

Young People in the Criminal Justice System

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Introduction

Young adults and children have become the focus of attention in recent years. The increased focus is due to the enhancement of criminal activities by young people. The self-inflicted death in the prisons has unfolded the serious lapses found in the criminal justice system. The failings of the prison authorities in tackling the issue of young criminals are also worrisome. The case of Alex describes the failure of monitoring authorities inside the prison. Despite the care and looking after by the officials, they cannot stop Alex from committing suicide. The criminal justice system needs overhauling in order to cope with the increase in self-inflicted deaths and positive construction of the youth, which will impact policy decisions.

Description

The death of 15-year-old Alex was one of the major failures in the criminal justice system. It shows how the construction of the youth is designed in the prevailing social context of Western society. Before his death, Alex was sexually abused by a member of his family. From a very young age, he went into the mental and social troubles of life. At the age of five years, he was brought to the London borough of Tower Hamlet. On granting the parental responsibilities from the parents of Alex, the borough became the corporate parents of Alex. The boy requires special education needs and special care as he was facing a mental disorder after suffering from sexual abuse. He was also placed in supportive foster care for recovery in the Medway.

However, over time, such caring did not change their behaviour and troubles. Alex became frustrated, and the carers failed to retain him from the custodial sentence given to him. In the same way, corporate parents also do not provide therapeutic support to the disturbed Alex (Inquest. 2014). In October 2013 eleven, he was sentenced to detention and the training order without taking into account the mental health assessment. The multi-agency meeting before his sentence recommends that his mental assessment be considered when deciding about Alex. No attention was given to the recommendation, and he was sentenced subsequently. The recommendation was that Alex be placed in the secure training centre.

Authorities did not provide the report to the court, which led to Alex being sent to Cookham Wood YOI, which was the male juvenile prison. He was the youngest prisoner in the Cookham. Its vulnerabilities in Alex were repeatedly witnessed by the number of personnel of the different associated agencies. Alex withdrew his participation in different activities inside the prison, and his vulnerabilities became more complex, which was not managed properly. The failure of the corporate

parents, the Tower Hamlet of Alex, to fulfil their needs for Alex led to his death. Before their death, the young boy became more frustrated and distressed, and he was practising self-harm activities. One day before his death, he told the prison officer that he was sexually abused. The officer fined him for depression.

The prison officers on twenty-five January found Alex hanging by his shoelaces. After his death, his father faces a complex inquest. Different agencies provided legal representation for the Youth Justice Board, London Borough of Tower Hamlet, and the Medway youth offending team (Inquest. 2014). The aid to their father, Alex, was granted over the highlighting of the case in the leading newspaper. The case of Alex reveals the in-depth flaws that are in the criminal justice system. It also shows how youth are constructed in the social environment. Those three other children who died with Alex in a short period also reflect the carelessness of children by the parents and the concerned authorities.

The most important issue with dealing with and caring for children who could save them from death, like Alex, is the lack of proper management and innovations in criminal justice policy. The co-director of the inquest, which was dealing with the case of Alex, remarked that Alex was in severe need of caring and therapeutic support from the concerned agencies. The finding of the inquiry revealed that shameful negation had been reported from the death of previous children. The director further lamented that imprisonment in the first place for Alex provided him with the worst and most disastrous environment (Inquest. 2014). He emphasized that Alex's case should restrict authorities from detaining children, which is very dangerous and must end now.

The death of young children and adults in the prisons shows that there must be an independent review that incorporates the families to look at the wider system and the policy issues. During the years two thousand eleven and two thousand fourteen, around sixty adults who were in the care of the government died (Bateman, 2016). The broader social, economic and political context also influences the deaths and attitudes of the young generation. Publications and research reveal that certain social construction of the youth leads to the death of many in prison. The increased death in the prison is because of the fact that dehumanizing nature and violent atmosphere of the prison.

The reforms or changes can improve the prison situation. Otherwise, the present construction will continue to lose the lives of many people. The use of prison for young adults and children needs political and policy boldness. The unsafe environment where juveniles are sent by the authorities is also dangerous and harmful to the children. The untrained and scarce resources staff of the prisons cannot deal with the young individuals who have socio-psychological vulnerabilities. The repetition of the same mistakes and the repeated deaths of young people unfolded, and authorities were not ready to learn the lesson from the previous deaths. Such lapses in the criminal justice system raised questions about the investigation, monitoring system, and inspection of the state institutions.

