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Targeting recidivism : an evaluation study into the functioning and effectiveness of a prison-based treatment program

Bosma, A.Q.

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Author: Bosma, A.Q.

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Studies have shown that correctional treatment can help decrease re-offending rates among ex-detainees, if imposed on high risk offenders, directed at the factors related to repeated offending, and matched to the individual delinquent. In line with these findings, the Dutch government developed the Prevention of Recidivism Program, a prison-based rehabilitation program aimed to reduce the re-offending rates of program participants. This dissertation aimed to study the functioning and effectiveness of this program, by conducting a plan-, process- and product evaluation.

The results of this dissertation indicated that the Prevention of Recidivism program could be considered promising, since it applied methods that were considered effective based on theoretical and empirical knowledge. In practice however, it was shown that program-execution was severely hampered by a number of issues: the program had rather strict inclusion criteria, faced considerable non-participation and non-completion rates, and often allocated offenders to inappropriate treatment. In the end, the program reached a limited group of offenders, most of whom completed a standard program, with no specific treatment aimed to target the factors that initially caused their criminal behavior. Consequently, the program was only shown effective for a small group of offenders that completed a standard treatment program. The most vital program-component, criminogenic need-specific treatment modules, was not shown effective. It was therefore concluded that the Prevention of Recidivism Program had for the most part not been effective in reaching its goals.

This is a volume in the series of the Meijers Research Institute and Graduate School of the Leiden Law School. This study is part of the Law School's research programme 'Criminal Justice'.

Targeting recidivism

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functioning and effectiveness of a
prison-based treatment program*

A.Q. BOSMA