commit to the process of change, and professional accompaniment programs must guarantee the necessary resources and the access to them in order to increase prisoner's personal, social and relational skills.

A key element in post-reinsertion is job reintegration, since work is not only the guarantee of monetary income, which is necessary for their sustainability, but it also brings relational capital and social function, which are very relevant in our society (Alos, 2009; Esteban *et al.*, 2014; Fabra *et al.*, 2016).

People who have stayed in prison for more than one year suffer from the effects of prisonization or imprisonment. *Prisonization* is understood as the inmate's assimilation of habits, customs and culture of the prison as a consequence of a prolonged stay in a penitentiary (Clemmer, 1958), the more time is served the stronger those effects get. This refers to the loss of security, skills, abilities and competences, derived from the fact of living in an environment where everything is predetermined and routines are established to facilitate the coexistence between inmates. Among these losses we can highlight the following: (1) Loss of functional autonomy (difficulties in having a time to get up or eat, follow a balanced diet or organize free time); (2) Loss of sensory orientation (difficulties in calculating distances, spatial confusion or misperception of time); (3) Lack of knowledge of the existing social, educational and health resources network (changes in the provision of services and benefits, changes in location in the territory or use of spaces); (4) Technological gap (especially in mobility, telephony and media in general); (5) Loss of social relations tools (family and social configurations have changed, having to face changes due to deaths, births, divorces, new relationships); (6) Loss of economic management capacity (changes in the perception of prices or loss of skills in money management); (7) Physical and emotional symptoms (somatisation due to discomfort, insecurities and anxieties because of challenges they will have to face in the future).

These factors must be taken into account during the accompaniment process, as they require specific attention, practice and training so that the inmate will gradually reach the personal and social skills required to adapt to the changes produced outside the prison. Therefore, the process of reinsertion should achieve the following aims: (1) Maintain the willingness to change and to build a non-criminal identity; (2) Continue with the rehabilitation processes initiated in prison and, if necessary, initiate complementary programs (such as psychological or psychiatric care or drug rehabilitation treatment); (3) Cover basic needs (food, housing, etc.); (4) Consider training needs (new technologies, functional and digital literacy, job training); (5) Strengthen and develop family and social bonds that are positive for the new personal project; (6) Empower and hold the person responsible for his/her own process, making him/her the protagonist of his/her decision-making, reinforcing the capacity for change, analyzing the difficulties and emphasizing the successes; (7) Provide opportunities for employability, participation in community projects and links with the local associative network.

## ***Reincorpora* Program from “La Caixa” Foundation. Purpose and characteristics**

*Reincorpora* (*la Caixa Foundation*) is a work placement program aimed at inmates of penitentiary centres in the final phase of their sentence. The program intends to carry out personalized itineraries of social and labour insertion, based on a previously agreed upon individual plan, which contributes to the improvement of professional skills, promotes the development of values and paves the way towards labour integration in businesses. This program includes personalized itineraries lasting from 6 to 10 months. Those itineraries include coaching sessions aimed at professional training, learning-service activities, labour intermediation services and individualized accompaniment for insertion. The program is carried out throughout Spain via social organizations specializing in social and labour reinsertion and through agreements with public administrations that are competent in the administration of justice (and therefore in the application of the prison system).

The *Reincorpora* program began in 2011. Some of its most significant figures are the following: a total of 44 social organizations and 57 training centres participated in 2013, offering training and job placement activities in 41 penitentiary centres and 18 centres of social insertion of 17 autonomous communities of Spain. In total, 88 training courses, 88 apprenticeship programs and 1313 work integration programs were carried out, affecting a total of 1240 inmates. The *Reincorpora* program is a key piece in public employment policies aimed at this particular group of people. Since this program constitutes a model and a benchmark of good practices for judicial administration, its study, evaluation and proposals for improvement are essential both for the program itself and for the penitentiary system.

### **Research methodology**

The methodology was of mixed type, combining quantitative (surveys) and qualitative techniques (interviews and discussion groups) (Denzin, 2013; Glesne, 2010). Specifically, a quantitative study was implemented, based on a questionnaire addressed to the various social entities that participated in the 2012 edition of the program, as well as on the analysis of data provided by the institution that owns the program.

This quantitative analysis was complemented by the realization of several discussion groups with technicians of the collaborating social entities. In addition, interviews were carried out with technicians from prisons, technicians from collaborating social entities and inmates who had participated in the program.

Subsequently, the fieldwork was carried out by sending the questionnaire and after, tracking and collecting the information. The questionnaires were addressed to the 66 social organizations that had participated in the 2012 edition of the program, of which 89% (59 organizations) responded. These responses represented 1,524 training itineraries (94% of the 1,628 training itineraries).