The concerns and the reports of the repeated death of young people stressed new thinking and improvised policy reforms. The new strategies can help the state avoid death cases like Alex Kelly's. There are many interventions and policy planning initiatives to eliminate the problem of the distorted

social construction of the youth (Burke, 2016). There are children and adults who have died from the background of family discord, substance misuse, exploitation, and abuse. These individuals have been underpinned by inequality and poverty. These needs are recognized as offending-related requirements. The early intervention system is indeed an essential aspect that can influence the destructed young adults from the criminal justice system.

Therapeutic schemes and community and support services are essential for the youth to save them from exploitation. Self-inflicted and self-harming death is also caused by the violent environment of the prison. Increased lock-up and impoverished regimes also contributed to the increased death in prison (Bradshaw, 2016). Discipline and widespread bullying cause anguish and isolate the young prisoners. The treatment and the intervention of under-custody juveniles like Alex Kelly do not consider the needs and the sufferings of the rehabilitating agencies. The punitive and the generic approach is observed in most cases of juvenile caring.

The support and help for the young adults are absent in the prison. At the point of the special custody of the young adult, the authorities do not provide personal officers, which are essential for the prisoner at risk. Many criminals are abducted in prisons that are meant for young people, like the Young Offender Institution. The number of reported deaths has occurred in those prisons that are not. Lack of communication between the statutory agencies and the establishment of the prison led to the unidentified death of young adults (Sanders, 2015). The risk for self-harm and its identification is also lacking due to the failures in communication. In the prison estate, there is collaboration to enhance pressure and under-resourcing.

The reductions in the budget of the prison and cutting off the staff also lead to a bleak, overcrowded and violent environment for the prisoners. Certain legal mechanisms influence the failure of systematic prosecution. The lack of proper prosecution paved the way for the destruction of the criminal justice system. There was no free legal aid for the father of Alex Kelly; it was done after the leading newspaper highlighted the case as a front-page story. The new coronial powers support learning from the previous incidents. However, the repetition of the same mistakes and failures of prisons continues to undermine the policies that were formulated for the penal institutions.

The inconsistency and the delay in the process of the inquest lead to the socio-psychological distortions of the victim's families (Smith, 2015). There are a number of people who have faced double trauma while waiting for the decision about the death of their close relative in prison. Restrictions in providing legal aid and constraints in legal representation further aggravated the bereaved family. Similarly, the lack of a proper mechanism for the monitoring, audit, and recommendation of the inquest process restrains people from cross-sector learning. It also affects the reform process in the criminal justice system. The father of Alex Kelly reveals that serious failure emerged in the caring and support of Alex after his death.

According to their father, Alex, imprisonment for his son destroyed his little life. He said that the authorities would learn the lessons from the death of his child, and no harm would be given to

another family (Smith, 2016). Other than the case of Alex, the mother of the 17-year-old Jake, who died at the HMYOI Hindley at two thousand twelve, also expresses her frustration and grief. She dreadfully explains that if her son could be moved by the authorities to a safer cell, it might save his life. She said that her family wakes up every morning with the grief that the prison officer helped Jake to hang out and end his life. In the same way, the chief inspector of the prison acknowledges that the mental well-being of the prisoners is seriously jeopardized.

The destructive, aggressive, and confrontational behaviour of the individual was not controlled by the authorities. Many of the officials have openly demonstrated that they are unable to cope with the psychological issues of young prisoners. The chief inspector lamented that a clear policy for criminal justice must be formulated to help the officials and staff retain the prison-centred approach. The prevailing culture, according to the chief inspector, is institutional blindness, which does not respond to the needs and the sufferings of the young prisoners. The authorities' approaches are concerned with punishing young adults. There is no focus on the child-centric approach to its welfare.

The dentation of the children in an unsafe environment is subjected to degrading treatment. Bullying, strip-searching, restraint, and segregation are some of the examples of the torturing of children in prison. In such an environment of disrespect and mental depression, self-harm and self-inflicted suicides are common (Taylor, 2016). The responsibilities of the key agencies that are associated with the criminal justice system should be reformed according to the increased disruptive conditions of the young people in the prisons. Agencies like the Young Offending Teams need to work on the management of offenders. The youth justice board is also responsible for the protection of the rights of the young adults who died in prison.

