

## **The Elasticity of Rehabilitation**

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### **Abstract**

This paper contributes to a debate on what constitutes rehabilitation. Current criminal justice practice tends to focus on lowering recidivism by utilising strategies geared towards cognitive behavioural modification and educational/vocational skill development. The paper focuses on the perspectives of custodial educators in a Juvenile Justice Centre in Northern Ireland. Their definition of rehabilitation is less concerned about lowering recidivism and instead focuses more on meeting the needs of the young people entering custody, more so than preparing them for their return to the community. Education staff present a model of rehabilitation that is fundamentally about improving the lives of young people. Despite expecting young people to return to custody Education staff contend that young people's lives improved because they were exposed to a welcoming, caring and pro-social environment which has helped the young people transform into academic and social achievers whilst in custody.

**Key Words:** rehabilitation, juvenile, custodial, education

### **Introduction**

This paper emerges from a doctoral ethnographic study of an Education Department within a Juvenile Justice Centre in Northern Ireland. It is an attempt to represent the views of custodial educators whose voices on the potential of education to be rehabilitative are perhaps under-represented in the literature. The following perspectives of custodial education staff represent those who Ward and Maruna (2007:175) refer to as 'confused coalface rehabilitative programmers' who work in an environment bereft of a clear model of rehabilitation.

This paper examines the rehabilitative capacity of education in custody. Rehabilitation is often discussed in terms of behavioural change and reduced criminality. However recent UK reconviction/re-offending

research based on young people identifies that recidivism remains problematic. In this study, education staff frequently acknowledged - and indeed expected - young people to re-offend and as a result return to custody. Despite this, education staff felt that they made a genuine contribution to the young people's rehabilitation. Staff tended to describe young people who came into custody as troubled, with a wide variety of needs including: a lack of confidence, low self esteem, fractured educational backgrounds and damaged relationships with teachers. From this perspective, most education staff members believed that young people were *transformed at least while in custody*. Staff described creating and maintaining an alternative space for young people which was welcoming, caring, and characterised by pro-social modelling and relationship building. Staff described the young people as growing in confidence, elevating their self-esteem and, crucially, academically and vocationally achieving. For the staff, these outcomes constituted their discourse on rehabilitation. This perspective presents an alternative model of rehabilitation still grounded in notions of change or transformation. Custodial education staff argue that rehabilitation is a temporary phenomenon and focuses more on addressing needs and improving lives rather than reducing recidivism.

## **Methodology**

An ethnographic study of an Education Department within Forest Grove Juvenile Justice Centre<sup>1</sup> took place between September 2006 and June 2007; in which the researcher spent on average 3 to 5 days a week over the period of an academic year. A variety of data gathering techniques were utilised including observation, participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The researcher carried out a review of policy and agency documentation, as well as gathering information on young people's educational and offending backgrounds and photographing the educational environment. Both education staff and young people were the focus of this study. The researcher observed from the staff room and classroom, took on the role of classroom assistant and taught lessons, shadowed education staff, attended staff and union meetings and participated in staff training events. The researcher carried out semi-structured interviews with 19 education staff members and 11 focus groups from a sample of 31 young people aged between 13 and 17.

## **Rehabilitation: A review of literature**

The literature identifies some conflict over the definition of rehabilitation; however a common theme tends to identify rehabilitation as a process, designed to affect change, transform or correct behaviour. According to

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<sup>1</sup> Forest Grove Juvenile Justice Centre is a pseudonym. Additionally, all names used in this paper have been changed to protect the identities of the staff and young people.

Raynor and Robinson (2005) this is the *orthodox* perspective of offender rehabilitation and tends to be discussed as an intervention, or a series of interventions, that have the desired function of bringing about *change* or *reform* (Raynor and Robinson, 2005) in individuals who have been involved in criminal activity. How change or transformation occurs appears to be contested. One such perspective presents criminal justice agencies as correctional interventionists (Duguid, 2000; Maruna, 2001) aiming to correct behaviours envisaged as criminally deviant. The process of *doing* rehabilitation has involved counselling, therapy, (Ashworth, 1997) medical interventions (such as prescribed drugs), behavioural and cognitive training or retraining (Ross and Fabiano, 1985) and educational interventions (Duguid, 2000).