Simultaneously, the selected penitentiary centres were visited and interviews and discussion groups were held. In total, a number of organizations and prisons were visited in five Spanish provinces (Valencia, Málaga, Madrid, Coruña and Leon). 11 interviews were conducted with prison officials and technicians from prison institutions, as well as 10 interviews with officials and technicians from social organizations and 9 interviews with prisoners participating in the program. Regarding the discussion groups, 6 interviews were carried out with prison technicians and 3 more with technicians from social organizations.

Finally, all available information and data was analyzed, results were obtained and conclusions and proposals for improvement were elaborated.

## **Results**

In this section we will focus on the results obtained from the analysis of the data provided by the questionnaires that were sent to the social organizations. The results of the analysis of the interviews and discussion groups are the subject of a separate article. The survey obtained a response level of 89%, obtaining information from 59 social entities. Of these, 32 organizations (54.2%) had carried out training activities and follow-up programs, while 27 (45.8%) had only undertaken training activities. Of the 59 organizations, 54 (91.6%) reported performing service-learning activities. The questionnaires given by these 59 organizations provided information on 1,524 participants. Of these, 1,265 were men and 223 were women (85.1% and 14.9% respectively). It should be noted that 72.2% had Spanish nationality and, regarding the level of studies, 10.5% had no studies, 52.2% had primary studies, 24.3% had secondary studies, 6.3% had a baccalaureate degree, 3.6% had a technical diploma and 3% had a higher education degree. Next, we present the results organized by different areas of analysis.

### ***Profile of people who obtain job placement***

We previously pointed out that the majority of users are men (85.1%), a proportion that remains virtually unchanged during the insertion process, with no significant differences detected. That is, there is practically the same proportion of men and women in the total sample and in the subgroups that get or do not get a job at the end of the program.



Table 1. Characteristics of users regarding labour insertion

Socio-demographic data	n	%	Without job placement		Placed		P
			n	%	N	%	
Gender (NC= 12)	1488		1097		362		
Man	1265	85,1	954	85,0	311	85,2	
Woman	223	14,9	169	15,0	54	14,8	0,490
Age (NC= 32)	1459		1097		362		
17-25 years old	224	15,6	188	17,1	36	9,9	
26-36 years old	547	37,2	397	36,2	150	41,4	
37-47 years old	500	34,5	370	33,7	130	35,9	
48-64 years old	188	12,7	142	12,9	46	12,7	0,009
Nationality(NC= 1)	1492		1124		368		
Spanish	1075	72,2	789	70,2	286	77,7	
Foreigner	417	27,8	335	29,8	82	22,3	0,003
If foreigner, with a work permit? (NC=23)	395		320		75		
No	99	25,1	92	28,8	7	9,3	
Yes	269	74,9	228	71,3	68	90,7	0,000
Level of completed studies (NC= 6)	1490		1123		367		
No formal education	157	10,5	132	11,8	25	6,8	
Elementary School	776	52,2	586	52,2	190	51,8	
Secondary/Middle School	363	24,3	271	24,1	92	25,1	
High School	95	6,3	71	6,3	24	6,5	
Vocational training/technical program	55	3,6	41	3,7	14	3,8	
Higher Education	44	3	22	2,0	22	6,0	0,001
More than 6 months of work experience at the time of imprisonment (NC= 62)	1435		1072		363		
No	230	16,0	195	18,2	35	9,6	
Yes	1205	84,0	877	81,8	328	90,4	0,000

Source: prepared by the authors

Nationality is another significant factor. Foreigners find it more difficult to acquire work; especially those who do not have a work permit. In contrast, it seems that the age factor does have an influence. Young people have greater difficulty in finding work, while people between 26 and 36 years of age have a higher probability of finding a job. Moreover, from this age, the same proportion

is observed between those who find work and those who do not. It should be noted that the majority of the sample (more than 70%) is between 26 and 47 years old, and if the age factor is confirmed, this variable should be taken into account in the redesigning of the program<sup>4</sup>. Another influential factor is the level of studies, to a lesser extent than what might be expected. There is a special influence on the extremes: greater difficulties of those who do not have any type of studies and greater facilities of those who have higher studies. The variable related to work experience prior to admission to prison does have a significant impact. Thus, people who already had previous work experience have a higher degree of job placement than people who have not had such experience, either because of their age (too young) or because they did not have any work history (as with women).

***The importance of Reincorpora***

A second axis of analysis sought to detect if the characteristics of the program and the social organizations that participate do in fact influence the degree of labour insertion. If so, the objective is to detect what these characteristics would be. Thus, regarding the organizations, a first aspect to be taken into account is that they do not all carry out training activities and follow the insertion itineraries. The data obtained indicate that this does not influence the results of labour insertion; that is to say, regardless of whether or not they jointly develop training and follow-up, this does not significantly influence the degree of labour insertion.

Table 2. Characteristics of the program

	n	%	Job placement NO		Job placement YES		P
			n	%	N	%	
Same organization performs training AND follow-up	1493		1125		368		
No	1069	71,6	809	71,9	260	70,7	
Yes	424	21,4	316	28,1	108	29,3	0,344
Completes training program (NC= 47)	1449		1090		359		
No	235	16,2	213	19,5	22	6,1	
Yes	1214	83,8	877	80,5	337	93,9	0,000

Source: prepared by the authors

<sup>4</sup> According to the design of the program, these users should not be participating, since the access requirements establish that, in case of being a foreigner, a work permit must be obtained. But the data provided by the collaborating entities shows the presence of a small group of users that do not meet this requirement.

On the contrary, the fact that the user has or has not finished the training itinerary seems to be important. Users who finish the training program are more likely to get a job than those who have not been able to complete it.

Another aspect that has been analyzed in this study is how much the development of the personal and professional competences of the users throughout the training and follow-up itineraries influences the placement. We believe that this is a key aspect of the program's design, although it is difficult to conceptualize and value. The study chose to ask the organizations what competencies they had worked on through the training program, and correlated them with the result of the subsequent labour insertion. The correlation between competences and the results of the job placement is inconclusive; in general it is not observed that approaching those competences has an impact on the labour insertion.

### ***Profiles associated with labour insertion***

In the profiles of those who have achieved employment, some specific variables stand out, such as the level of education, completion of the training program, previous work experience when entering prison or being a Spanish citizen. On the other hand, contrary values are associated with non-insertion, as for example not having studies, not finishing the training, not having work experience before entering prison or being a foreigner.

There are other attributes that are more difficult to interpret, but that point out some aspects, which can be studied in more depth. For example, the competences that some organizations work on and others do not. Results have shown that mobility competences have a greater influence in the labour insertion.

## **Conclusions**

The ceasing of criminal behaviour and social and labour reinsertion are based on personality factors, the prisoner's willingness to change, the network of social and family support, and the opportunities to exercise citizenship (housing, basic needs, work, social participation). To this end, *Reincorpora* must promote methodologies and tools for support and accompaniment that reinforce the refusal of crime, the configuration of a new non-criminal identity and the establishment of a network of material and emotional support that facilitates the subject's willingness to change.

The quantitative analysis that has been performed highlights the importance of the training processes, since there is a direct link between having completed the training activity and the labour insertion. This relationship is reinforced if the training is aimed at an occupational sector with a demand for jobs.

Table 3. Variables associated with the insertion process. Minor probability 0.01

Characteristics of people who did not obtain employment	Characteristics of people who obtained employment
The person does not finish the training program	The person finishes the training program
The social organizations do not work on emotional skills	The social organizations do not work on communication or interpersonal and social skills, however they do work on mobility suitability
He/she has taken commerce and marketing courses.	He/she has received training in: Hospitality and tourism, agriculture, installation and maintenance, wood and furniture, mechanical manufacturing
They are serving a sentence in Madrid, Alcalá prison, or in Galicia	They are serving a sentence in Castilla y Leon or Catalunya
No job experience higher than 6 months before imprisonment	More than 6 months of job experience at before imprisonment
Foreigners	Spanish
Haven't received formal education	Have received higher education
17 to 25 years old	Training received coincides with the subsequent employment
	Autonomous job search
	Ongoing contact between the monitoring entity and the training entity
	Adaptation of training to business demand

Source: prepared by the authors

Another important conclusion of the analysis is the link between the occupational trajectory of the individual before being incarcerated and the possibility of obtaining a job placement through the program, observing that the effects are more positive when the person has work experience prior to their entrance into prison.

Concerning young people, the accompaniment given will have to be specific and adapted to the difficulties presented by the labour market for this population group (acquisition of work experience).

Age, nationality, work experience prior to admission to prison or educational level positively or negatively influences the labour insertion process. Therefore, a greater individualization of the accompaniment in function of these aspects is needed.

Regarding transversal competences, contrary to the opinion that social entities usually have on this particular matter, the observed results show that they have a very low relevance in the process of insertion. This probable contradiction points out the need to review the role of transversal competences in the success of the insertion processes and in its methodological development in the training actions.

Concerning the idea of good practices, recognizing the importance of establishing a social support network and building a new personal identity is key. Therefore, we must emphasize the need to work on the motivation of the participants to build a new identity based on change, where labour insertion has a relevant place.

Personalized attention is a prerequisite for the quality of this work, which allows us to respond to each particular situation throughout the process, with group actions supporting activities. The working rhythms should be flexible for each person, as an increase in the time of confinement is correlated to an increase in the existence of deficiencies and personal difficulties and, therefore, to a greater need for support. Two aspects that deserve special attention are drug use and mental health problems.

Finally, it has been verified that the organizations have their own work models and that the program allows the self-management of the service based on the characteristics and the experience of each institution. However, it is possible to encourage the exchange and transfer of good practices between entities, preserving their identity and autonomy. There is a lack of spaces for reflection and debate, exchange of good practices and dynamics of knowledge transfer among institutions that could provide opportunities for improvement.

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