With the turn of the century, there was considerable focus on the construction of the youth. Working has continued for many decades. The emerging European youth research, policy, and social youth working are impacting the policies and social practices. The construction and the policy of youth challenge the meaning and the concept of being youth. The different social and cultural settings reveal that youth are essential parts of European society. The emergence of the concept of youth dates back to industrial society and with the advent of modernizing society (Tonry, 2015). The beginning of the state intervention and the education reforms in Europe are influencing the construction of the youth in the Western region.

The change in the labour market and the revolution of industrialization attributed to the development and construction of the youth. It has severely affected the policy that works according to the latest changes and preferences of the policymakers. The beginning of the intervention of government and regulation in child labour policies are the result of youth construction. The reorganization of the criminal justice system according to the prevalent requirements of the youth also contributes to the construction of the youth. Improvement in lifestyle and the transformation of different modes of society are also factors that contribute to the development of youth (Tonry, 2015). The realization of the time's calibration has introduced the structuring of one's life by the units of measurement.

The notion of the youth as a normative and normal stage in the life cycle became legitimate in Europe. The educational developments and the reforms in Europe and Northern America are also enabling the construction of youth and influencing policymakers. There were middle-class movements and campaigns in Europe. The perception of the youth as the agent of change under the regimes of totalitarianism and fascism is of considerable importance to policies and practices (Wadman, 2017). The experience of being a young individual undergoes shifts due to the occurrence of certain changes in society. Modernity has radically transformed the lives of young people. The exploration of the self and the social landscapes are factors associated with the construction of youth.

There are a number of projects that are running the state organization for the development and the welfare of the youth. The European projects are unfolding the political ideology which emphasizes democratic values and the protection of human rights. European youth centres in different regions play a critical role in translating European values and inducing them into educational programs. Sharing equal powers, the entire sector of the youth council is managed by the international non-governmental youth organization. Efforts are continuing to promote youth education, which will ultimately influence the various policy decisions.

Other than the organization for the construction and development of youth in Europe, the European Union has also played its role in the promotion of youth (Wadman, 2017). The operation sector program, along with the European youth project, was started by the EU in the last decade to promote the values for the integration of youth in policy-making decisions. The EU has funded around nine million euros over the last decade. The values and thoughts of the youth organization overlap with the EU ideology. The Council for Europe concentrates on the promotion of civil society.

The Youth in Action program provides opportunities for people to run and support voluntary service projects. The participation of the Council of Europe and the European Commission provides new policy direction and an approach to generating young leaders. The establishment of advanced training for the trainers 'ATTE' and the trainers for active learning 'TALE' is the result of cooperation between the different youth organizations. The programs are designed for long-term courses to aim to identify the key competencies and intercultural learning among the youth (Young, 2017). In the same way, the socioeconomic factors that influence the work of youth are social work and social education.

The partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission in the field of youth construction has considerable implications for policy and practices. The history of the social policy of youth in the UK is considered the response to the problematic urban class of the post-industrialist youth society. The vulnerable target of the youth in the Thatcher period was underpinned by the permissive approach to the managerialism of the audit culture. In the era of Tony Blair, there was the idea and demand for joined-up services for the youth. The discourse of youth construction revolves around the conceptualization of youth workers as educators, psychotherapists, and education instructors.

The non-formal values of self-determination, voluntarism, and autonomy are affecting the practices of

the professionals serving in the youth field. The reaction of the UK government in recent years against the riots is a case in point. The cause of ambiguity and tension is the coexistence of the traditions of voluntarism with the drive to achieve the professional status of the youth workers (Young, 2017). The successful development of youth work in an increasingly connected world depends on the parameters of the policy and the national legislation. In the youth field, research has been connected with the policies and practices in explicit and implicit ways.

In the EU, these connections are embedded in institutional frameworks and a wide range of networks and organizations. The state institutions of Europe have introduced and promoted strong youth policies a number of times. The Council of Europe reaffirmed that in the 2020 agenda, the role of youth research will be a principal element of the youth sector policy. The youth strategy of 2009 provides a number of promotional aspects for the development of youth. The coordination and cooperation between the EU and national youth policy are complementary mechanisms for the construction of the youth in Europe.

Conclusion

In concluding the discussion on the young people and the criminal justice system, it is said that a number of reforms have been implemented by state organizations. However, there are serious lapses in the criminal justice system which destroy the lives of many young members of European communities. The case of Alex Kelly reveals that failures of the key agencies and policy gaps lead to the increase in self-inflicted suicides in the prisons of Europe.

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