



MODEL UNITED NATIONS

SOCOMUN XXXII

NOT FRESHMAN D

TOPIC: ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN
PRISONS



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NOT Freshman D Access to Education in Prisons

Hello delegates! My name is Sophie Polay and I am excited to be your chair for SOCOMUN XXII. I am currently a Junior at Santa Margarita Catholic High School, and this is my third year of being in Model United Nations. I love MUN and have experience in a variety of committees! I have worked traditional committees like general assembly and security council, as well as specialized committees such as the International Olympics Committee, the International Bioethics Committee (where I represented a scientist, not a country), and even represented the Queen of Troy in a Trojan War crisis committee! MUN has helped me become a much more confident public speaker and become more aware and involved in current pressing world issues. Outside of MUN I run cross country and track for Santa Margarita. I am looking forward to meeting you all and hearing your unique solutions!

The goal of SOCOMUN is to be a fun and educational conference for new delegates. Thorough this conference, SOCOMUN aims to teach students about the typical procedures and flow of MUN conferences. Committee will start with roll call, where the chair will call each country (remember, you are representing your assigned country and their view on the topic!) and you will answer “present,” or “present and voting.” Present and voting means that you cannot abstain from voting. From there, the committee will open a speakers list, where delegates raising their placards will have the opportunity to present their ideas and solutions. After each speaker, the chair will entertain two comments of thirty seconds each where other delegates can give their thoughts on the previous speaker’s speech. Throughout the conference, delegates may motion for formal consultations and informal consultations. In formal consultations, the delegate who motioned for it will announce a topic to discuss, the overall time allotted for the moderated consultation, and the time allowed for each individual speaker. For example, the United States may motion for a 5-minute formal consultation, with a 30 second individual speaking time, on the topic of educating prisoners in developing nations. If this motion passes, ten delegates who raised their placard will give a speech on this specific topic. Moreover, informal consultations give delegates the opportunity to meet with other delegates from a similar region or with similar ideas to discuss solutions and create resolutions. Delegates will be expected to collaborate with other delegates to create a resolution document by the end of committee. These resolutions will be presented to the committee and voted on. If you have any questions about the topic, researching, or committee procedure, do not hesitate to reach out at socomunnotd@gmail.com!

E4JMUN Resources from the UNODC

Through the E4JMUN project, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has provided some excellent resources for students involved in Model United Nations to learn more about the UNODC’s mandate areas. Our topic, Access to Education in Prisons, falls under the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice mandate area. The following link provides insightful background information and additional resources for delegates to use.

<https://www.unodc.org/e4j/mun/introduction.html>

In specific, delegates may find the Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders helpful for this particular committee. It is a



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lengthy report, so it might be helpful to Ctrl + F “education” to streamline your research.
<https://www.unodc.org/e4j/mun/resources/crime-prevention-and-criminal-justice.html>

Background

In recent years, a movement to reform aspects of the criminal justice system has received a lot of attention to lower crime rates, reduce costs associated with incarceration, and promote equality and fairness. Implementing education in prison systems has proven to be vital in reducing reincarceration rates and helping to socially reintegrate citizens post-release. Providing education in prisons is not only beneficial to incarcerated individuals but also for society. A study by the RAND Corporation has found that for every dollar spent on education in prisons, four to five dollars are saved on re-incarceration costs. In addition, educating prisoners helps to achieve the larger United Nations Sustainable Development Goal #4, Quality Education by providing education opportunities to those who may not have had access to a proper education. First, implementing educational programs in prisons helps reduce the rates of recidivation. Recidivation is defined as the tendency of a convicted criminal to relapse into criminal behavior, following three years after their release. In a study of the efficacy of educational programs in prison, it was shown that incarcerated individuals who participate in these programs are 48% less likely to be recidivated than those who do not. It is paramount to reduce recidivism rates because it helps in stabilizing the lives of formerly incarcerated people and their families, reducing the costs associated with reincarceration, and reducing the overall crime rate.

Moreover, incarcerated individuals who receive an education also have an easier transition to reintegrating themselves into society. Not only do they gain proficiency in subjects like math, reading, and writing, but individuals may also receive vocational training, which is training specific to a job or field. All of which improve employability. The employment rates of formerly incarcerated individuals post-release were found to be 34% higher for those who participated in an educational program. Formerly incarcerated individuals without education often find themselves without a job, and consequently without the financial stability to support themselves post-release. This makes their reintegration into society much more challenging and increases the likelihood of committing additional criminal acts. Educating individuals who have been formerly imprisoned also helps to erase the social stigma associated with prisoners in the community and workforce.

When discussing access to education in prisons, it is necessary to address some of the concerns that arise with it. To start, many developing nations are without equal access to education. As a result, many questions arise as to why incarcerated individuals should get this opportunity. However, it is important to note that individuals in developing countries often do not have access to education because they live in a remote region and cannot access it. Incarcerated people do not face these challenges. Additionally, to promote equality and literacy worldwide, it is necessary to provide education to all, regardless of their background. Moreover, some argue that incarcerated individuals may use their knowledge in negative ways or pose a threat to educators. With the correct safety measures in place, however, this is a non-issue. In short, while there are some concerns about providing access to education in prisons, it is overall extremely beneficial and essential.



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The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has worked to assist countries in reforming their prison systems and applying human rights principles, such as access to education, within these systems. Already, the UNODC has issued mandates and recommendations for countries on how to support offenders, address reoffenders, and improve social reintegration success. Many of these mandates include clauses on the necessity and effectiveness of providing educational programs in prisons and strategies on how to do so.

Possible Solutions

When creating solutions, remember to be creative and original! Make sure to keep in mind your own country's policy, the feasibility of the solution, and how it will affect the issue. It is important to be well researched and knowledgeable on both the background of this topic and what has already been done to address this issue to create comprehensive solutions. Also, try to create multiple solutions, including short term solutions that can be achieved in the near future, as well as long term solutions which may take years, or even decades, to fully implement. In addition, please note that at SOCOMUN, funding is not considered to be a pressing issue as it is assumed that the UN's 5th budgetary Committee and the World Bank would sponsor resolutions that have been passed by the committee. However, with that in mind, look for Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that work with this topic. Partnering with NGOs who have similar goals makes your solutions stronger and more feasible.

This expansive and complex topic allows for delegates to come up with many unique solutions! This topic synopsis will cover some basic solutions to help delegates start forming their own ideas.

First off, raising awareness among the public is beneficial for almost all issues. In regard to access to education in prisons, this topic still has many social stigmas surrounding it that need to be changed. For example, citizens may be opposed to providing incarcerated individuals with educational programs and do not understand the benefits to society this opportunity poses. Many do not want their tax dollars to be spent on programs they find "unimportant and ineffective." Teaching citizens about how inexpensive yet beneficial educational programs are in prisons will help change this stigma. In addition, many employers are hesitant or refuse to hire individuals with a criminal past. They do not understand that hiring these individuals is not only safe, but lowers crime rates and recidivism. To address this, in person seminars, and online videos and articles can help raise awareness and spread truths about the many benefits an education in prison provides.

Another solution could be working with NGOs to further develop programs that work to get educational material to prisons. A recent study found that only 14% of students in a prison education program have access to modern technology. Partnerships with NGOs can help make this technology more available and provide traditional resources like textbooks and books to prisons. In addition, it is crucial to reach incarcerated individuals in prisons globally. At this time, the education programs that are instituted in prisons are typically only in wealthier countries and regions. To best reduce recidivism rates and allow for better social reintegration, these programs must be expanded to all prisons.

Lastly, in order to provide education for prisoners, there needs to be educators to oversee this process. These educators would need to be educated on how to best teach and support the unique needs of an incarcerated person. A training program for these specialized teachers would be helpful in this situation. This training program would provide training sessions for educators looking to work in prisons and provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively carry out their job. These specialized teachers are paramount to an incarcerated



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individual receiving a meaningful and beneficial education, so it is necessary that they are educated and knowledgeable themselves.

Questions to Consider

Delegates are not required to answer these questions directly and should be used to gather a deeper understanding of the topic.

1. What past actions (if any) has your country taken to improve their prison systems?
2. Does your country support providing access to education for incarcerated individuals?
What is the status of quality education in your country?
3. How will you ensure that prisoners are receiving a quality education and have the necessary materials to learn?
4. Which individuals should have access to this education? Should everybody have an opportunity, or will their behavior, crimes committed, and assigned sentence affect their chances of receiving an education?
5. What measures need to be taken in order to protect the educators of prisoners and ensure that this gained knowledge is used for good?
6. How will you take into account the past successes and failures of programs that work to provide education in prisons?
7. Are there social stigmas preventing public support of educating prisoners in your country/worldwide? How will you address these stigmas?
8. What are the benefits to providing access to education in prisons? What are the drawbacks?



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