According to others, particularly those who advocate desistance perspectives (Rex, 1999; Maruna, 2001; Burnett and Maruna, 2004; Farrall, 2004; Maruna et al., 2004a; 2004b; Vaughan, 2007; Ward and Maruna, 2007), rehabilitation should be less about trying to change individual's offending behaviour, and more about recognising human agency and the fact that individuals are more likely to make choices to desist from criminality on their own terms (Farrall and Bowling, 1999; Maruna, 2001) - rather than be changed by any rehabilitative interventions. Some argue that factors such as age or maturity contribute to desistance (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Farrington, 1992; Moffitt, 1993; Maruna et al., 2004b; Farrington et al., 2006; McGuire, 2007). Others argue that social structures or social practices such as marriage, (Sampson and Laub, 1993) relationships (Vaughan, 2007), becoming a parent (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998; Jamieson et al., 1999) and employment (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Farral, 2004; Farrington et al., 1986; Uggen, 2000) act as significant forces that affect an individual's decision to desist from further criminality.

#### *Rehabilitation: Responding to risk/need*

Ward and Maruna (2007) argue that current rehabilitative practice is geared towards a model of rehabilitation that gauges the level of risk an individual poses to their community and responds to that risk level with the appropriate rehabilitative intervention or series of interventions. The current rehabilitative strategy operating in custodial institutions across the UK focuses on trying to lower re-offending and reducing the numbers of people returning to custody, by utilising behavioural and cognitive modification programmes and providing opportunities for individuals to engage in educational and vocational training activity. It is hoped that those who offend may acquire the skills and qualifications that, in the first instance improve basic skills, but also improve their chances of re-engaging in education or finding employment or training opportunities after custody – thus reducing the likelihood of further criminality.

This rehabilitative model has emerged from an evidenced based policy agenda often referred to as 'What Works' which has identified that

cognitive behavioural programming (Ross and Fabiano, 1985; Izzo and Ross, 1990; Lipsey, 1995, Redondo et al., 1999; Feilzer et al., 2004; Cann et al., 2005) and education (Porporino and Robinson, 1992; Duguid, 1998; Wilson et al., 2000; Steurer et al., 2001; Callan and Gardner, 2007) are most likely to reduce recidivism.

However the evidence base for this model remains contested. Harper and Chitty (2005) highlight that much of the evidence originates from the USA and Canada and that this may not translate into a UK context. Furthermore they argue that there are significant concerns about the methodological integrity of many of the studies and that the evidence base in the UK is more modest and contested. Others (Merrington and Stanley, 2004: 18) have argued that despite the message emanating from the 'What Works' literature, evidence in the UK would suggest that it is too early to make claims that significant reductions in re-offending can be achieved. Pawson, (2000:66) described the 'What Works' perspective as a 'dangerous over-simplification'.

Critics have argued that the 'What Works' agenda came to dominate criminal justice practice in custody (Reuss, 1999) and as a result has confined or narrowed (Warner, 2005) the definition of rehabilitation to its ability to reduce recidivism. Reuss (1999:114) elaborates on this perspective:

...educational programmes in prison are frequently assessed as successful when measured against recidivism as opposed to describing the reality of prison classroom practice ... Put simply, the question of what changes suggests that people expect and hope that if an offender attends a particular course or courses in prison, then those courses will stop any future offending behaviour. It is the question most asked of educational practitioners who work within the current penal system in England and Wales, closely followed by: 'How can you show it?' or alternatively: 'How do you know they have changed?'

In Northern Ireland, recent juvenile reconviction research carried out by Decodts, (2005; 2006) and re-offending research by Lyness (2008) indicates clearly that recidivism is problematic. Juvenile reconviction records in Northern Ireland over the last decade have been described as *depressing* (O'Mahony and Deazley, 2000). In 2001, 36% of 10-17 year olds were reconvicted within one year and within 2 years that figure had doubled (Decodts, 2005). The following year, reconviction rates had risen to 42% over one year - however the reconviction rates over two years were not reported (Decodts, 2006). The most recent report examining re-offending patterns in 2005 (Lyness, 2008) identified that 72.9% of young people in custody had re-offended in one year. This report differs from previous reconviction studies, because it examines re-offending patterns *throughout* a one year period, rather than traditionally examining reconviction *at* a one year interval. In effect, the figures are still based on

reconviction via the courts, but the figures show the extent of re-offending by young people. While the 2008 report cannot accurately be compared with previous reconviction reports, there is a clear indication that recidivism remains significantly high among young people who have been in custody.

The reality that young people return to the centre was readily acknowledged by the education staff. Recidivism was discussed as the norm and expected. The following interview transcript extracts identify how staff normalised recidivism:

**Author:** *Is it frustrating to work in an environment, where you see young people coming back?*

**Catherine:** Yes. It's not so bad, them coming back once, even twice but when it gets a way up, you just actually realise that you haven't got through so far and they have heard it all, they have done it all and they become, possibly quite immune. One day you hope that the penny will drop, I doubt it. (26.04.07)

Another member of staff indicated:

The reality is, for some of these kids they are going to have to come back two or three times to go through the process, the learning process. You can't smugly stand up and say, rehabilitation and reducing offending, I'll cure you the first time you are here and I will never see you again, that would be foolish. (**Ian:** 17.05.07)

Despite the common expectation that young people would re-offend, most staff at interview still felt that they were making a genuine contribution to the rehabilitation of the young people. What will become evident is that staff tended to conceive of rehabilitation beyond its relationship with recidivism.

#### *Rehabilitation and the 'Good Lives Model'*

Ward and Maruna (2007) suggest a model of rehabilitation that emerges from and compliments the risk/need model of rehabilitation. While it remains important for criminal justice agencies to pursue a model of rehabilitation that reduces the likelihood of re-offending, Ward and Maruna advocate a 'Good Lives Model' [GLM] of rehabilitation. They argue that as well as responding to the risk/need paradigm; humans are 'fundamentally social creatures, driven to find meaning in their life through social interaction and individual achievement' (Ward and Maruna, 2007:143). Rehabilitative intervention should also be fundamentally about improving the lives of those who have offended. This model advocates that rehabilitation should also address basic human needs. Ward and Maruna suggest the importance of addressing individual needs of *autonomy, relatedness and competence*.

Autonomy refers to individuals' propensity to self-regulate and organise their experiences and to function as unified, integrated beings. Relatedness refers to individuals' propensity to establish a sense of emotional connectedness to other human beings and to seek the subsequent goals of feeling loved and cared for. Competence refers to the propensity to establish a sense of mastery in one's environment, to seek challenges and increasingly to master them. (Ward and Maruna, 2007:144)

This paper presents a model of rehabilitation which reflects aspects of this Good Lives Model. Of particular significance is the notion of *relatedness*. Staff frequently discussed how building and maintaining relationships with young people was a rehabilitative pursuit as well as creating a welcoming and contrasting environment that promoted respect and pro-social values. Education staff promote a model of rehabilitation that focuses less on addressing the risks that young people pose to their communities and instead focus more on a model that attempts to improve young people's lives and compensate them for missed opportunity.

## **Research findings**

### *The model of rehabilitation put forward by custodial education staff at Forest Grove Education and Learning Centre*

From the outset education staff at Forest Grove characterised young people as having multiple and complex needs, alongside coming from turbulent and unstructured backgrounds. Staff argued that the young people tended to lack cognitive, moral, social and emotional skills; they were disenfranchised from education, lacked educational skills and often had poor relationships with teachers from formal education. Others highlighted that many young people came from difficult family backgrounds where abuse was commonplace, with some referring to histories of alcohol and substance abuse. The following extracts summarise this need perspective:

A lot of young people are very damaged in lots of ways. So if we can help them to become more rounded then that's a form of rehabilitation. I think it is very important. It's the start of a process that will go on outside. (**Catherine:** 26.04.07)

As an alternative, staff identified in interviews that they felt their role was about creating a contrasting environment that was characterised by structure and routine, where activity and achievement could be meaningful, purposeful and celebrated. In this environment, staff felt that young people could develop their social, personal and educational skills:

...we are here to give them back their own self respect as well. A lot of re-offenders have no respect for themselves, no self worth. They are out there, doing things they might not necessarily even want to do themselves but they don't think that they are capable of anything else, you know? They have no confidence. I think by coming to the school they gain confidence, they gain self respect, they gain all those... It's part of their social skills as well, where they are in a controlled environment where they are not just talking about crime and cursing and things like that. I think the school is really multi-functional and it does in a way go towards helping prevent re-offending. (**Carol:** 05.12.06)

It provides structure for the young people's day. It provides a meaningful input for the day. It is meaningful activity, which is interesting, engaging and that's sounds really stupid because most of these kids haven't been in school for couple of years. (**Betty:** 29.11.06)

Education staff tended to respond to need by employing three broad approaches, which I will argue, formed the Education/Learning Centre's rehabilitative strategy. Education staff described that they:

- Attempted to create a contrasting and pro-social environment
- Focused on building relationships with young people
- Provided opportunities for young people to acquire skills and qualifications

#### *Creating a pro-social environment*

There are a variety of studies and emerging literature that examine the potential of using a pro-social approach when working with those who have offended (Trotter, 1990; 2000; 2002; 2006; 2007; Rex, 1999; Rex and Gelsthorpe, 2002; Burnett, 2004a; 2004b; Cherry, 2005). Ultimately being pro-social involves a combination of promoting and reinforcing particular types of values that encourage a pro-social lifestyle (Cherry, 2005:20). The particular values that an institution or an education staff member would hope to instil or promote must be the same values that they are prepared to model. According to Cherry (2005:2):

Pro-social modelling refers to the process by which the worker acts as a good motivating role model in order to bring out the best in people. The worker engages the client in an empathetic relationship within which they actively reinforce pro-social behaviour and attitudes and discourage anti-social behaviour and attitudes.

The role of pro-social modelling for most staff tended to be discussed as a process designed to change, alter or challenge behaviours

and values. For most, pro-social modelling was described as an explicit strategy, rather than an implicit one. Pro-social modelling was presented as a mechanism by which staff could promote values that they felt offered young people contrasts to the perceived anti-social values that young people held and were exposed to in the community. Staff tended to identify a variety of values and behaviours that they were keen to change or challenge. For some, *swearing, shouting* and *using fists* were examples of behaviours that they hoped to challenge:

By treating them along the same level as myself; by being absolutely consistent. If they swear, I don't accept that and they accept that I don't accept it and they don't do it. There is very rarely occasions where there is a swear in here. They may well start and they will say oops sorry and they will stop, I react I suppose. I won't do it, they will never ever hear me swear. **(Frances: 15.05.07)**

Many staff argued that pro-social modelling was about creating and maintaining a consistent environment and positive culture:

In terms of pro-social modelling - I am not going to use my fists and I am not going to shout and rant and rave. One of the learning outcomes is that there are examples of Gavin sitting down and talking to [Ian] about his bad hair day. ... We slow the whole process down, let's talk about this, let's explore this. It goes pear shaped, they throw wobblers, they leave, they walk out of their rooms, they are taken out of their rooms, but I think by and large we have a culture of working with kids and supporting kids and the fact that you don't have 22 removals a day. The culture amongst the staff and the environment is a positive and supportive one and I think that it is part of what we have to do. **(Ian: 17.05.07)**

Staff argued that they modelled behaviours that they hoped young people could emulate. Staff frequently talked about having a *calming* and *positive* influence on young people.

### *Relationship building*

Wright (2006) proposed that relationship building and a caring attitude were at the 'heart of prison teaching'. The frequency with which relationship building was mentioned at interview and in general discussions with staff throughout the study suggests that relationship building was at the *heart of teaching* at Forest Grove. Staff often talked about the importance of building and maintaining relationships with young people. Evidence of this is reflected in conversations with young people who highlighted that they felt that teachers took them seriously, listened to them and helped maintain a positive and enjoyable learning environment:



**Author:** *What makes the teachers in here different from those teachers in school?*

**Barry:** Cos the teachers in here take us serious

**Warren:** Teachers in school think they are a lot better than us

**Barry:** In here they work with ye. See in school, they just stand up and beat your self down, ... and then go home more or less

**Warren:** Teachers in here when you do the work, they have a bit of craic with ye have a bit of a laugh, while you are working

**Barry:** Teachers in here do show that they want to help ye, teachers in school they just don't, I dunno?

**Author:** *You say teachers in here do want to help you?*

**Warren:** Teachers in schools have a lot of more people to look after, in here there are 3 or 4 people in a class in school there are 20 to 25 people in a class

**Barry:** Teachers respect you in here

**Warren:** Aye (08.03.07)

Relationship building appeared to act as the central mechanism which maintained a pro-social environment, allowing the staff to both engage and manage the young people whilst they were attending the Education and Learning Centre. Trotter (2006) describes the role of someone who works with involuntary clients - such as a young person in custody - as having a dual social control and welfare role (Trotter, 2006:87). This duality is reflected in the following transcript extract:

You couldn't have a class, you couldn't do anything if you didn't have some sort of relationship with the young people in here. The main thing is the trust, that you are not gonna laugh at them or that you will listen to what they have to say and respect what they have to say otherwise nothing will work. (**Frances:** 15.05.07)

Relationship building techniques often involved listening, talking, being respectful, being consistent, using humour and being empathetic. Staff explained that they would often talk to the young people, informally counsel, and give advice about their future plans.

They all have days where maybe they have had a phone call from their Mum saying she is not signing bail or whatever... But they are gonna come into the classroom and they are going to tell you that, they are going to want to talk to you about that. They are gonna tell you why they are upset. They are very open about their feelings, well, most of them are. Having a positive relationship has a positive effect on them and the whole aspect of their education and the education centre. (**Sharon:** 26.04.07)

Some staff explained that once they had built a relationship with the young people they were able to engage them, motivate them to learn and achieve. Some felt that they were able to engage young people directly about their offending behaviours:

It is one thing to build a relationship, but on the other, are we using that type of relationship to help, transform the young person? **(Bruce: 23.11.06)**

Relationship building was also discussed by many staff members as a means of maintaining control in the classroom. For many staff, having good relationships with the young people meant that there was less disruption and discipline issues. Several members of staff identified how they used relationships they had developed to manage the behaviour of other young people, especially those new to the centre:

I think the interaction and the relationship building that you have with young people is probably the most important part of it, even in front of education and control. If you build a relationship, control becomes easier and therefore it opens the door for educating. Engagement, having respect for each other... the kids will do stuff and ask you can they do this rather than charging on, if you set those simple rules but not sternly or a dictatorial thing. It's just letting them get to know each other. **(Robbie: 30.11.06)**

### *Gaining skills and qualifications is rehabilitative*

...it has been more about trying to engage them than actually doing anything meaningful. A lot of work has been put in to just trying to get them there and be engaged. **(Betty: 29.11.06)**

According to Hurry and Moriarty (2004) those in custody are more likely to have poor qualifications, likely to have been excluded from school and to have truanted. They are more likely to have significant literacy and numeracy needs and likely to experience unemployment. Desistance literature (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Saylor and Gaes, 1997; Berridge, et al., 2001; Hayward et al., 2004; Haslewood-Pocsik and McMahon, 2004) identifies education, exclusion, low attainment and unemployment as significant predictors of criminality. According to Berridge et al. (2001:vi) exclusion from school has the potential to 'loosen a young person's affiliation and commitment to a conventional way of life'. It therefore stands to reason that addressing educational needs and striving to re-engage or keep young people engaged (YJB, 2007) in education may impact on their offending behaviour as well as providing opportunities to gain skills and qualifications in order to find employment or training. Addressing skills and qualifications is presented as a rehabilitative pursuit,

by providing and assisting those who offend to find education, training and employment (ETE) opportunities after custody and thus not re-offend.

However the dominant model of custodial education discussed by education staff members tended to focus more on re-engaging young people with education and learning whilst in custody. As a result education staff talked less about preparing young people for life after custody. Many staff identified that the role of custodial education was more about immediate enrichment, providing structure while in custody, providing stimulus throughout the day, reacquainting the young people with school and the classroom (Stephenson, 2007) and providing the young people with varied educational opportunities and experiences. Education in custody is presented as an opportunity to *redress missed opportunities*:

The first thing I was told was engagement which to me is another word for relationship building. It is offering the opportunity for the kids to better themselves. I love the fact that they are learning new skills that they are willing to do because it is practical. The practical thing seems to be getting bigger and bigger. Its things like, woodwork, mechanics, catering, horticulture, all hands-on stuff. It does give them an opportunity to try stuff that they have never ever tried before. (**Robbie:** 30.11.06)

Similarly:

The role of education [in custody] is to try to re-integrate the kids into education in a lot of cases, because a lot of our kids come from a place where they don't really engage in education. Some of them have been out for such a long time. So part of our role is re-engage them in some sort of meaningful and structured work. (**Caroline:** 21.06.07)

What becomes apparent after examining these transcript extracts is that most staff tended to view educational achievement as a rehabilitative process in itself. Evidence of rehabilitation is presented as: young people coming to education again and engaging in *any* educational activity. The notion of educational re-engagement and rehabilitation become intertwined. Staff tended to characterise young people as entirely disengaged from education and therefore were able to present any type of educational engagement as successful endeavour:

I think basically we are dealing with kids that are educationally disadvantaged, that are educationally challenging, and I think it is even a success for some of them if you can get them to sit on a seat. If you can get them to tune in for 15-20 minutes of a 40 minute period or you can get them to actually interact with you in a pleasant manner where they can put a wee bit of effort in to their work and basically that you can show them that this is working you

towards a certain goal. It has to be short term goals for our kids.  
(Daniel: 05.12.06)

*Rehabilitation is confined to the custodial experience*

What emerges from examining the rehabilitative approach proffered by education staff is the emphasis placed on engaging young people while they are in custody. Staff *mostly* conceived of rehabilitation as a short term process, confined to evidencing changes while the young people were in custody. Coupled with this, the prevailing view amongst staff was that young people would re-offend after leaving custody and would return to the centre.

The aims of education in custody according to Youth Justice Agency Website (YJA, 2008) appear to present a model of custodial education that focuses on engaging young people whilst in custody, more so than preparing young people for leaving custody. The rehabilitative potential of custodial education is presented as a temporary, short term process:

- Provide an enjoyable and worthwhile time
- Improve basic skills – reading and writing, number work
- Help young person pass exams
- Learn new things
- Build friendships
- Build confidence

With staff, there was *some* discussion on the rehabilitative potential of education in the context of impacting on recidivism and preparing young people for their lives after custody. However in most cases, discussions about education as a rehabilitative pursuit tended to focus on addressing the need/inadequacy conditions of their entry into custody and less on the potential of education to impact on their lives once they left custody.

Many of the staff appeared to focus on providing evidence of how a positive, caring and pro-social environment impacted on the young people during their stay. Table 1 highlights the type of rhetoric that staff used to describe the young people since coming into custody.

**Table 1: Indications of Rehabilitation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settled</li> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Learning new skills</li> <li>• Happy</li> <li>• Re-engaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing</li> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Achieving</li> <li>• Stabilising</li> <li>• Gaining self-respect</li> </ul>
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Robbie, a staff member, described rehabilitation as a *change in lifestyle* and felt that the Education and Learning Centre was capable of achieving this;

however he did not think this *change* was able to be maintained outside of custody:

Rehabilitation could mean change their lifestyle, we can do that. You see so many times in here, where the kids do come in and buy into it, they are actually rehabilitated while they are in working in here or while they are in the centre. The behavioural patterns are broken, they don't have the same chance to do what they want to do, but that is ok in a controlled environment, not ultra controlled but in a closed environment where they have to exist, this is the way to do it. Yes they do rehabilitate. But, once they are released out that front gate, the support services aren't there to make sure that they are continuing to do that. (**Robbie:** 30.11.06)

Education staff appeared to adopt a position that talked about change and transformation in an orthodox manner but that rehabilitation was confined to the custodial experience. Adopting this position allows education staff to avoid using recidivism as an indicator of efficacy. Education staff argue that rehabilitation can also be conceived as a temporary process that can take place in custody. Change or transformation occurs because staff felt that they could create an environment that contrasts with many of the experiences that young people have had prior to coming into custody.

## **Discussion**

This paper argues that the notion of rehabilitation is contested and as suggested by Raynor and Robinson (2005) *problematic*. A variety of perspectives have emerged in this paper that demonstrate that rehabilitative terminology can be used flexibly. Ward and Maruna (2007) identify how academics and practitioners tend to use a variety of terminologies such as *resettle*, *reintegrate* and *restore* to describe rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is used to describe a process aimed at changing an individual, *transforming* (Reuss, 1999) an individual and even healing an individual - as much of the medicalised rhetoric suggests (Duguid, 2000). Rehabilitation to others is a process that should be less about trying to do onto others or change individuals and more about creating or facilitating situations where individuals can desist from criminality themselves. In this case, rehabilitation is about helping individuals change on their own volition (Farrall and Bowling, 1999; Maruna, 2001). Others have argued that rehabilitating offenders may not *work* and that almost no interventions have any appreciable affect on offending or re-offending behaviour (Martinson, 1974). Rehabilitation has also been described as a process aimed at preventing re-offending and as such, recidivism figures have become the measure of rehabilitative efficacy

(Reuss, 1999). Some are critical of this perspective describing this 'What Works' perspective as narrow (Warner, 2005).

Some advocate that many of those who offend do not reason well, have cognitive difficulties, have trouble making decisions and are morally deficient (Ross and Fabiano, 1985). As a result, addressing an offender's cognitive and moral reasoning capacities could be considered rehabilitative. Others have argued that offenders typically lack educational, personal and social skills (Berridge, et al., 2001; Hayward et al., 2004; Haslewood-Pocsik and McMahon, 2004), and therefore providing opportunities for skills development in these areas can be rehabilitative. These strategies tend to reflect modern criminal justice systems influenced by a 'What Works' perspective or an evidenced-based approach. Modern custodial facilities tend to concentrate on education and cognitive development as the main rehabilitative strategy aimed at tackling offending and re-offending behaviour.

Others (Ward and Maruna, 2007) have argued that rehabilitation is not just about reducing crime or addressing and minimising risk and should also be about addressing fundamental human needs and improving lives. The views of the custodial educators in this paper contribute to this perspective.

## **Conclusion**

An additional theme that has emerged from this paper has been not so much about trying to define or argue for a concrete definition of rehabilitation; instead, what has become more interesting is how academics, agencies and practitioners talk about rehabilitation. It has become evident that rehabilitation is not only a contested definition, but also has a particular elasticity.

This elasticity was particularly evident in discussions with education staff at Forest Grove Education and Learning Centre. Overall, staff talked about rehabilitation from an orthodox perspective, as a process designed to bring about change. However, for the most part, staff did not talk about rehabilitation in terms of impacting upon recidivism as is reflected in much of the literature. Most staff expected young people to return to the centre because of re-offending. Yet despite this, staff still felt that they were involved in the rehabilitation of the young people. Interviews with education staff identified that their rehabilitative strategy comprised of three aspects:

1. Creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming, pro-social and alternative space for young people who have offended
2. Actively pursuing relationship building between young people and staff as the principle mechanism for maintaining the rehabilitative environment

### 3. Facilitating achievement and skill development

Crucially, education staff described a short-term process that was confined to and occurred during the custodial period. Most staff described that they could evidence change or transformation (Reuss, 1999) that occurred in custody, but that they felt that rehabilitation for most young people, *stopped at the gates*. Most staff felt that young people faced a wide variety of personal and social issues in their communities. The literature may identify these issues as criminogenic risks (Farrington, 1997), but staff tended to translate these risks into personal and social needs. As a result, staff tended to describe young people as troubled, damaged, under-confident, having low self-esteem, having fractured relationships, and not achieving. In turn, adopting this perspective the staff tended to focus a rehabilitative strategy on addressing the conditions of entry into custody rather than the preparation for leaving custody.

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