Book Review

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Book Review

**Introduction**

The practice of criminal justice has taken the toll across the whole nation; this has expanded the cost and amount of taxes and resources, with little or no benefit of evidence. The Evidence-based practice is the balanced, objective, and accountable application of modern researches and top presented data for guiding the decisions related to policy and practice, such that it makes the improved outcomes for its consumers (Lum & Koper, 2017). Consequently, evidence-based approach for assessment of cost efficiency will place justice and crime in the middle of every decision- making. Where it has resulted in less cost-efficiency, it also decreased the accountability of government, and most importantly it lowered the opportunities for lessening the crime rate and achieving justice. However, the authority makes no occurrence of such assessments and instead they preferably invest in police and prison. Incarceration is the solution to no problem.

In his book ‘*Out-of-Control Criminal Justice,’* Daniel Mears presents a better solution to this problem in the form of evidence-based practice in criminology and justice. Rather than remaining contended on the justice situation, Mears proposed a better application for improving the policy process and for this he focused on research. Research is to be done in every part of the policy-making and criminal justice department. The purpose of criminal justice is to improve the safety and security of the public and reduce the crime rate. Mears viewed the failure of the policy process as encompassing criminal justice along with the corrections in laws, practices, programs, and decision-making. This book review will give an insight into the better policy processes and system in criminal justice proposed by Mears.

**Discussion**

The system solution devised by Mears refers towards the broad range of whole criminal justice system which includes rules and laws, practices and programs, along with the policy-making decisions by jurors, judges, and practitioners. He rightly simplified this system into the hierarchy, evaluation, and implementation of theory, its impact, and outcomes which further involve the cost-efficiency and rightful benefits. He is also not exaggerating where he intends to take the stakeholders into the ‘system improvement solution' which is an evidence-based solution (Lum & Koper, 2017). According to this process, it will bring all the potential stakeholders of criminal justice, i.e., from administrators to law-makers and implementers, together in the implementation of the policy on the daily bases. He talked in his book about the policies which are primarily based on empirical evidence and secondly on the policy process of multi-stakeholders. It will further improve all the aspects and factors of criminal system of justice.

Mears presented the evaluation hierarchy in the five-step process as firstly the needs evaluation, then evaluation of theory, outcomes, and cost efficiency. This raised the arguments related to the need for policy, the theoretical part of the plan, the processes related to policy, the consequence of the policy, and lastly the worth of policies. For this, according to Mears, a developmental paradigm is necessary to take place which will ensure the accomplishment of each stage which will lead towards the next stage. It also calls for adherence to the policy processes and maintains the effectiveness and integrity of the procedure (Welsh & Harris, 2016). Mears emphasized the institutionalization of the process into the policy discussions and decision-making processes on a daily bases. It is useful only when truly research-based and deliberative. The Evidence-based practice is the balanced, objective, and accountable application of modern researches and top presented data for guiding the decisions related to policy and practice, such that it makes the improved outcomes for its consumers.

Mears viewed the failure of the policy process as encompassing criminal justice along with the corrections in laws, practices, programs, and decision-making. This failure stems from the failure of multiple systems, and that most important is the loss in acquiring the system-based approach in understanding and catering to the crime and justice. The others may include, failing in the sustainable and continuous involvement of various stakeholders necessary for guiding about research and policy process. The breakdown of continuous institutionalization of evaluation and improvement of policies is a significant factor too.

The purpose of criminal justice is to improve the safety and security of the public and reduce the crime rate. For this, the justice system designs numerous tools and policies in order to safeguard the public and their rights. However, an efficient and productive approach in this regard is to use the least costly and helpful tools for devising and implementing justice policies. Mears argued that the justice system in America is all about punishment and lack of this in the system gave rise to the crime rate. Instead of making a department for public safety which targets the crime, instead, they center their efforts in making policies regarding punishment (Welsh & Harris, 2016). Correctly described by Mears, this attitude is not improving public safety, as it is not reducing the crime. He points towards rooting out the cause of crime which is much helpful in combatting crime than policies regarding prosecution and punishment.

Obviously for an issue to get solved, there is a need to go in-depth to its root cause and then by eliminating such reasons only then peace or tranquility is achieved (Welsh & Harris, 2016). The example given by Mears in his book regarding the parenting of a child is justifiable; as if a country doesn't pay attention to the upbringing of a child will raise more children with low self-control and higher crime rates. He is not entirely against the idea of punishment, but all he is emphasizing here is about the making policies regarding the occurrence of crimes not on their after-effects. He rightly stated that ‘not giving enough attention to the cause of crime is itself a cause of crime,' as he didn't mean to target the criminologists here, in fact, he persisted over the reasons of crimes occurring in specific areas. Therefore, this requires extensive and continuous research done in certain areas. This gives rise to the overemphasis on the interventions and sanctions lacking a piece of solid scientific evidence constituting the issue of the system, such that it focuses and spend resources on the areas which do not need an implementation of such interventions (Lum & Koper, 2017).

The depletion of resources goes in vain when a policy is giving useless expenditures, which are not required in the policy processes or unnecessary processes. In Mears book, it has been extensively explored why such issues arise in the criminal justice system. According to him, such situations occur where a justice system allows the change to take place without carefully assessing the empirically based risks which are dispersion and reason of crime and the measured cost and outcomes of the policy. Furthermore, this also arises due to the bias in the judgment of the judge or policymakers who give privilege to one person or group over the other due to racial, sex, ethnic or cultural discrimination (Mears, Cochran, & Lindsey, 2016). Thus the interventions apparently seem so helping but they are not, yet they increase the cost and divert the efforts and resources from the place which needs it more.

