A person with a long, flowing white beard and hair, wearing a white robe, stands on a stage. They are holding a large, colorful peace sign in their right hand. The background is dark with some red lighting. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# JOURNAL OF PRISON EDUCATION & REENTRY

Vol 4  
No 1  
June 2017

*Dialogue for researchers & practitioners*

*Scene from "Robin in da Hood," produced by the PEETA project in the Netherlands*

## About the Cover Art:

### The PEETA Project 2010 - 2012

#### Using creativity to offer a brighter future

It's a vicious circle. A lack of skills needed for employment leads to offending and a custodial sentence. Then a criminal record leads to yet poorer employment prospects and continued re-offending. This tragic cycle is often made yet more difficult to break by the fact that many offenders' complicated backgrounds mean they respond poorly to traditional, academic methods of learning. It is, however, an area where creative-based approaches are being increasingly recognised for their ability to engage offenders, improve interpersonal skills, increase self esteem and broadly generate positive results.

#### The PEETA Project and the SEPE award

Over the course of two years several prisons in Europe participated in the PEETA Project. Prisoners took part in arts projects that were structured around the strengthening of soft skills: **Personal Effectiveness and Employability skills Through the Arts**. After successful completion, the participants were rewarded with a SEPE certificate, an award to **Support Employability and Personal Effectiveness** such as good communication, a pro-active work attitude and the ability to self reflect.

This is specifically designed to help people from a variety of backgrounds gain recognition for the skills they have developed. For many participants, it was the first qualification they earned and a benchmark for both themselves and others in their determination to change their circumstances. The SEPE certificate is issued by Pearson and acknowledged within the European Qualification Framework.

The images show the theatre play titled 'Rob in da Hood', that the Dutch PEETA team delivered in 2012 in the prison in Krimpen aan den IJssel in the Netherlands.

-Pris Tatipikalawan and Ed Santman



**FEATURE--VIGNETTE**

## **Democracy in a Singapore Prison, 1825-1873**

by THOM GEHRING

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The British acquired Singapore in 1825, and used it, in part, as a penal colony for convicts transported from India—much as they used Australia as penal colonies for convicts transported from England. The ticket-of-leave system (parole) was used to regulate prison routines. Prisoners who earned marks for good behavior would be released early. That system was later named reformatory prison discipline. (McNair, J.R.A., and Bayliss, W.D. [1899]. *Prisoners Their Own Warders: A Record of the Convict Prison at Singapore in the Straits Settlements Established 1825, Discontinued 1873, Together with a cursory history of the Convict Establishment at Bencoolen, Penang and Malacca from the Year 1797*. Westminster, England: Archibald Constable and Co., p. 5). The authorities had some discretion regarding sentences and punishments, so they established various classes of prisoners, subject a range of parole sanctions. A few of the convicts were deemed ready for immediate parole. (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 14). Some of the officers (warders) were civilian employees, but “an attempt was. . . made to enlist the services of well-trained convicts to oversee their fellow-prisoners;” prison regulations were revised accordingly (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 19).

The two-storied prison was large, had separate quarters for female prisoners, and had such features as guards’ quarters, sleeping areas, and a hospital. However, it was poorly ventilated and not well equipped with cooking places and latrines. The biggest problem was that different groups from India did not behave well when confined in the same space. Hence, the plan for using the ticket-of-leave system to have groups of convicts live in their own quarters, sometimes at great distances from the prison. They came in to report and pick up supplies periodically. This is probably why the prison was labeled democratic. (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, pp. 19-46). Eventually, the whole system of civilian officers was abolished (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 19).

Convicts were engaged in different occupations during their incarceration. They were most remembered for those that directly related to the safety and prosperity of the Singapore colony. These included stone quarrying (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 11) and making bricks (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, pp. 110, 174); cutting and burning down jungle vegetation, working on the roads, and leveling ground for roads and construction sites (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 15); erecting public buildings such as a cathedral (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 16), Government House, (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, pp. 101-104), and light houses (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, pp. 60, 62). Some helped rid the area of dangerous animals—killing wild boars (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 25), and trapping tigers (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, pp. 52, 131). They dispersed Chinese rioters (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. pp 67-68) and worked as firefighters (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 42). Some prisoners were assigned to be orderlies and servants (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 42). Most were able to arrange for some extramural employment in the outside community so they could save money for their new life after release (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, pp. 108-112). After parole they often took jobs as “artizans, cow keepers, cart drivers, and the like” in local communities (McNair and Bayliss, 1899, p. 4).

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RESEARCH PAPER

## ‘Learning to be More Human’: Perspectives of Respect by Young Irish People in Prison

by EMMANUEL O’GRADY  
Mary Immaculate College

**Abstract:** *Respect is a fundamental aspect of how human beings relate to each other and, arguably, is a significant factor in the relationship between student and teacher. For incarcerated adults, the relationships they foster with their teachers (and by extension the respect or disrespect cultivated within it) often have a considerable impact on their educative development. This research explores how respect, and disrespect, is perceived to be communicated within prison education by 13 students and 13 teachers in an Irish Young Offenders institution. The values at the core of prison educators’ practice and their capacity to promote self-respect within their students emerged as central to this cultivation of respect. The place of socialisation within these educative relationships also emerged as a prominent factor and is discussed in relation to MacMurray’s (2012) assertion that the primary function of education is ‘learning to be human’.*

**Keywords:** *Respect; educative relationship; self-respect; rehabilitation.*

This article explores the practice of respect within prison education. It aspires to answer the questions: - how is respect communicated between a teacher and young Irish people in prison? And what are the educative implications for rehabilitation in such an institution? This research is based on interviews with young Irish people in prison and their teachers about how they believe respect is practiced and how it shapes the educative nature of prison education. Initially, a review of the pertinent literature details how respect can be conceived of, particularly within an educative relationship, and its distinctive importance for prison education. The methodology of this research is detailed examining the selection of participants and the ethical issues surrounding this study. The findings from this study are explored through the perceptions of pupils’, and teachers’, manifestation of respect and the effect that respect has on their learning experiences. The significance of the social aspects of prison education and the place of self-respect within prison education are then discussed in light of these findings.

### Literature Review

#### Respect

Respect is a fundamental aspect of how human beings relate to each other. Respect between people can be thought of as the esteem paid by one human being to another; however, the object of this esteem is the focus of much academic debate (Darwall, 1977, 2006). It could be esteem based on cultural norms, or even fear of others; however, the most common debates about the focus of respect centre on a person’s dignity (Kant, 1855; Darwall, 2006). For clarity, the definition of respect as understood by this study relies on Hoban’s (1977) conception as ‘an openness to others, esteem for others because of their human decency and the degree of excellence of their performance’ (p.232).

#### The social importance of respect and self-respect

A person may feel respected if he is esteemed by others; however, the focus on a person’s dignity has also been argued as primary importance for one to feel truly respected (Kant, 1855; Darwall, 2006). Historically the conception of respect between people has been the subject of vigorous debate, the most prominent centring around the work of Kant (1855) who advanced the position that respect should be predicated on the innate dignity of human beings. This conception of respect was considered to be reciprocal in nature for if



a person claims to have their dignity respected then they must afford a similar right to others (Kant (1855). Therefore, emerging from the debate of respect based on the inherent dignity of human beings was the moral implications of human beings to respect others founded on the utilitarian belief that respect would be practiced in such a way as 'to increase the sum of human happiness' (Mill, 1988 p. 258).

A human being's dignity, as the object of a person's respect, is historically grounded as dependent on a person's capacity to reason and have a degree of autonomy (Sensen, 2011). This focus on dignity (based on personal autonomy) has implications not just for the respect due to oneself, but also the respect one must pay others. Balancing one's own autonomy and encroaching on the autonomy of others is the respect one accords oneself; one's self respect (Bird 2010, Roland and Foxx 2003). Therefore, self-respect has been conceived of by McKinnon (2000, p.493) as the effort required between how one views oneself and the person one intends to be, that would require 'congruence between a person's self-conception [how one sees oneself] and [their] self-expression'. It is the respect for oneself that can motivate a person to fully esteem the dignity and autonomy of others.

An individual's self-respect demands that they 'protest the violation of their rights and that they do so within the boundaries of dignity...[as] Dignity is the way in which individuals visibly demonstrate their humanity and their worthiness of respect. It is how self-respect is displayed to others' (Roland and Foxx, 2003, p.250). It is how this conception of respect is communicated through the educative process that is of concern to this study.

### **Respect and educative relationships**

An educative relationship can be considered as the role of a teacher to promote the growth of their pupils (Blenkinsop, 2005; Lomax, 2000). Within such a relationship, the teacher would guide the specific learning experiences for their pupils (Frymier and Houser, 2000) which are not entirely directive as teachers cannot compel a pupil to learn as teachers 'never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment [they create]' (Dewey, 2004, p.18). This relationship is central to maintaining this environment as 'education is essentially a social process' (Dewey, 1998, p. 65). This educative relationship aims for a teacher to help their pupils achieve their greatest potential. A 'genuine educator' is one who has a concern for their pupils and considers 'the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives now and in his possibilities, what he can become' (Dewey, 1998, p. 65).

Educative relationships which are experienced between a teacher and her pupils are comparable to the many relationships people engage in to better understand each other (Frymier and Houser, 2000). This formation of social bonding between people helps to 'create a pattern in cognitive processing that gives priority to organising information on the basis of the person with whom one has some sort of connection' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.503). These bonds can help people to acquire a deeper mutual understanding, which can foster interpersonal relationships founded on mutual trust (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.503). Conversely 'dissimilar feelings and unequal involvement prevent the growth of trust and thereby thwart or weaken relationships' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, p.515). A person communicating with others affects their relationships with them (Hendrick and Hendrick, 2006). In an interpersonal relationship, the nature of the communication between people can help to encourage mutual understanding and develop trust that can nurture a deeper connection between them. Indeed, Mac Murray (2012, pp.669-670) commented on the "paradox of human nature": although we are born as human beings we must learn how to become human wherein the relational place of education is of paramount importance:

For this reason the first priority in education—if by education we mean learning to be human—is learning to live in personal relation to other people. Let us call it learning to live in community. I call this the first priority because failure in this is fundamental failure, which cannot be compensated for by success in other fields; because our ability to enter into fully personal relations with others is the measure of our humanity.

This type of connection can be fostered within teacher-pupil relationships to better enable communication and understanding (Frymier and Houser, 2000; Goldstein, 1999). Put simply, successful teaching 'means personal communication between teachers and [pupils] as well as expertise and effective delivery of

the content' (Frymier and Houser, 2000, p.217). The distinctive interpersonal relationship between a teacher and her pupils is where the 'two (main) differences in the teacher-[pupil] relationship are that it lacks the equality typically associated with friendship and has time constraints not typical of friendships', and, although there are substantial differences, 'they do not affect the basic functioning of communication in relationship development and maintenance' (Frymier and Houser, 2000, p.208). An educative relationship is principally inhibited by an absence of equality between the teacher and her students; yet, it must aim to produce a positive classroom environment for students that would enhance their learning. Lomax (2000) considered this type of relationship as a reciprocal development between a teacher and her pupils within a classroom. Lomax (2000, p.51) envisaged 'a direct relation without ritual... (and that) there will be learning and improvement (change) that involves both the self and others independently and reciprocally'. Frymier and Houser's study (2000, p.217), which examined the connection between interpersonal teacher-pupil relationships and communication skills, reported that 'when communication becomes interpersonal, individuals treat one another with greater respect and trust develops'. This interpersonal dimension of a teacher-pupil relationship can promote an atmosphere where teachers and pupils can communicate better within an atmosphere of greater trust and respect (O'Grady, 2015; O'Grady, Hinchion, and Mannix McNamara, 2011). This is especially significant within a prison education context.

### **Respect within prison education**

Why is respect of distinctive importance for prison education? As argued by Wright (2004), prison education should aim to achieve caring educative relationships between teachers and pupils. An ethos of care in prison education can exist when 'there are signs of respectful behavior, and where this behavior is modeled and expected by all' (Wright, 2004, p.198). As care is rooted in an intention towards others, 'it is found in respectful actions on their behalf and by a general concern for their well-being' (Wright, 2004, p.201). This care is relational and for prison teachers requires 'a relational commitment that demands effort and accountability...and a sound knowledge of the delicate balance of self-other in helping, educative relationships' (Wright, 2004, p.201). These relations can help students see the efficacy of prison education by showing them their possibilities for the future: 'these relations help students respect themselves, their teachers and others in society' (Wright, 2004, p.201). However, these caring relations must have boundaries given the delicate power dynamics that are omnipresent in prisons (Wright, 2004, p.201.). Therefore 'most prison teachers face relational dilemmas and conflicts that arise because they must understand their students-get "close" or "near" enough to them in order to teach-while also keeping their emotional and social "distance" from them' (Wright, 2004, p.201). Hence they must gauge the relational midpoint of these interactions (Wright, 2004, p.201)

This primacy given to the place of respect within prison education is also exemplified in the work of Shobe (2003) in his survey of prisoners about respect and classroom management techniques. For prisoners, 'respect is very important to incarcerated adults and, consequently, can be used as a powerful motivator for controlling behavior in the classroom. Incarcerated adult students expect to be treated with respect and will give respect to others whom they believe deserve it' (Shobe, 2003, p.60). Within educative relationships in prison 'the teacher's skill in creating a classroom environment in which students feel non-threatened and motivated to learn is a key element in becoming a successful educator' as well as the fact that 'the student's respect toward the teacher and other students is a vital ingredient in the process of maintaining order within the classroom' (Shobe, 2003, p.60). Yet incarcerated adults may not have the capacity to express this respect to others, leaving the teacher in a position where they may not feel respected by their students because of this inability (Shobe, 2003, p.60). However, 'the perceptive teacher is one who takes the initiative to model respect to the students. The teacher in a correctional setting has an obligation to teach more than just the academic subjects' (Shobe, 2003, p.60). From this initiative to demonstrate respect students may reciprocate it (Shobe, 2003, p.60).

This interpersonal focus of prison education is also salient in an Irish context, as Warner (1998, p.120) discussed these challenges and cited the European Prison Rules whereby 'the prisoner's dignity is seen to be respected...and is allowed, as far as possible, scope to make choices and to seriously participate in shaping his or her life and activity within the prison'. Increasingly a myopic perspective of prisoners tends to dehumanise them and 'curtail' the rehabilitative capacities of prisons often obscuring the "whole person" within prison ed-

ucation (Costelloe and Warner 2014). In Ireland, the espoused interpersonal focus is exemplified through the Prison Education Service, which has the priorities to help prisoners 'i) cope with their sentences ii) to achieve personal development iii) to prepare for life after release iv) to establish the appetite and capacity for further education after release' (Costelloe and Warner 2014). Wright (2004, p.207) further explicated the need for care to be at the centre of prison teaching, asking 'Can we find examples of caring prisons which promote positive relationships of intimacy (but not quite), transparency (but not completely), and compassion?'

The need to explore issues of respect in a prison context is also articulated by Hulley, Liebling, and Crewe (2012, p.20) as 'respect is not a "sharp" construct with clear boundaries; it has blurred edges which merge into other key concepts such as honesty, fairness, trust and care... [and] More focused work is needed to refine these measures and explore more systematically the way respect 'works' in prison'. Therefore this research aimed to explore how respect was conceived of by young Irish people in prison and their teachers.

### Methodology

The central research questions for this study were:-

- How is respect communicated between a teacher and a young Irish person in prison?
- How is respect perceived by a teacher and a young Irish person in prison?
- What is the significance of respect in the educational process within prison education?

Given the subjectivity of experiences that can shape an individual's understanding of respect as 'what one person claims as respectful may be viewed as disrespectful by another' (Goodman, 2009, p.4), a qualitative focus was adopted for this study. Qualitative research endeavours to understand the meaning individuals give to a phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and accept the subjective worldviews of human beings (Krauss, 2005). In addition, the dearth of research into the lived experience of prison education, due to an increasing neo-liberal approach to prison education internationally (Wacquant 2002), is well documented. This lack of research provides a greater need for a qualitative study of this nature. Interviews, rather than focus groups, were chosen as the primary method for this research as it more readily appreciates the anonymity of sensitive topics compared to focus groups and allows for the meanings attributed to a phenomenon to be elicited in a shared dialogue.

Both parties to the interview are necessarily and unavoidably active. Each is involved in meaning-making work. Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge—treasuries of information awaiting excavation—as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p.4)

One all-male young offenders institute in Ireland was chosen as a focus for this study of respect within prison education. This institution attended to the rehabilitative needs of individuals from the ages of 16 to 21 and had an education centre on site that, in keeping with Irish practice, was run by the local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) authority. Given the small number of young offender institutions in Ireland (there are currently four although this number has changed since the time this research was conducted in 2008) (IYJS, 2014) then any additional contextual information about the institution would possibly make it identifiable. Teachers and pupils were asked to volunteer after outlining the purpose of the research with 13 pupils and 13 teachers who agreed to participate. Given the sensitive ethical issues of researching young people, it was agreed to only approach the students who were over 18. Also, given the power dynamics of these institutions (Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti, and Santos 2005) a presentation was made to the staff and separately to the students with no explicit external pressure placed on the students to participate. The demographics of the teachers included 11 female teachers and 2 male teachers, all Irish natives with no racial variation. The age profile was restricted to protect the anonymity of participating teachers. The interviews lasted from approximately 30 minutes to an hour for both students and teachers. 15 questions were asked to each participant focusing on topics pertaining to their background, perceptions of respect, and the place of respect within



teaching and learning. All interviews were conducted in a private room to aid anonymity and to help place the participants in a more comfortable setting. In addition, no further information was requested from students pertaining to their time in prison, age, race, education level, etc. (unless volunteered) to appreciate the sensitive context that this research was conducted under.

### **Ethics**

Given the delicacy of ethics for these institutions, care was taken to ensure all ethical protocols and frameworks were followed thoroughly. Ethical approval was given by both the Prisoner Based Research Ethics Committee (of the Irish Prison service) and the University's research ethics committee. The ethical procedures primarily addressed issues of anonymity, transparency, and power dynamics. The anonymity and ethical rights were assured with the pertinent information sheets and consent forms. All terms were explained to the participants at a suitable language and their rights were explicitly described to them. In addition, given the complications of acquiring parental consent, all participants of this study are between 18 and 21.

### **Data analysis**

All of the interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher and read to identify themes and categories. The audio files of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher personally. Thematic data analysis (Ryan and Bernard, 2000) was used as a framework whereby the researcher identified themes in the transcriptions and re-read the transcriptions numerous times to better ensure saturation of the data. These themes were identified inductively as emerging from the data rather than being applied as pre-conceived categories during the analysis. These themes were then grouped into categories to better shape their presentation.

### **Methodological limitations**

One of the central limitations of conducting qualitative research with a vulnerable group of prisoners is the power dynamics, both of their voluntary contribution and the validity of the data they relay to a stranger. Efforts were made to ensure that the students did not feel uncomfortable and efforts to establish trust and a dialogue were also attempted by the researcher.

## **Findings**

The findings of this study are discussed firstly in the institutional context of the school as expressed by both teachers and students. Following from this, the place of educative relationships and respect for both students and teachers are discussed, as well as its significance on teaching and learning within the institution. The names of participants have been changed and the notation "P" and "T" denote young pupil and teacher respectively. Questions asked by the researcher are italicised.

### **Context of study**

Much of the respect, or disrespect, communicated by both teachers and students must be situated in the wider context of the prison and the socialising effects on both teachers and students. Understandably both students and teachers felt that the prison constrained their own sense of autonomy. For example, students largely described the institution in terms of an erosion of their autonomy through routine and ritual as 'it's just the same thing every day, day in day out' (Harold-P). This was compounded by the disrespectful treatment by the officers who many in the study (n=6) had very little respect for or felt disrespected often by them.

*I've no respect for the officers in here [they] push you around telling you what to do all the time...bullies, that's all they are (Harold-P)*

*The officers in here treat you like dogs. They talk to you whatever way they want. There are only one or two that are respectful and the rest I do not pay heed to (Gavin-P)*

In contrast, the school located within the institution was described as a positive influence on their experiences as a distraction from this routine and a productive outlet during their incarceration. 'It passes the time quicker, it flies through. Once you put the head down and do something' (Philip-P). Teachers also felt that the education offered in the school helped students cope with their sentences. 'If you look at the aims of prison

education the first aim is to help students to cope with their sentences...Education has different aims here and that is the first one, keeping them busy here and having something to occupy themselves with' (Jennifer-T). The teachers were also aware of the prioritisation of the prison rules as they also acknowledged the pragmatic realities of teaching in such an institution. One teacher identified ulterior motives for their involvement in education:

A lot of them are in school for reasons that have nothing to do with school, they are here because their pals are here, they think that there might be drugs over here, they're here because they want to steal food or because they're here so they can rob Biros, they're here because there are women over here and there are none over there. They're here for a million reasons that have nothing to do with education, if you can manage to squeeze in a bit of education into their agenda that's fine... It passes the time. (Joanne-T)

Teachers were not naive to the opportunistic nature of students or the rationale for a measure of socialisation within the prison. 'If there is a lot going on they will go to great lengths to take small things like a T-shirt or pritt stick, anything like that because all of those things might have a use in their cell...The more you try and take away the more they will try and steal, they are very opportunistic and you must never forget that' (Patricia-T). However, they understood the priorities of the institution in safeguarding the prisoners. For example, one teacher described an incident: 'after the junior cert there recently I brought some of the parents in and had some tea and sandwiches ...and we found out that some of them had put pressure on their parents to bring in drugs, so you can see why we are on their [institution's] side' (Greg-T).

The politics of the prison environment were specifically cited by teachers as inhibiting their autonomy and constraining their capacity to trust the institution. 'The politics here is outrageous...and that is very frustrating because it's such a big institution there is nothing you can do about it, although you can do is work the best as you can within it ... Just the egos and the personalities and the politics' (Jennifer-T). Another example of the decreased autonomy and powerlessness was given by a teacher whereby credit for initiative was often appropriated by those in a greater position of power.

I think the worst thing here is the lack of power... you have to hand control over to someone else, like I mentioned about organising plays and art exhibitions and they make life so difficult in getting the people. And when it comes to the exam results the governor is there taking all the credit for the institution doing it. So on the night of the play they will be the ones with the drinks and the cheese and the Minister [of Justice] in and the person who produced it is put away. So if you can accept that and the work under those conditions then that's fine. (Greg-T)

However, in contrast to students' experiences of bullying and the cynical attitude by some staff about the institution, a large proportion of the students and teachers spoke about the positive relationships, and respect, they experienced in the school.

### **Educative relationships**

From the teachers' perspective, they spoke of their relationships with students as communicating respect and esteem for each other. The teachers largely (n=9) spoke of these relationships positively and described them as respectful. This relational esteem was felt to exalt the more human components of prison education. For example, one teacher who had taught in a nearby prison (at the same time as the young offenders' institution) met students who had come through this institution years earlier. The students would 'have very fond memories of their time here' but as they were teenagers at the time they had 'to be sullen, they can't show joy...they kind of have to think "come on we're teenagers and we have to pull that sullen mask down"' (Mary-T). She believed that the students' recollection of enjoying the school was based on the relationships they established within the school.

I think that the best thing about being a teacher in a prison, and I think that we are very lucky here with most of the teachers, is that we have a really good relationship between the teachers and pupils. I don't think it matters how brilliant the teacher is at teaching their subject, I think it matters, the good relationship you have with the students (Mary-T).

This interpersonal contact was distinctive within the institution as teachers in young offenders' institutions and prisons are not employed by the Department of Justice in Ireland (such as the other supports available for the students from the counsellors and psychologists). Therefore the teachers were not viewed by the students as part of the formal correctional system and therefore more open to establish equal relationships. For example, one teacher stated:-

I'm the human contact that they have and from the outside which they value very much, I am not employed by justice, none of the teachers here are. We are employed by the VEC [Vocational Educational Committee]. We are the only true people who are not employed by the prison. The doctor, the nurse and the priest are paid by [The Department of] justice but we are not, we are paid by the VEC. We are outside and it's something that we take as being important, the prisoners may not be able to articulate that but it is very important to them (Greg-T)

From both teachers' and students' perspectives, any attempts to acknowledge the humanity of the pupil also helped promote a more respectful relationship. For students, examples such as engaging in an informal dialogue or a teacher's genuine attention to a pupil's life was also perceived to be respectful: 'they'd talk to you about the weather or sports or what we got up to over the weekend in the yard or how things are going for you' (Harold-P) and 'by coming in greeting you and saying "Brian, how are you?" and they will say "are you in the humour to work?" and I will say "Yes" and then we go to work' (Brian-P). Teachers also believed that certain practices were perceived as respectful by students such as enquiring into the lives of students and being interested in them. 'I would think I show respect by always using their names, I would always ask them about themselves or where they are from ... I suppose that would be my way of showing my interest in them as an individual and respecting who they are' (Diane-T). Equally they believed that pupils communicated respect to them by being manneredly and pleasant. 'Honestly I am surprised at how good they can be. I came in here expecting them to be disrespectful and they have been very pleasant...Respect would come when they say thank you for things or say things like "could you pass me the ruler please?"' (Lorraine-T).

### **Interpersonal respect between teachers and pupils**

Reciprocity was an issue linked with respect for both pupils and students. For pupils, the relational significance of their teachers (as respect within it) was highly regarded by them: 'if you did not get on with them then you would not be in the class. It is mutual respect between us and the teachers. You have to respect them because they are taking the time to come in and see you. They show you that respect back as well' (Howard-P). Students who described prison education as a very positive experience also felt the need to reciprocate any respect they felt from teachers. For example, one participant specifically cited the interpersonal qualities of the teachers as contributing to this: 'they help me. I mean I could barely read before I came in here and one of the teachers taught me how to read eventually, now I can read perfect' (Harold-P). Pupils even felt protective of teachers they had built a respectful relationship with.

If the guards were shouting at them we wouldn't let anything like that go on. ...For an instance there a couple of months ago they were slaggin' off one of the teachers, and he's an old fella you know what I mean. I turned around and I was on the phone and I hung up my phone call and I said to him "don't you go starting on him!" (Harold-P)

For teachers, they also described reciprocity as central in the promotion of a respectful climate. 'I think if I show them respect and I feel that it is reciprocated and I think it is very important to start with that and not forget to do it because sometimes you can get complacent about these things but they are hugely important' (Diane-T). However, some teachers did feel that pupils would be able to display a veneer of respect that might not be authentic: 'they know how to appear like they do... The school is voluntary and they know that they are not welcome in the class unless they show respect so they certainly know how to give the appearance' (Jennifer-T).

In addition to reciprocity, a sense of greater autonomy was particularly prized by students as a charac-

teristic of a respectful teacher: 'choice is everything. Sometimes I will say to them that "I will not work today" and I'll tell the teacher and they will say "no problem"' (Brian-P). This was also articulated by students as the difference between being told and being asked as 'if you are pushed into something then you are not going to do it' (Howard-P). The teachers also agreed that greater autonomy had a significant benefit for the students as they were able to choose their subjects. Indeed, one teacher stated 'a big thing for me is that I want them to feel that they are making their own decisions all the time because I think that is something that is taken away from them here' (Diane-T). Allowing them choices, and providing greater autonomy, during discipline issues was 'showing respect because you are actually giving them a choice that they mightn't have had previously... If you are calm and you allow them the choice to change, they do, they show you respect in return and there maybe the odd time where they don't get what they want, but if you explain to them why they didn't get it, it can turn the situation around' (Moir-T).

A greater sense of autonomy for pupils also implied a greater level of accountability as consistent and clear boundaries between the teachers and the students were often described as maintaining a respectful relationship. 'I think it is about how you conduct yourself in your class and that you have boundaries where to draw the line, what you are going to accept and what you are not going to accept' (Moir-T). In contrast some teachers were felt to be disrespectful by pupils primarily through a lack of maintaining authority 'old John's ones [classes] are bad though, no one respects him, they just run amok in his class you know...he is easily led, he doesn't put his foot down and say stop messing or anything' (Philip-P).

The equal application of boundaries and accountability of pupils was also frequently mentioned by teachers. Communicating to pupils that there was no discrimination between them, or judgement of their crimes, was central to the practice of respect for most of (n=5) the teachers. 'Here they are in for all sorts of different crimes...But you treat everyone the same' (Aoife-T). Specific mention was made by students of teachers being respectful if they helped the students, viewing the students more as equals, with a measure of flexibility. The students described respectful teachers who 'helped me with my reading and writing and all' (Joseph-P) and 'they don't talk down to you, they will ask you to do something and if you are not in the humour they will not give out to you' (Brian-P). Acts of rudeness or perceived acts of unequal treatment were often (n=3) felt by pupils to be disrespectful and elicited disrespectful actions. For example, one pupil gave the example of unequal treatment by a teacher:-

I was only doing the washing-up, and I said "Miss I have to go and use the phone" as it was 10 to 12, but she said "no you had to do the dishes" and there were two boys sitting down doing nothing and I had to wash the dishes like a fool. So I said "listen I am going out to use the phone" and she goes "well then this is your last class" and "I said f\*\*\* you, stick your class up your hole you fat tramp" and I walked out. (Neil-P)

### **Educative significance of respect**

The educative significance of respect for both teachers and pupils will be discussed separately to help distinguish the differences each held in the communication of respect. For teachers, the cultivation of trust and empowerment grounded in a care for their pupils was their core value as educators. An extension of this was felt by students, who also said that greater educative empowerment helped them to respect themselves.

**Educative significance: the teachers' perspective.** The teachers perceived respect as contributing to the educative potential of prison education. They described respect as cultivating trust with students by helping them to greater achievement. This gave the students the capacity to respect themselves more. One teacher cited the respect shown by students when they trusted her and displayed their vulnerability as learners: 'they might even ask you how to spell something which for me is a big statement as they are putting their trust in you to a degree or showing you their own vulnerability' (Lorraine-T). This trust was especially prized, as another teacher felt it was so hard to attain. 'And they tell you so much, I mean I'm amazed at the trust they have, I mean they don't know me from a hole in the ground' (Mary-T).

For many teachers (n=7), respect for themselves emerged from observing their students achieve their own goals. One teacher gave the example of a student who had an inauspicious beginning as 'after one class he told me to "go and f\*\*\* myself" so I said fine'. A year or so later 'he approached me again this year and he said that he wanted to do his junior cert and ...nearly every day was a challenge but on the day of the exam...

he managed to be relaxed and do some really, really beautiful drawings so I told him that I was very proud of him, that was a good moment for me' (Diane-T). Another teacher organised her cooking students to prepare Christmas meals for charity where they were allocated varying responsibilities 'so the boys served it up and they felt very proud of themselves. When you give them that ability to feel proud or to achieve anything and it happens very regularly on small occasions, that is good' (Patricia-T). Other teachers had similar stories about their sense of self respect as a teacher being achieved by promoting a sense of self respect in their students. 'There is a guy who has a degree from Open University after 10 years suffering from chronic alcoholism and now he is a changed man... He now has respect for himself and has an education' (Peter-T).

For most teachers, their decision to undertake teaching in a prison often (n=8) emerged from their desire to make a difference. This desire was grounded in a more holistic perception of the purpose of education. When asked "*what would you like your teaching legacy to be from here?*" often (n=5) the reply was 'to make a difference to a few people at least. Do you know when you hear people talk about this great teacher that they remember from school, to be one of those' (Jennifer-T) or 'that I made a difference to the students and that they learnt' (Anne-T).

The teachers appeared to be very aware of the hardships the students have undergone, which influenced how the teachers treated them. One experienced teacher had particular insights into the lives of students and was humbled by 'their lack of any anger towards things ...as they're lives for a vast majority of them are s\*\*\*'. The following examples illustrate some of the traumatic experiences undergone by some of the students that this teacher was made aware of during her numerous years teaching in the school. Hearing about these experiences motivated her to respect them:

His mother was a drug addict and she wasn't let into a lot of hostels, but he wouldn't leave his mother, so for six months he was sleeping in a skip and going to a back lane hostel getting a shower and going off to work, he was only 17 at the time. (Mary-T)

Another young fella was here last week and he said he didn't like his mother at all... [as she] blamed the boys for the dad leaving. When he was 6 he robbed something small out of a shop and his mother said "you're going to end up like your father", so she tied him to a chair in his underpants and she pulled the plug out of the television and she beat him for an hour with the plug of the television. Even at 19 he had all these scars on his arm but nobody intervened to take them into care and he said the lives they had were just hell on earth. (Mary-T)

**Educative significance: the students' perspective.** Students also felt that respect had educative significance within their prison, particularly if it contributed to their sense of empowerment and greater respect for themselves. For students, respect was described as a significant aspect of teaching and learning that helps to motivate and promote greater co-operation. 'It gives you that extra bit of encouragement' (Gavin-P) and 'If they talk down to you then you will not give them respect and so you will just mess or throw things around the classroom' (Brian-P). Education was described by some (n=4) as an aspect of prison that helped them to respect themselves. 'You need an education as being streetwise isn't going to get you a job' (Harold-P) and 'I'm doing it for myself, I would like to have my leaving cert. A few of my friends have it and it is not even just for a job, it is just that I wanted to have a leaving cert. and say that I have finished school...Just to say that I have finished something' (Howard-P) and 'I don't do any subjects, like I don't do the junior cert or anything. I just do the classes, I just like the learning, you learn new things every day' (Philip-P). For several (n=4), this sense of self-respect was a greater capacity to better enact their values in their role as a father after prison.

Say you have a kid or something and he's going through school and he'll need help with the work and you're as dumb as two planks with no education. I mean you'd be lost and they'd be looking at you and you're saying "go ask your mother" and you don't want be that sort of father ... I grew up with my father being in prison. (Harold-P)

The only reason I am doing it [education] is to get out and see my kids. My main priority is before I get out I wanted to get some social housing outside of Ballymun that is the problem. There is too much s\*\*\* going on out there at the moment and I do not want to be involved. I wanted to stay away from it as it is always me that ends up in here ...I will be in here for the best years of my life (Gavin-P)

### Discussion

Within the findings, the socialised nature of the students' relationships with their teachers emerged as a salient issue. The reproduction of socialised practices amongst prisoners is well documented (Carrigan, 2015) and the consistency of interpersonal engagement is required to feel cared for and to build trust with others (Noddings, 1992). Indeed, Strang (2015) also supported a compassionate focus of prison education, and the place of prison education to act against the increasing dehumanisation of mass incarceration has also been well argued (Stern 2014). This socialising aspect of education has been described by MacMurray (2012) as 'learning to be human' and a central component of the purpose of education:

Perhaps in our day it is the inhumanity of man that we feel most keenly, and that conditions our generation to cynicism and hopelessness. It is this same paradox from which both the necessity and the sense of education is derived. We are born human, and nothing can rob us of our human birthright. Nevertheless, we have to learn to be human, and we can only learn by being taught (p.666).

This is not to state that young Irish people in prison are any less human than others but that those within prison education are possibly most in need of this aspect of education. It is this "learning to be more human" that MacMurray (2012) espoused that is a fundamental aspect of the rehabilitative process. This issue of reciprocity within respectful relationships, as often cited by both teachers and students, was also highlighted by MacMurray (2012, pp.669-670) as a central construct in how we learn to be more human.

The first principle of human nature is mutuality. 'There can be no man,' said Confucius, 'until there are two men in relation.' In a more modern idiom we might say that 'a person is always one term in a relation of persons.' This principle, that we live by entering into relation with one another, provides the basic structure within which all human experience and activity falls, whether individual or social.

His additional insistence that "inhumanity is precisely the perversion of human relations" (MacMurray 2012, p.670) has significance for those within incarceration as, arguably, they should be provided with greater supports to develop their relational capacities.

Within these reciprocal relationships reported by participants, autonomy also emerged as a central facet of interpersonal respect for students. This is also not surprising, as articulated by one teacher, as so much freedom has been removed that any choice given to the students is appreciated. Teachers believed that asking, and giving freedom to, students was a way of communicating respect. Autonomy as a feature of respect is discussed by Bagnoli (2007):

As the experience of autonomy, respect is twofold: it is the experience of being free and at the same time it is the experience of being constrained by the recognition of others as having equal standing. While autonomy is a quality of the will, it is also something that we acquire and practice always in relations with others as peers (p.120).

Darwall (2006, p.12) cited this appreciation of another's autonomy within the practice of respect as analogous to Hobbe's distinction between "command" and "counsel". However, as liberty may be regarded as "the luxury of self-discipline" (Cooke, 1973, p.388) then greater autonomy implies greater accountability. The need for consistent boundaries (as described by the teachers within this study), and the lack of respect felt by students for those teachers who did not maintain them, highlights the significance of teacher accountability

within respect to hold students to these boundaries. This accountability to oneself and one's values, professional or otherwise, can be regarded as a sense of self-respect.

Although teachers espoused the need to respect themselves (through the need to be committed to their students and maintain boundaries) students also described the place of prison education to enhance their sense of self-respect (for example as fathers or as an opportunity for growth). Although teachers can help to empower students, it is the student's capacity to hold themselves accountable and grow through their own efforts that promotes a sense of self-respect. In this regard, self-respect can be regarded as a rehabilitative process for young Irish people in prison through which they acquire greater dignity and esteem. This appears to be largely founded on the respectful interactions they have with their teachers within educative relationships.

### **Limitation and scope for further study**

The most obvious limitations of this study is the voluntary selection of students as well as a possible reticence to disclose to a stranger issues of disrespect within the institution where trust could only be established within the interview. In addition, the findings of this study are based on a relatively small population of students, which inhibits the generalizability of these findings. There were also no previous studies of a qualitative nature in this context exploring respect to build on for this work, so its aim was exploratory. Given the importance of socialisation and educative relationships within prison education, as well as respect within these relationships, further studies are needed into the varying practices of respect within the international community of prison education.

### **Conclusion**

Three main issues appeared from this study: the relational significance of respect as improved socialisation (and by extension societal norms); the place of both autonomy and accountability as essential components of a respectful relationship; and the place of self-respect within the rehabilitative process for prison education. The lack of guidance for students in the social norms and insecurity of their relational practices that was apparent within this study points to the need to prioritise the relational aspect of education within prison education. To better implement these reciprocal educative relationships, a sense of greater autonomy should be given to students. This greater autonomy will help them to feel respected, but also feel the need to be held suitably accountable for their actions to reinforce this autonomy. It also appears that teachers' values are at the heart of their motivation to respect themselves and convey a respect in pupils that would reciprocate respect to them and develop a sense of greater dignity and growth.. In this way, respect is conceived as an important relational practice and not simply a tool to improve classroom management as espoused by Shobe (2003).

Although a small scale study, the recommendations from this research include exploring the values and motivations of prison educators,, encouraging greater empathy for the lives of incarcerated individuals, offering consistent boundaries that hold both the teacher and pupils suitably accountable, and promoting autonomy in the pupils' learning experiences.

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**PRACTITIONER PAPER**

## Learning to be a Prison Educator

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**Abstract:** *For many correctional educators, the learning curve upon beginning to teach in prisons can be steep. This paper explores issues that are encountered by correctional educators: culture shock, skill or knowledge gaps, and philosophical dilemmas. With experience as a correctional educator and administrator, the author presents a training and mentorship program developed as a result of correctional education expansion in Alberta, Canada. Formalizing the training and mentorship program has proven to be a successful structure under which correctional educators can be supported through all phases of their development.*

**Keywords:** *correctional education; prison education; instructor training; professional development*

### Introduction

Learning to teach in non-traditional environments such as correctional institutions differs greatly from learning to teach in traditional education. The field of correctional education straddles justice and education systems; systems that are often in conflict over philosophy, policy, and practice. As such, those new to correctional education must learn to navigate the system with which they are unfamiliar (justice), and work within it to accomplish goals and outcomes put forward by the education system. For many correctional educators this can involve overcoming the initial culture shock of institutional life as well as addressing personal knowledge and skill gaps in areas such as alternative education, security, and law. Some correctional educators may experience philosophical dilemmas as a result of getting to know their environment and students.

Considering that these challenges are quite different from challenges in traditional education, it is important to tailor the training of correctional educators to be corrections-specific. As part of their training, those who are new to secure environments should be introduced to issues prior to being confronted by them. The actual extent to which correctional educators encounter issues will vary according to the institution in which they work, as well as their individual teaching experience, personality, and teaching assignment. Once correctional educators have acclimated to correctional education, ongoing professional development is equally important; correctional educators need to have access to both formal and informal venues in which they can explore the intricacies of correctional education as issues arise.

### Context for Developing a Training and Mentorship Program

In 2013, our Correctional Education Department expanded to offer programs at a new remand facility that had been built<sup>1</sup>. As a result of the new centre, correctional educators were hired, most of whom were beginning their teaching careers and had little experience in corrections and/or education<sup>2</sup>. Orienting groups of new correctional educators at the same time necessitated formalizing a training and mentorship program for future educators. The department has since begun to look at ongoing staff development and to seek out the best ways to support correctional educators as they encounter challenges and develop their identities as correctional educators. This paper provides a discussion of issues that can be encountered by correctional educators, as well as a brief overview of the training and mentorship program that was found to work best for the facility. Providing appropriate training and orientation to new correctional educators, as well as opportunities for meaningful ongoing development has been important to ensure that educators are adequately supported in their development.



## **Issues Encountered by Correctional Educators**

Those involved in correctional education will inevitably encounter difficulties and challenges unique to prison settings. Research into correctional education tends to focus on three types of issues: Culture Shock, Skill and Knowledge Gaps, and Existential and Philosophical Crises (DelliCarpini, 2008; Jurich, Casper & Hull, 2001; Whitehead, 2013; Wright, 2008; Yanz, 2008). Although there is a dearth of research into how correctional educators move through and between these three categories, anecdotally correctional educators tend to first encounter them in the order they are presented below. Existential and philosophical issues tend to arise once correctional educators feel comfortable with the daily happenings in their classrooms and begin trying to reconcile their worldviews and philosophies of human nature with their correctional experiences.

### **Culture Shock**

*“I never really knew what prison or prisoners were like”*

Society usually encounters prisons only through news reports and sensationalized entertainment, which can lead to many assumptions about institutions. Prisoners, officers, and prisons are neither similar to how many imagine them to be nor how they are portrayed in the media. Assumptions held by new correctional educators are challenged as they experience the real institutional environment (Wright, 2008). Similarly, a newcomer to corrections will also be confronted with their pre-conceived assumptions about a variety of social issues (addictions, poverty, culture/race, etc) as well as their beliefs regarding what students, education, and school should look like. Correctional education often has little resemblance to traditional education.

Furthermore, correctional institutions each have their own specific culture. As a result of being places where people live all aspects of their lives closed off from society, institutions also breed unique subcultures (Goffman, 1961). Both officers and prisoners have their own subcultures with unwritten standards of behaviour, and other groups (educators, psychologists, chaplains, etc) who work within institutions often have their own unique subcultures. Educators must learn to work within and between these cultures. Often the dominant officer and prisoner cultures within an institution are incongruent with education and contradict the worldviews of educators. As such, these contradictions can become a source of stress for the correctional educator.

While all adult students come to education with a wealth of experience and personal knowledge, students in corrections also come with additional issues and crises that preclude education (Wright & Gehring, 2008). For example, students in prison must deal with relationship problems, family deaths, divorce, immigration, and child custody as a result of their incarceration. Institutional problems such as intimidation, gambling, drugs, and gang issues can also impact students' ability to fully participate in education (Wright & Gehring, 2008). Issues relating to both their lives outside and inside the institution make it even more difficult for students in correctional institutions to learn than adult learners in the outside community.

As a result, educators in correctional institutions are often expected to be more than educators; they must be teachers, counselors, and security agents (Jurich et al., 2001). Learning to take on and work between these multiple identities is another manifestation of culture shock that many correctional educators experience. Security concerns take precedence over education and the correctional educator is limited to use only security-approved materials and activities. Without an abundance of resources, the challenge becomes how to “make learning so interesting, so worthwhile, so enjoyable that the students elect to stay and learn because it is exciting, interesting, fun, and incredibly valuable” (Jurich et al., 2001).

### **Skills or Knowledge Gaps**

*“I need new skills to help me teach such a diverse group in such a different place”*

Although classes in correctional education are typically small, students in corrections are a diverse group. Correctional educators encounter issues related to students' discontinuous education experiences, learning disabilities, and mental health issues. As a result of institutional restrictions on class size and student movement, it might not be possible to assign students to classrooms based on education level; therefore, many classrooms are heterogeneous. It is equally uncommon in Canada that educators come to correctional education already having experience with alternative or adult education<sup>3</sup>. Without previous training, correctional educators may struggle to address students' needs (DelliCarpini, 2008).

Jurich et al. (2001) conducted a needs assessment of 373 correctional educators to identify a number of workshops they would be interested in attending. Of the top ten requested workshops, eight were related to skill or knowledge development. Requested workshops included: learning styles, basic criminology, safety, classroom management, and communication skills. While launching the new education program it was found that once correctional educators became more at ease in the institution they tended to encounter skill or knowledge gaps similar to those identified by Jurich et al. (2001), including:

### **Communication Skills**

- Problem solving
- De-escalating
- Non-verbal communication

### **Understanding Human Behaviour**

- Addictions
- Psychology/Psychopathology
- Sociology and criminology

### **Specialized Instructional Techniques**

- Teaching within the limits of a prison classroom
- Learning disabilities
- Heterogeneous classrooms
- Differentiated group instruction

Depending on the specific teaching-assignment and classroom dynamics, correctional educators may find that they require some additional skills, knowledge, or teaching instructional techniques in order to be fully effective in their classrooms. Since most educators came to the program with experience in traditional education, most of their needs centred on how to adapt their current instructional styles to adult students in a prison environment.

### **Existential/Philosophical Issues**

*“I am not simply an adult educator – prison changes everything. It changes me”*

Many correctional educators encounter a variety of philosophical dilemmas while learning to teach and teaching in correctional institutions. These dilemmas can include: negotiating the conflicting philosophies of education and corrections, developing empathy for students who have allegedly committed horrible crimes, assisting prisoners as they develop new identities as students, and coming to terms with the impact that prisons have on everyone involved (including themselves). Dichotomies of good/bad, black/white, right/wrong, and innocent/guilty are challenged daily.

In theory, justice and education systems share common goals: education, rehabilitation, and successful re-entry. In practice, however, the two systems can have irreconcilable differences. Correctional institutions are focused on security, control, and power, and often use a behaviour modification model. Foucault (1977) noted that the prison “is supposed to apply the law, and to teach respect for it; but all its functioning operates in the form of an abuse of power” (p. 266). In contrast, adult education returns power to the student. It aligns with cognitive and social learning models, focusing on personal and societal improvement, self-direction, and a belief that all people have capacity and desire for learning. Often correctional education struggles to fit between these two philosophies with correctional educators attempting to create an atmosphere of adult education inside the correctional institution. In so doing correctional education is controversial and political by nature. Whitehead (2013) explained that since corrections and education have different purposes, goals, and outcomes, there is more potential for correctional educators to encounter ethical dilemmas. The primary obligation of everyone in corrections is security, which can conflict with a correctional educator’s “obligations to the student, the education department, or fellow correctional educators” (Whitehead, 2013). In spite of a correctional educator’s desire to support all students, they often can find themselves in the difficult position of

ending a student's participation in education because that student violated prison rules.

Wright and Gehring (2008) discussed how correctional educators set up classrooms as places of value, respect, worth, and choice. These places, or "spheres of civility," foster an environment of adult education and personal development (Wright & Gehring, 2008). However, they can be a source of internal conflict for students as they transition daily between identities of student and prisoner. Spheres of civility can also become a place of internal conflict for correctional educators when students behave one way in class and return to living units to behave in a completely opposite manner (possibly sabotaging their participation in class and challenging the correctional educator's view of them).

Similar to the students' identity conflicts, correctional educators can find themselves labeled as outsiders: segregated from adult education in the community but also segregated from other prison practices (Yantz, 2008). In this isolation, Yantz (2008) struggled with her identity as a professional, being overlooked in both education and corrections, and with understanding the role she played in both spheres. This begs the question of whether or not it is possible to work in a correctional environment without being affected by it. As correctional educators become settled with their teaching assignments and students, they may begin working through such philosophical questions.

### **Training and Mentorship Program**

The previously mentioned training and mentorship program developed by the Correctional Education Department consists of three phases: initial formal training, initial informal training, and ongoing informal training. New correctional educators have a variety of backgrounds, with experience and certification as either secondary-level professional teachers, or social workers, psychologists or community workers<sup>2, 3</sup>.

Upon receiving security clearance to the institution new correctional educators will undergo initial formal training. They must participate in formal security orientation from Correctional Staff. Correctional educators will learn security practices specific to the institution, chain of command, examples of contraband items, and placement information. An institution tour will highlight areas in the institution with which correctional educators need to be familiar (i.e., offices, classrooms). If possible correctional educators will be shown an empty classroom so that they can see the environment in which they will be working. The final part of formal training is the staff training manual. At this stage, correctional educators are also shown the location of any curriculum material they might need and given some time to digest and become familiar with their surroundings and class materials.

Ideally, educators who are new to correctional education will have two to three weeks before they begin teaching their own classes. During this time they will take part in informal training through classroom observations and team-teaching with more experienced correctional educators. They will observe the intricacies of prison education, develop relationships with other educators, and gather a variety of strategies for use in their classrooms.

An important part of this informal training is debriefing with other correctional educators or staff. Correctional educators should have time to reflect on their practice, sharing with others and making sense of their experiences. When pairing new correctional educators for team-teaching or classroom observations it is important to note which experienced correctional educators will be able to provide opportunity for reflection and debriefing. If an environment of group sharing and disclosure can be encouraged from the outset they will be more likely to remain engaged with their peers in supporting each other on an ongoing basis. Debriefing experiences with other experienced correctional educators can help new educators process the culture shock, skill or knowledge gaps, and philosophical issues described above.

As correctional educators transition from merely observing individual classes or sessions to team teaching entire courses and ultimately to managing their own classroom, they progress into ongoing informal training. This phase transitions into regular continuous professional development for all correctional educators. When a new correctional educator is teaching their first class they might need more additional support and conversation than when they are months or years in the position. However, it is important that ongoing dialogue is always available.

Throughout training, the focus is on creating and maintaining an environment where correctional ed-

ucators can discuss, reflect on, and solve issues that arise as they become more comfortable with their position as a correctional educator. Correctional educators often feel a sense of isolation that can be ameliorated through peer collaboration. Peer collaboration can also protect against complacency that can develop as correctional educators begin to adapt to the correctional environment (Ropp, 2008).

### **Ongoing Professional Development**

Of course, educators adjust to the correctional environment differently and will choose to engage with the issues described above in various capacities and quantities. Since the correctional education environment differs greatly from traditional education, ongoing professional development should focus on the challenges of teaching in corrections (Jurich et al, 2001). It is crucial to have opportunities, formal and informal, to debrief and to engage in reflective practice. DelliCarpini (2008) noted the importance of providing opportunities to “pose questions specific to their context, focus on content and pedagogical skills, and form collaborative partnerships within their own facility and with teachers in other facilities”. It is common for each institution to have few correctional educators in each subject area, isolated from others doing similar work in different institutions. Therefore, the need to develop a community of practice is perhaps more important in a prison setting than in other educational settings.

Communities of practice are defined as a group of people with a common interest, who form a group together, and who have a practice related to the interest (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As the group interacts they learn more about the topic, share personal knowledge and experiences, and experiment with alternative methods. In corrections, a community of practice is one way that educators can support each other through culture shock, share teaching strategies and skills specific to a restrictive environment, and discuss existential issues. Being consistently involved in a community of practice is one way to address the loneliness inherent in correctional education.

One example of a community of practice is simply taking time to debrief with other correctional educators or education staff working in the same institution. Another would be connecting with correctional educators from different institutions and maintaining communication throughout the year (through an online community, face to face meetings, etc). Being involved in a community of practice is one way to continually support a new correctional educator as they move out of the initial training phase. For seasoned correctional educators, a community of practice can protect against complacency and jadedness. Communities of practice can provide a place for correctional educators to provide each other with support, trouble shooting, brainstorming, and reflection (DelliCarpini, 2008).

In addition to participating in a community of practice, correctional educators should also have opportunities for formal professional development (such as workshops, courses, additional study, and conferences). DelliCarpini (2008) noted that professional development is most effective when the focus is on three areas: student learning, subject matter knowledge, and alignment with the actual conditions of the classroom. Since both the student population and the classroom conditions in correctional education differ greatly from those involved in traditional education, it is important to have development opportunities specifically designed for the correctional educator. These opportunities are offered through correctional education associations and department-organized training opportunities.

### **Conclusion**

Through the training and mentorship program outlined above, a new educator is allowed time to observe the prison environment, view classes and team-teach. This provides a structure through which initial culture shock, skills gaps, and philosophical issues can be discussed before the new educator is more isolated in their own classroom. The program also helps integrate the new educator into a community of practice where debriefing experiences with others is welcome. Both new and experienced correctional educators should have access to colleagues with whom they can debrief and process daily experiences, as well as meaningful and relevant professional development opportunities. Outlining the importance of ongoing development through a training and mentorship program has enabled the department to highlight development opportunities as a necessity. Together the group can develop effective practices, experiment with new initiatives, address issues, and safeguard against security concerns.

Correctional Education is full of contrasts: uniforms / jumpsuits, speaking to / speaking with, strict hierarchy / spheres of civility, and emphasis on total control / student autonomy. Often people involved in correctional education find themselves caught in the middle of these contrasts. Correctional educators have a way of speaking with students, and advocate for maximizing class-time and participation. The most obvious example of these contrasts is how educators refer to people in class: students, not inmates or prisoners. As a result of being seen as “doubly outside” (not exactly regular education and not exactly regular prison administration), correctional educators can occasionally walk a fine line of welcome in their institutions. Appropriate initial and ongoing training opportunities, formal and informal, can provide support to correctional educators in the unique positions they hold in their institutions.

### Footnotes

1. The facility is currently the largest in Alberta (Canada), capable of housing up to 1600 people remanded until trial. While the remand centre was designed with the intention of offering programming, classrooms are decentralized and located on each living unit. The institution houses both males and females, in both medium and maximum security areas. Correctional educators work in most areas of the institution.
2. Correctional education programs in Alberta are delivered through local community colleges. Educators are faculty members of the college and work under the terms of the faculty association’s collective agreement. There is no specialized training in adult education or correctional education upon being hired. Workshops in adult education practices are available through the college; however, these rarely coincide with date-of-hire. Correctional educators have at minimum bachelor’s degree in education, social work, psychology, or a related field. Some educators possess a teaching certificate from the Ministry of Education; those who teach secondary-level academic courses must have a temporary teaching certificate and are eligible to earn their permanent teaching certificate while working at the college.
3. In Canada, undergraduate teacher-training programs focus on either primary or secondary education. There are few graduate programs in adult education, none of which culminate in a teaching certificate. As a result, correctional educators teaching secondary-level academic courses have experience and certification in secondary education. Those teaching non-academic courses might have experience in social work, psychology, or community work.

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**Author comments:** An earlier version of this paper was presented in 2015 at the following conference: “Innovative Strategies in Criminal Justice: From Policy to Practice.” The conference was sponsored by the John Howard Society of Alberta. The presentation was titled “Between two worlds: Training educators to provide programs in correctional settings.”

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## The ECHR condemns prison overcrowding in Italy: The total reorganization of the institution and the social reintegration of the prisoner

by MARIA GARRO & FEDERICA CIRAMI  
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**Abstract:** *This contribution analyses the current Italian prison system, which has been called upon to resolve its structural problems. In 2013, The Council of Europe condemned Italy for inhuman treatment in its prisons. The principal accusation concerns the problem of overcrowding. The country has responded with solutions such as the application of the open system, which provides cells that are used exclusively for sleeping in at night, and dynamic monitoring, an effective system for ensuring order in the institutions. These initiatives aim to promote re-educational activities and the social re-integration of prisoners. In addition, Italian institutions have made greater use of alternatives to custodial penalties in order to tackle overcrowding and to provide more opportunities for re-integration. This contribution focuses on the need to increase prisoners' employment opportunities. In fact, Italy seems to have neglected this area, which is fundamental for re-integration into the community sphere.*

**Keywords:** *correctional education; re-entry; prisoner; organization*

### Introduction

The Italian prison system and the work of its operators have been the subject of numerous studies and debates that have analyzed them through different perspectives, such as political, social and legal approaches (Cellini, 2013). The prisoner context is actually a subsystem which strongly depends on the country in which it is sited. It is hugely influenced by the pressure of the mass media and by the socio-cultural context, which recognizes it as a punitive system whose purpose is to “normalize” deviance, identify “rejects” and attempt to correct them (Ferrara, 2013). As a consequence, there is a need for convicted persons to be treated in ways that respect their dignity. This is what happened until the reform of the penitentiary system in 1975 (L.354 / 75 - *Norms on the penitentiary and on the enforcement of measures involving deprivation or limited freedom*). This reform identified the presence of conditions in society that can lead the individual to commit a crime. This approach aims to overcome the idea that the only person responsible for the crime is the individual who commits it (Sarzotti, 2015).

The prison institutions have been examined in terms of organization as well as a way of structuring social actors who follow a set of rules and an internal, peripheral organization, whose aim is the achievement of goals (De Nardis, 1998; Buffa, 2013). It would be insufficient to talk about normative changes concerning the prison system without examining in depth the impact of changes in perspective on the organization of the daily work of all operators and the individual well-being of prisoners.

However, the current reality is that the Italian penitentiary system has structural problems, especially in terms of the health and safety of the prison population. The increase in the number of prisoners in the institutions led to a gradual deterioration of living conditions, reduced the effectiveness of rehabilitation and hampered relations with the outside community. For these reasons, in 2013 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned Italy for inhuman treatment and overcrowding in prison facilities, accusing the State of violating Art. 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) of the ECHR.



### **The penitentiary change after the ECHR's condemnation**

After the ECHR's judgment, the Italian prison system started the process of change. The country is committed to changing the layout of prisons because the buildings themselves contribute to poor conditions. Firstly, attention has been directed towards the creation of a new organizational and management system for the entire system. Secondly, the institution has aimed to improve the appreciation of prison workers who perceived the negative judgment of the Council of Europe as a personal defeat.

In response to these factors, the Italian system is committed to ensuring the welfare of prisoners, harmonizing disparate regulations and operational practices. In fact, "despite the coercive character of the institution, it is considered that there are limits for the prison population regarding the protection of individuals and their rights through the acquisition of skills which useful to internal survival and which are gradually applied to the phase of re-integration" (writer's translation, [www.ristretti.it](http://www.ristretti.it)). The reformation of 1975 focused on the centrality of developing relationships with the prison population; however, it is true that over the years the dimensions of the prison system, both in space and time, have represented very critical elements for achieving the objective of the legislator.

Currently, the main response to this issue is the application of a so-called open regime (described in Art. 6 of the Penitentiary of 1975) which ensures better living conditions for private individuals deprived of personal liberties. According to this reform, the cell is used exclusively for sleeping in at night. During the day, education, training, employment, and leisure take place in other specific spaces, whereas the courtyards are for time 'out of cell'. In addition, there are specific places for meetings with professionals and for their meals.

Furthermore, the dynamic monitoring concept is closely related to this approach. In fact, it consists of the simplification, rationalization, and qualification of workloads, the distinction of levels of expertise, and the sharing of information flows between the various professionals. This is a dynamic security service capable of reconciling order within the prisons with helpful psychological and pedagogical activities.

The foundation of dynamic monitoring is based on close relationships between prisoners and prison staff, which can be severely limited if the prisoners' physical space remains confined to a few square meters in the cell. Therefore, it is important to achieve effective communication between the various professionals involved in observation and treatment. The success of the aforementioned goals depends on effective communication between the professionals who work in the field of observation and treatment, coupled with the assignment of workloads dependent on the human and material resources of each institution. In addition, it is important that prison staff get to know prisoners and help develop a sense of responsibility, enhancing the quality of the relationships among prisoners, and between prisoners and staff.

These factors emphasize the high level of attention focused on the protection of the dynamics between professional workers and prisoners' rights.

### **The prison population in the new organization**

Operational strategies adopted in response to the ECHR's requirements ask for a review of the organizational and management system of penitentiary administration through the shared commitment of the entire prison population. What is required is a strong sense of responsibility that gives all professionals who work respectively *in* and *for* the prison, whether they are organized or not, the opportunity to address this important change. The open prison system and dynamic monitoring, which can only take place through the active involvement of the staff and prisoners, implies renewed flexibility and expertise as part of a reorganization of the management and security (i.e. greater autonomy in the management of their resources, of security and of the cognitive processes of the prisoners) ([www.giustizia.it](http://www.giustizia.it)).

The success of the prison organization lies with its human resources, which demands a good relational atmosphere within the work context (Nelli, 1994), attention to relationships and also to employees' motivations (Avallone & Bonaretti, 2003).

These new applications can disorient all prison actors who can have difficulties in changing their *modus operandi*. In fact, the prison institution is a rigorous system resistant to change. In particular, prison work-

ers have some difficulties in changing their approach while some prisoners seem to accept the changes. During research in prisons conducted by the writer, some prisoners expressed an acceptance of the changes thanks to the greater freedom of movement and contact between cells. Prisoners, in fact, recognize relational needs as existential needs. In particular, this occurs within the open regime system when prisoners are migrants because it gives them the chance to restore ethnic and cultural traditions.

The new system also requires an increase in employment opportunities for prisoners at the beginning of their sentences as opposed to at the end. However, this opportunity is limited because of the insufficient number of jobs available and this hampers the process of social re-integration.

The transition from prison to the community is often a complex process that depends on the need for social security and the need for ex-prisoners to become active members of the community, moving beyond their labels as prisoners (Skowronski & Carlson, 1989; Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004). In this regard, the alternatives to incarceration, called *community sanctions*, are good examples of alternatives to punishment and treatment. The community sanctions include measures such as probation, home detention and custodial sentences<sup>1</sup>, which allow part-time study or work outside the prison, experiencing outside life instead of isolation and avoiding the overcrowding of prisons. These activities are based mainly on the possibility of working outside the prison, an important opportunity to develop their awareness of social assistance and to deal with dynamics similar to those that they will face outside prison. In this way, the work becomes a tool for the gradual preparation for a free life: the prisoner begins to perceive themselves useful to society, capable of creating a system of relations and designing a life outside their cell.

Subsequently, it is important to highlight that there are many limitations in realizing long-term projects due to high levels of unemployment and poverty. In fact, in Italy the phenomenon of the *working poor* (Lavanco & Novara, 2017) which emerged in the late eighties (Crettanz & Bonoli, 2010), is more widespread among young people and marginal subjects (former prisoners, former drug addicts, ex-alcoholics). Firstly, the main problem regards the effects of low wages, provoking consequently poor education and training, poor health, widespread crime, poverty and social exclusion. Job insecurity affects ex-prisoners doubly because the community treats them as second-class workers, aggravating the social re-integration processes. Actually, in the Italian context, the region of Sicily registers the highest rate of precarious employment, unemployment, poverty and the greatest concentration of social exclusion.

In order to reduce the extent of these difficulties, the Italian system should begin to meet the prerequisites for prisoners/ex-prisoners' re-integration to work. A good solution would be the establishment of a special employment office that is responsible for finding employment compatible with the profile of the prisoner/ex-prisoner. Furthermore, it is important to carry out the procedures laid down by the law and harmonize the bureaucracy, considering that prison overcrowding causes the transfer of prisoners within and between regions. In December 2016, two years after the ECHR's recommendations, the official national capacity of the prisons amounted to 50,228 places compared with 54,653 prisoners in attendance. Furthermore, there is a need to provide a service to prisoners in order to obtain the personal documents required for employment, ensuring the respect of their fundamental rights ([www.ristretti.it](http://www.ristretti.it)).

## Conclusions

The prison reorganization requested by the ECHR calls for the active involvement of workers and prisoners. Many initiatives have been planned for the enrichment of professional skills and for the social inclusion of prisoners ([www.giustizia.it](http://www.giustizia.it)), such as active listening (Caputo, 2013). However, there is a need to enhance the relationship between the staff and the prison population in order to protect the community needs in which the prisoner has the right of re-integration. Furthermore, the institution has to "humanize" the prison system. Pris-

<sup>1</sup> 1) Prisoners are placed in the custody of social services outside the prison for a period that is equal to the term of imprisonment. 2) Female prisoners who are pregnant or who have children (under the age of 10) can serve their sentence in their own home, in another private house or in public centers that assist women in disadvantaged conditions. 3) The prisoner spends part of the day outside of the prison in order to participate in work, educational activities or other activities useful to their social re-integration, on the basis of a treatment program, the responsibility of which is entrusted to the director of the penal institution (Official Journal of the European Communities, No. R (92) 16).

ons should not be considered merely as places of imprisonment; rather, they should be considered as ‘re-educational’ places, which aim to improve quality of life. However, this mission has sparked controversy due to the difficulty in changing the perspective of many of those who operate within the system. Problems still exist regarding the social resistance toward the re-integration of ex-prisoners into the community, which risks creating the foundation of a dichotomy that a prisoner is “locked out of the jail” because they are perceived as a ‘foreign body’ and not as an integral part of society. This distorted view encourages the reality of the prison as a closed community: a dysfunctional element that mainly threatens southern Italy because of its additional social problems (unemployment, poverty, and criminality).

Currently, it is not possible to draw up a complete assessment of the Italian prison system. Otherwise, it seems appropriate to examine and reflect on what has already been achieved and what improvements still have to be made in order to improve the well-being of the prison population and to overcome the distance between the institutions and the social work.

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**PRACTITIONER PAPER**

## **How Student Recruitment and Selection Can Impact Reentry Outcomes: Lessons from the Michigan Department of Corrections and Jackson College**

by TERRELL A. BLOUNT

Vera Institute of Justice

TODD BUTLER

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**Abstract:** *In 2013, the Vera Institute of Justice launched the Unlocking Potential: Pathways from Prison to Postsecondary Education Project (Pathways), a five-year multi-state demonstration project. Pathways aimed to increase educational attainment and employment opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals by supporting an expansion of educational opportunities in prison. Corrections departments in the states of New Jersey, Michigan, and North Carolina were selected to participate in the initiative. Each college-in-prison program—although executed differently and offering varying programs of study—possessed one common theme: to equip incarcerated persons with the tools necessary to end the cycle of incarceration through high-quality postsecondary education. This paper examines approaches to student recruitment taken by the Michigan site during its implementation phase and suggests potential outcomes for college-in-prison programs to consider when using the “return communities” approach.*

**Keywords:** *Prison education; postsecondary correctional education; college in prison*

Over the last several decades, the United States experienced a sharp decline in the number of colleges providing classroom-based instruction to the incarcerated population. With the support of Pell grants, college education in prisons flourished from the 1970s to the 1990s (Adams, 1973). In 1994 however, nearly all programs were discontinued when Congress moved to ban people incarcerated in state and federal facilities from receiving federal aid to cover their costs of tuition (Fine, 2001). At its peak use in prisons immediately preceding the ban, prisoners accounted for less than 1% of all Pell grant recipients: there was 1 imprisoned Pell student for every 499 students receiving Pell grants in the community (Morra, 1994). State aid programs soon followed suit (Fine, 2001), leaving what few programs remained heavily dependent on private funding or volunteer initiatives (often non-credit bearing), and forced to drastically reduce the number of students in their prison classrooms. Other programs offered distance learning through correspondence courses in liberal arts or theological studies, but were forced to limit enrollment to students who could pay for the courses themselves.

Prison populations massively increased in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, capping off in 2009 with 1.5 million people behind bars (National Research Council, 2014). That figure holds steady today (Carson and Anderson, 2016), driven in part by the high rate at which people return to prison within three years: 55 percent (Durose, 2014). Given these trends, postsecondary correctional education reemerged as an interest to many policy makers, researchers, and philanthropic organizations in the mid-2000s. Research demonstrated that postsecondary education could reduce recidivism and improve other post-release outcomes such as civic



participation, employment and income, and intergenerational prosperity (Delaney et al, 2016).

In 2012, the Vera Institute of Justice launched the Unlocking Potential: Pathways from Prison to Post-secondary Education Project (Pathways), a five-year multi-state demonstration project. Pathways aimed to increase educational attainment and employment opportunities for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals by supporting an expansion of college opportunities in prison. The initiative, funded by five leading foundations,<sup>1</sup> involved sixteen prisons and fifteen colleges and universities throughout three selected states: New Jersey, Michigan, and North Carolina. Each college-in-prison program—although executed differently and offering varying programs of study—possessed one common theme: equipping incarcerated persons with the tools necessary to end the cycle of incarceration through high-quality postsecondary education. Throughout the project, the colleges and corrections agencies developed innovative approaches to a number of implementation challenges. This article—which draws on the experience of the Michigan Pathways project—explores student recruitment and selection, and the potential outcomes for college-prison programs serving students returning to specific areas post-release.

### **Program Overview**

For the Pathways project, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) partnered with Jackson College (JC), a two-year college located in Jackson County, Michigan. JC served students in Macomb Correctional Facility, a men's mixed-security prison, and Parnall Correctional Facility, a men's minimum security prison. Michigan implemented a "2 years in, 2 years out" model, providing students with two years of classroom instruction and program support while incarcerated, followed by two years of continued educational and reentry support after release. Eligible students were required to return to one of the two cities in Michigan selected as designated return communities where project partners developed bridge services to re-connect students with college after they left prison. These aspects of the program design distinguished Michigan Pathways from many other college programs in prison, which typically do not offer support for their students during the reentry phase.

Under the partnership agreement with MDOC, JC offered courses to eligible students, who, upon completion of the program, would receive a Michigan General Transfer Certificate (GTC). Generally, the GTC recognizes the completion of general education requirements and awards recipients thirty credits (for those courses completed) toward an Associate's degree at any Michigan state university or community college. While the original intention of the GTC was to enable students in the community to easily transfer from one college to another to pursue the major of their choosing, the GTC was especially beneficial for Pathways students because 1) it required a shorter amount of time to complete than an AA or BA degree while in prison, 2) it equipped students with the general requirements needed to pursue most AA/BA degrees, and 3) it did not restrict students to a single major or concentration, allowing them to pursue their preferred major once released.

### **Recruiting Eligible Students from the Prison Population**

Similar to the process of accepting applicants into a college or university in the community, student selection for a college-in-prison program should also reflect standards that ensure eligible and qualified candidates are treated with fairness and equity. Postsecondary institutions teaching in prisons need to be thoughtful about the benefits and disadvantages of various student selection approaches, including: "first-come first-served," randomly generated lists, or selection based on sentence length or age of student. For instance, selecting all incarcerated people in a given facility with high school credentials and performing a randomized list of new enrollments may seem like a just approach, but prison release dates vary individually and can result in departures mid-semester, interrupting a student's education. A "first-come first-served" approach has its obvious flaws in the simple fact that prospective students living in housing units that are called last—whether randomly or strategically selected—will likely be unable to participate, especially if the number of enrollment slots are scarce. Commissary, religious services, and other correctional programming held during the time of registration may also prohibit the movement of people incarcerated within the facility.

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<sup>1</sup> The five foundations included the Ford Foundation, the Sunshine Lady Foundation, the Open Society Foundations, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Since its launch, the project has also received support from the Laughing Gull Foundation.

Where colleges in the community tend to have a generous pool of qualified applicants, colleges operating in prisons have a narrower group to choose from with approximately 30% of the US prison population having below high school education (Rampey et al, 2016). Additional factors narrow applicant pools even more, including incarcerated people who qualify but are uninterested in enrolling, are too close to their release date (and therefore cannot complete a semester), or have other reasons preventing participation.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, MDOC had a prison population slightly over 43,300 people. Of this population, 69% had achieved a high school diploma (HSD) or received high school equivalency by passing the test for General Education Development (GED), and 11,200 were either actively participating in an educational program or on waiting lists. Approximately 22% of those who achieved a HSD/GED had taken some postsecondary academic courses, but none had completed a degree. Students in Michigan Pathways were required to have achieved a HSD or GED, scored at least at the 9th grade level in Math and Reading on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), and have a release date within two to three years of the Pathways program implementation date.

To ensure this opportunity was not exclusive to the population in the two designated Pathways facilities, MDOC recruited students statewide. MDOC's Education Director—who provides oversight for planning and performance of educational programming for the state's 31 prisons—worked with numerous corrections staff to achieve recruitment goals. Before the program started, MDOC staff verified release dates of potential students, implemented an application process for those who were deemed eligible, orchestrated facility transfers for prisoners accepted into the program, and created detainers to prevent random administrative transfers once courses began. In the end, MDOC received 644 applications out of 1,157 eligible prisoners across the state. Finally, a randomized selection process resulted in 150 students entering the Pathways program from 21 facilities.

### **How Student Recruitment Impacts Reentry**

Another factor in determining student eligibility was the geographical area in which participants would return upon release. The Michigan Pathways program specifically targeted students who were expecting to return to Pontiac and Kalamazoo, where partnering community organizations could assist with student-related issues and basic reentry needs. Selecting a community to which people commonly relocate following prison will likely attract a high number of applicants to the program, strengthening enrollment numbers. Designating an uncommon post-prison destination as a return community may dissuade students from signing up while incarcerated. Many newly released prisoners rely heavily on the support of family and friends to re-establish their lives and will choose to return to the communities in which they can find those supports, as opposed to a place where they have no known resources. In the event that service providers may not be available or well-resourced in the selected return community, programs should connect with the local colleges to learn about available campus-based services that are normally covered by tuition and fees: tutoring support, food pantries, on-campus jobs, student housing, health and mental health services, to mention a few. However, as with any approach, selecting returning communities can have its advantages and disadvantages.

#### *Possible Benefits and Pitfalls of Targeting Student Reentry Communities*

One challenge that may occur when using the return community approach is that incarcerated students may feel obligated to return to an area they are not comfortable with (whether they lived there pre-incarceration or not) just so they can participate in a postsecondary program while in prison. After release, students may object to relocating to the targeted area or simply cannot relocate due to factors such as family obligations or parole requirements, thereby temporarily delaying or completely halting their studies. Another pitfall is that if eligibility for a college-in-prison program is restricted to students who are willing to commit to relocating to a limited number of return communities, the policy will inadvertently deny other potential students outside those targeted areas the opportunity to participate. College programs in corrections should make every effort to ensure that educational opportunities are inclusive, while balancing the reality of proposed reentry efforts.

Despite the possible pitfalls, there are some benefits to selecting particular areas where incarcerated students will return. One main benefit is that students in reentry who are within close proximity to one another—and the college—tend to organically form peer-support networks that promote information-sharing

<sup>2</sup>Other reasons incarcerated people cannot enroll in college level programming include facility policy that require prisoners to be free of infractions for a certain time length, being housed in segregation, or in some cases, already possessing a postsecondary degree.



surrounding academics, on-campus activities and events, local reentry resources, and more. To combat costly living arrangements, students in reentry may live together in off-campus housing, sharing apartments or sometimes entire homes. Doing so provides other collateral benefits such as learning to budget personal finances and living independently, which for some students may be a new experience. Another benefit—more so for the college program or reentry organization—is that students in the same area are easier to track and reach. Students often stay in communication with one another, so if one student encounters any setbacks, such as a return to custody due to a parole violation, another student can share that with program staff so they can act quickly to remedy or mitigate the situation (e.g., withdrawing a student from courses or offering to speak on a student's behalf). Those who live far from campus or program headquarters may be more difficult to reach.

### Conclusion

College-in-prison programs can take many different forms in regard to the coursework being offered, the postsecondary credentials earned upon completion, and the student selection process. Ensuring that those processes are fair and equitable is up to the academic institution and its corrections partner to determine. For example, if students are not returning to their home communities where they have social support, they may require more supportive community-based services or supervision. In Michigan, the lessons learned about recruitment for the Pathways project have informed the expansion of postsecondary education available in the DOC as additional colleges—Mott Community College and Delta College—have started teaching inside. Ideally, a thoughtful, strategic collaborative effort between the academic and correctional institution promises that incarcerated students from various backgrounds, with different offense types and returning to different communities, can have the opportunity to participate in high-quality college coursework that is challenging, rewarding, and transformative. As with any such endeavor, accomplishing even the most distant goal of the program begins with the decisions made on day one.

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This article is supported by Grant No. 2014-DP-BX-K006, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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**FEATURE--BOOK REVIEW**

**Through the Wall**

**Edited by Annie Buckley and Matthew McMilon**

**San Bernardino: Prison Arts Collective, California State University, San Bernardino**

Reviewed by Jonathan Cummins

*Through the Wall* (2016), a richly illustrated book, showcases the work of artists and writers incarcerated in three prisons in California, all of whom are participants in the Prison Arts Collective (PAC) arts programme. This innovative university-led initiative provides visual art, art history and creative writing programmes to prisoners at California Institution for Men (Chino), California Institution for Women (Chino) and California Institution Los Angeles County. PAC is part of California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) Community-based Art (CBA), an extensive programme dedicated to expanding access to the arts in settings that rarely promote arts education such as after-school programmes for at-risk children, shelters for youth and prisons.

The book was produced to accompany a 2016 exhibition of the same name at CB1, a contemporary art gallery in Los Angeles; yet it confidently functions as a standalone publication to introduce the diverse work of the artists involved. In keeping with what PAC describe as their collaborative and non-hierarchical ethos, the book documents the work of highly motivated self-taught artists, who engage with the programme through advanced critique classes, alongside artists who have only embarked recently on their art practice. The publication is edited by Annie Buckley and Matthew McMilon. Buckley is founder and director of CSUSB-CBA and PAC and associate professor of Visual Studies at CSUSB while McMilon is a teaching artist with PAC and Master of Fine Art candidate at CSUSB.

Context for the book's two-hundred plus illustrations is provided through a short introduction by Buckley, a foreword by artist-participant Stan Hunter and further texts by participant artists, teaching artists and associated staff. These short texts help situate the pieces and give context to the day to day working methods employed in what seems to be a very successful and dynamic studio-based prison arts programme. In his foreword, artist and PAC participant Stan Hunter emotively spells out the wide-ranging and positive impact that art has played in his twenty-eight years in prison. What is clear from the paintings, art objects and poems documented in the book is that when a prisoner is painting or writing, he or she is first and foremost an artist. The work in this book clearly illustrates the ways in which art allows us to reframe experience and identity, which is particularly important in the prison context.

The artworks created at each facility reflect particular themes and styles but a shared culture of studio production, critical thinking and group engagement is evident across the three facilities. Many of the artworks documented in the book depict idealised images of nature which are articulated with great skill and sensitivity. Nonetheless, isolation and the reality of prison life is a constant theme. Rarely, for example, do the artworks bear witness to social engagement and relatedness to other. Figures are frequently depicted alone such as Hooker's 'Mprisoned' or C. Weyant's 'Lonely Man 2'. This is work about 'doing time' and the poems and artworks provide a visceral engagement and commentary on the prison context from which they emerge. D. Eagen and J. Tercero's austere paintings of prison, for example, sit in stark contrast to S. Hunter's verdant paintings of nature such as 'Paradise' and 'Peace' or L. Valencia's many paintings of dolphins breaking the waves. Like different sides of the same coin, the heightened representations of nature provide a counterpoint to the contained, surveyed and censored life of prison. This gulf between 'inside' and 'outside' worlds points to the enormous personal challenges involved in maintaining one's identity while incarcerated and the difficulty in mediating relationships with loved ones on the outside as the years go by.



Despite the context, there is playfulness and joy in the paintings such as R. Yovano's 'Untitled' series of circus animals and the collaborative project 'Community Quilt'. There is a lively commentary around contemporary politics such as E. Gonzalez' 'The Antichrist', which comments on President Trump's stance on walls between the United States and Mexico. An important aspect of the programme is that it enables prisoners to create an artwork that can be gifted to a family member on the outside. This allows a man or woman on the inside to present a different side of self to those who really matter in his or her life. This simple but important act of exchange is evident in the content of many of the artworks, which express themes of home and longing.

Having worked as an art tutor in a prison in Ireland for many years, I'm particularly interested in those texts that detail the day to day methods employed by teaching artists, site leads and participants. It is clear that PAC has successfully created and sustained a positive group studio teaching environment, which is a very real challenge in prison. The process of art making provides participants with an experience and sense of place that is somewhat independent of the security regime and one which I expect provides a powerful normalising influence in the closed and contested nature of prison life. The book, like the public exhibition it accompanies, plays an important role in bridging worlds of inside and outside. It also represents a critical part of the art-making process; the public exhibition and dissemination of art enables the artist-participant to be a full artist by allowing others to experience their work.

PAC presents a model of how universities and prison institutions can work in partnership to create an environment of mutual learning. This is a relationship that works both ways. CSUSB-PAC, by facilitating students to teach in prisons through internship on credit-bearing modules, creates a mechanism for educating and fostering socially aware art teachers and artists who can engage meaningfully with individuals, groups and institutions. This inter-related process creates an experience that embeds itself deeply in the visiting teaching artist as much as the incarcerated artist. The book bears witness to the depth and breadth of the work being created by artists in prisons in California and the important arts education programmes provided by PAC.

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**REPORT**

## Future prisons and personalized trajectories

by CISCA JOLDERSMA  
Custodial Institutions Agency, The Netherlands

**Abstract:** *In the near future, imprisonment may no longer be the ultimate sanction. Imprisonment may be part of sanctions combined in an offender's trajectory. These trajectories will become more and more personalized and tailor-made. A trajectory consists of different options: pre-trial options; front-door options; options during stay in prison; pre-release options; and aftercare options. With regard to future prisons, five basic principles can be recognized: human dignity; the avoidance of further damage or harm; the right to develop the self; the right to be important to other people; and a stable and professional organization.*

**Keywords:** *Prisons of the Future; alternatives to detention; reentry*

### 1. Introduction

How will prisons look and what kind of alternatives to imprisonment can be expected in the near future? These questions were investigated in the European project Prisons of the Future. The European Commission, as part of the Specific Program Criminal Justice, Action Grants 2013, funded the project. Specifically, the project relates to the program theme 'improving prison conditions' and the priority 'actions or studies that focus on alternatives to imprisonment'. The project started in 2014 and ended Spring 2016 with a final working conference and a final report (Joldersma, 2016).

During the project implementation, the emphasis on *what* alternatives to imprisonment are available was complemented by focusing on *how* to apply alternatives in practice. The project aimed at giving an impression of the future landscape of prison and probation *practice*. The landscape includes buildings such as future prisons, but also other institutional practices and the way they are shaped and organized. The central questions of the project were:

- What are current developments in prison and probation practice?
- What patterns can be recognized in prison and probation practice and how can they be assessed?
- What are challenges for the future?

The project was shaped in accordance with the methodology of participatory policy analysis (Geurts and Joldersma, 2001). Participants together reflected upon recent developments in prison policies and detected challenges for the future. The participatory methodology resembles methods of 'foresight' (Popper, 2008). More specifically, the project has certain characteristics in common with Future Search conferences, in which participants develop common ground by looking to the recent past to explore the future.

Participants in the project came from Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The Confederation of European Probation Organizations participated in the project as well as the European Organization of Prison and Correctional Services. During the project, national teams were composed of the contributing countries, consisting of a policy maker, a prison governor, and a scientist. An expert team was also involved in the project.<sup>1</sup> Together with all participants, three working sessions were held to arrive at preliminary answers to the above questions. The sessions focused on current developments in prisons and probation practices, patterns and principles, and challenges for the future. One of the sessions was partly shaped as a gaming/simulation in order to explore innovative options.



At the start of the project, we assumed that it would be possible to detect a long list of alternatives to imprisonment. Furthermore, we implicitly expected one alternative at a time to be imposed on an offender. In this paper, the main project results with regard to these assumptions are shared and reflected upon. The results are mainly based on recent developments in the five northwestern European countries that were involved in the project, but they can also be of interest to other countries as well.

## 2. Project findings

### 2.1 The wheel of sanctions

The participating countries were asked to give insights into trends in the prison population in their countries in relation to probation population and criminality rates. Additionally, they were invited to draw an overview of current developments in prison and probation practice since the year 2000 and to reflect upon the alternatives that were at stake.

Different patterns were found with regard to a country's prison population in relation to the population of probation service. Whereas in Denmark the prison population remained stable over time, the number of prisoners decreased in Finland, Sweden, and The Netherlands. The Belgian prison population gradually increased. Overcrowding is still a problem to be solved by the Belgian government. In Denmark, it was observed that the prison population had become more complex and was more in need of support and treatment. A similar development was found in The Netherlands. One of the obvious reasons for a more complex prison population is that offenders of light offences are enabled more and more to stay out of prison due to alternative measures. However, in countries like Finland and The Netherlands, a large part of the prison population still consists of short-term prisoners.

In all countries involved, the favored alternatives to imprisonment are community service and electronic monitoring. For example, in Denmark, community services and electronic monitoring were the preferred alternatives. Community service – in combination with supervision - is often viewed as an appropriate alternative to a short-term prison sentence. In Finland, for example, until the year 2000, community services increased and short time prison sentences decreased at the same time. After the year 2000, however, the number of community services and short time prison sentences fluctuated. In Belgium, the focus has been, amongst others, on electronic monitoring. Electronic monitoring is also used in Belgium as an alternative to prison sentences for more serious offences, due to efficiency and prison overcrowding.

Other alternatives, such as contract treatment, differ per country and are dependent on the historical background. In Finland, the emphasis is on community services, since the country unsuccessfully tried to introduce contract treatment. In Sweden, contract treatment, community service, and electronic monitoring are the common sanctions. It is expected that the prison population in Sweden will decline further, due to electronic monitoring. A proposed measure in The Netherlands was intended to increase the use of electronic monitoring instead of imprisonment, but the measure was withdrawn due to lack of political support.

The range of preferred alternatives to imprisonment is quite small in the five different European countries together. The alternatives are summarized in the 'wheel of sanctions' (see Figure 1).

The wheel of sanctions shows that, in practice, only a few sanctions are commonly used. Conditional sentences can only be applied when the offender has agreed to comply with the conditions. Conditional sentences can involve different alternatives, such as fines, community services, and contract treatment. A breach of conditions usually implies that prison still functions as a last resort. A conditional sentence is usually accompanied by supervision by a probation officer in order to control whether the offender complies with the conditions. Probationary supervision can be viewed as a 'virtual imprisonment' concerning offenders' control in society. In practice, an increased use of alternatives to imprisonment does not always imply a similar decrease in the prison population. Therefore, net-widening effects can be designated, which means that as a whole, more people are under the influence of the criminal justice system (Joldersma, 2016, p. 138).<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1. The wheel of sanctions (Joldersma, 2016, p. 150)

**2.2 Multiple applications of sanctions during the criminal justice process**

We already noted that sanctions in the wheel are not mutually exclusive; they complement each other. Moreover, we found that, besides as autonomous alternatives, sanctions are applied as an option within a prison sentence. For example, Maes (Joldersma, 2016, pp. 41-54) explains that electronic monitoring is not ‘one single measure’, but can be implemented in different stages of the criminal justice process, such as in the pre-trial phase, as well as in the sentencing phase.

A distinction can be made between options used in the pre-trial phase, so-called ‘front-door’ options; options during execution of the sentence and stay in prison (i.e., ‘back-door’ options or ‘pre-release’ options); and options that are applied after execution of the sentence (so-called ‘after release’ options or ‘aftercare’ options). For example, electronic monitoring is frequently used as a back-door option in many countries. In Finland, supervised probationary freedom has been introduced as a form of gradual release in which case the offender is supervised by prison staff outside the prison. In Sweden, special release measures are effected, in particular to juvenile prisoners and with the supervision of laymen. In The Netherlands, a revolving door measure is used for drug-addicted offenders, which includes a type of conditional release for residential or extramural care. Depending on national regulations, the applied options can be imposed by the judge, but also by the prison governor and/or a probation officer. With regard to a prison sentence, the use of different options in practice can be visualized as in Figure 2.

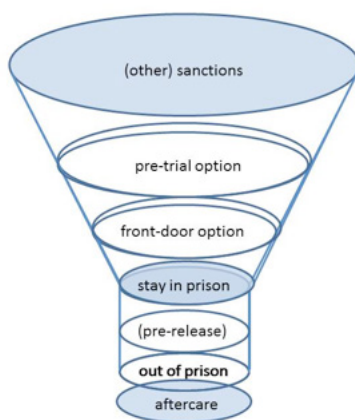


Figure 2. Funnel of options within a prison sentence (cf. Joldersma 2016, p. 140)

Figure 2 shows that different kinds of sanctions can be applied within a prison sentence. A pre-trial option concerns an alternative measure to remand custody. A front-door option is applied after the trial in order to avoid incarceration. A back-door option refers to possibilities for early release or pre-release from prison,

due to appropriate behavior and/or reasons for reintegration. After release from prison, aftercare options or post-release options can be applied in order to facilitate reintegration and to improve cooperation with local municipalities and care providers. The options within a prison sentence generally contribute to shortening prison time (Joldersma, 2016, pp. 139-140). In time, the continuum of different measures, partly replacing or complementing a prison sentence, are broadened and enriched. Moreover, the boundaries between prison and community based-sanctions can blur. This trend can be seen in the Finnish basic principle of allocating prisoners to a setting with as open conditions as possible, including outside prisons.

### **2.3 Personalized trajectories**

In the participating countries, it is quite common that prisoners have personal enforcement plans or 'detention and reintegration plans'. Each prisoner has his own personal plan with activities during the day and preparations for reentry in society. These plans are preferably developed with the involvement of the prisoners themselves. The plan is usually intended to be in accordance with the severity of the offence and the risks and needs of the offender. Already in the phase of conviction, risk-need analyses are sometimes used for individualized sentencing. More and more, treatment and rehabilitative interventions are tailored to the learning style and characteristics of the client. In the European countries involved, evidence-based practices are developing, based on the principles of Risk Needs Response or the 'what works' approach. The plans preferably take into account personal circumstances and hooks for change of the offender (Joldersma 2016, pp. 141-142).

Elaborating on the 'what works' approach, and in addition to the question 'what works' with regard to alternatives to imprisonment, we asked questions such as 'for whom, in what contexts and circumstances, and why?' These kinds of questions are commonly used in so-called realist evaluations in which working mechanisms are searched for (Pawson and Tilly, 2004). Referring to these additional questions, we found that sentences, their execution and follow-ups are tailored to the characteristics of the offender. Not only in the phase of conviction by court, but also in the phase of execution, sentences are tailored to characteristics of the offender, such as risks, needs, personal experiences, and hooks for change. Personalized sentencing can also be recognized in the personal enforcement or detention and reintegration plans. Consequently, in different phases of the criminal justice process, personalized sanctions and options are applied in a particular sequence to a particular offender (Joldersma, 2016, p. 151). The applied options together form a trajectory, taking into account circumstances of the offender as well as his social network. For example, the application of electronic monitoring needs family consent. Personalized trajectories in prison and probation practice can be compared, to some extent, to personalized medicine. Personalized medicine takes into account personal characteristics of the patient before prescribing medication (Joldersma, 2016, pp. 137-148).

### **2.4 Theory-in-use in prison and probation practice**

Our experience during this project shows that it is hard to look at the future and imagine how future prisons will be shaped. According to the project participants, future prisons probably result from evolutionary and incremental changes of current practice, instead of revolutionary and disruptive changes. Therefore, we searched for current structural characteristics that influence current changes and probably will also be visible in the near future. We considered how to define the core characteristics of sanctions and options. For example, electronic monitoring can be defined in terms of electronic devices and the kind of technology used to control movements of the offender outside the home situation. However, shaping electronic monitoring for one situation can be different from shaping electronic monitoring for another situation. Therefore, we searched for the 'theory-in-use' of the applied sanctions and options. Theories-in-use are those theories that 'can be inferred from action; they are consistent with what people do'. They differ from 'espoused theories' or a theory a person or stakeholder 'claims to follow' (Argyris and Schön, 1974; Joldersma, 2016, pp. 54-64).

In the countries involved in the project, similar reasons or values are raised with regard to shaping prison and probation practice (see Figure 3).

The values can be compared to the espoused theory or the values participating countries claim to follow. The question is how these values are balanced in practice. Regardless of the particular option or sanction, common ground was found in similar basic principles with regard to prison and probation practice. The basic principles are:



- *Human dignity; the offender feels recognized as a person.*
- *The avoidance of further damage or harm: sanctions should not provide additional punishments.*
- *The right to develop the self: offenders have personal autonomy and are enabled to use their strengths.*
- *The right to be important to other people: persons are part of society and can contact their social network.*
- *A stable and professional organization: prison & probation service is open-minded and focuses on professional development (Joldersma, 2016, pp. 14, 147).*

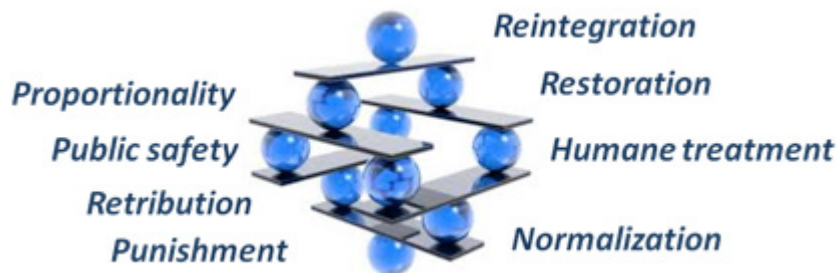


Figure 3. Balancing different values (Joldersma 2016, p. 152)

### 3. Conclusions and future challenges

In this article, the results of the European project Prisons of the Future were presented, along with the question of how to prepare for future of prison and probation practice and what to take into account.

The project was based on a participatory methodology, by elaborating on current changes in prison and probation practice in the participating countries and developing common ground in knowing where we are going.

Current features in prison and probation practice can be ordered along the ‘wheel of sanctions’, personalized trajectories and basic principles. The wheel of sanctions makes clear that there are only a few basic sanctions that are used autonomously or in combination with each other and function as options in a criminal justice process. The options are applied in a particular sequence, resulting in personalized trajectories that take personal characteristics of the offender into account. It is not the sanction or option as such which matters, but the way it is applied in practice, and for whom, and for what reason. Basic principles with regard to personalized trajectories in the context of public safety and reintegration relate to human dignity, avoidance of further damage, personal development, to be significant to others, and a professional organization.

Challenges for future prisons concern how the wheel of sanctions, personalized trajectories and basic principles are applied in practice. It raises new questions with regard to shortening prison time and connecting prisons and prisoners as much as possible to society. Is the future prison still functioning as a last resort for vulnerable offenders who are not able to comply with conditions? Other challenges concern the application of new communication technology and electronic monitoring, facilitating face-to-face relationships between staff and offenders, and maximizing opportunities for dynamic security. Finally, ