

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the award of PhD

**How young offenders interpret, construct and engage
in education from statutory school to post-16 provision**

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Abstract

How young offenders interpret, construct and engage in education over time and in response to various educational contexts is examined. Three conceptual positions were taken 1) criminogenic perspectives were rejected and young offenders were reconceptualised as learners first and offenders second, 2) young offenders were positioned as neither children nor adults but developing adolescents 3) young offenders were conceptualised as similar to their non-offending peers with similar educational trajectories and outcomes.

A three stage qualitative design was adopted. 25 young people took part in the study and 53 pieces of data were analysed, 14 young people completed three interviews (2 structured and 1 depth) and 11 young people depth interviews alone. The thesis took a thematic analytical approach as used in psychology informed by interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Building upon models of learning with mainstream young people of a similar age, Bloomer (1997, 1999) and Hodkinson's (1997) concepts of studentship and learning careers were combined with C611Tianand Heridry's (1990, 1999) focal theory of adolescence. These theories were tested and proved robust, providing an explanatory framework for young offenders in educational contexts.

The institutional and psychological conditions under which young offenders disengage from school are identified. How interpretation of and engagement in education changes from school to post-16 education is discussed as well as the role of provision in the context of future aims and objectives. Based on the findings, the relationship between the consequences of disengagement and

engagement is explored. The Self-Education Alignment model is presented, representing a tentative exploration of how young offenders in education could potentially be theorised.

It is concluded that this thesis was successful in breaking new ground by moving past a fragmented understanding of young offenders in education and providing an integrated account of interpretation, construction and engagement over time and educational context.