Mears highlighted the issue of mass incarceration in his book, which is very correctly targeted, as this issue is on the national level and it contributes a lot to the higher crime rates. He argued that the reliability over incarceration for long periods of time brings no good to the criminal and staying in prison also do not reduces the cause or rate of the crime (Braswell, McCarthy, & McCarthy, 2017). There is no empirical research or evidence based on this practice as to why these prisoners are punished and jailed for more extended periods or any amount of time. In turn, this also depletes the resources and time of the criminal justice department as well. As incarceration calls out for expenses for the prison, prisoners and their maintenance, thus it brings no good to the criminal and staying in prison also do not reduces the cause or rate of the crime.

The author termed the word efficiency regarding the efficiency of cost and resources and efforts for achieving the benefits, least expensive outcomes of the policy. If the monetized value of a system and its interventions is lesser than the interest then it this policy is considered as efficient. For an analysis of significant efficiency, it requires the law-makers to make a framing analysis for the cost efficiency and deduce the best-suited scenario in this regard. Thus, an approach based on scientific evidence is needed for the assessment of competence this assessment will also figure out the other aspects of the society, such as unemployment or poverty, violence, and anger, etc. However, the authority makes no occurrence of such assessments and instead they preferably invest in police and prison. Consequently, evidence-based approach for evaluation of cost efficiency will place justice and crime in the middle of every decision- making.

The author further provides solutions in his book regarding the cost-efficiency, justice, accountability, and crime. There is an ample amount of evidence which is associated with the problems in the concept of policies regarding criminal justice. Also, there is quite a lot of evidence on the issue of lack of research on justice problems (Braswell, McCarthy, & McCarthy, 2017). All these concerns are deteriorating the justice system, so incorporation of evidence-based practice is a necessity according to the author (Cole, Smith & DeJong, 2018). This concern is the about the right time when every field of this world is reliant on the practice of evidence or system-based approach, then why not the criminal justice. It is unfair and unjust to treat a justice system on bogus and worn-out ways.

Hence, the author argues over the solution of the system improvement which is particularly a huge disjuncture between the policy and research and creates the central organizing system for efficiency, safety, justice, and accountability. He gave the idea of coupling the research needs with the policy process and in this way it will ensure that people who need certain information will get real and on time knowledge. The stakeholders, scholars, and policymakers are primarily involved in this step. Scholars are there to hypothesize and test a theory and stakeholders to evaluate and implement.

The improvement of the system focuses on the necessary three activities for the solutions as proposed by Mears in his book, the first one being the research, second is multi-stakeholders, and third is evidence-based approaches. These are important for the institutionalization, evaluation, processing, and implementation of the policies, practices, and programs. This further takes place through focusing on main goals, refraining from making huge mistakes, prioritizing the low-risk and high-bet alterations, leveraging the loops for feedback and lastly evaluating and monitoring the activities of the system (Cole, Smith & DeJong, 2018). However, this calls out for challenges along with the benefits of system improvement solution, which arises due to its implementation.

Mears described benefits related to avoiding serious mistakes, producing higher responsiveness to the communities and especially victims. It also decreases the racial and ethnic differences, increases public awareness in understanding the crime and justice and improves the thoughtfulness on the causes and nature of crime and justice. However, the risk factors attached to this problem is that it may require a lot of effort and struggle to implement systematic solutions to the criminal justice system. Therefore, Mears proposed the solution as if the best way out to these issues and that is system based or empirical approach towards criminal justice. These approaches are not only easily attainable, but they are the best way to improve policy practice and processes.

The author concludes his book on the justice and public safety which according to him need the recapitulation of the system-focused solutions towards similar strategies. He also emphasized the institutionalization of the process into the policy discussions and decision-making processes on an everyday base. Likewise, its use will bring advantages and benefits to the advanced research and theory for criminal justice. It will also help and support the communities, societies and federal and state government to bring the ‘criminal justice under control (Cole, Smith & DeJong, 2018). Relatively remaining contended on the justice situation, Mears proposed a better application for improving the policy process and for this he focused on research. Lastly, there is an ample amount of evidence which is associated with the problems in the concept of policies regarding criminal justice.

**Conclusion**

Concluding on the findings of this book review, that an evidence-based approach, i.e., policies and research towards improving a system, is essential in organizing or civilizing an institution. Rather than remaining contended on the justice situation, Mears proposed a better application for improving the policy process and for this he focused on research. Thus the systematic solution devised by Mears refers towards the broad range of whole criminal justice system which includes rules and laws, practices and programs, along with the policy-making decisions by jurors, judges, and practitioners. He talked in his book about the policies which are primarily based on empirical evidence and secondly on the policy process of multi-stakeholders. Mears presented the evaluation hierarchy in the five-step process as firstly the needs evaluation, then evaluation of theory, outcomes, and cost efficiency. This raised the arguments related to need for policy, theoretical part of the policy, the processes related to policy, the consequence of the policy, and lastly the worth of policies. There is an ample amount of evidence which is associated with the problems in the concept of policies regarding criminal justice. Consequently, evidence-based approach for assessment of cost efficiency will place justice and crime in the middle of every decision- making. Mears emphasized the institutionalization of the process into the policy discussions and decision-making processes on a daily bases.

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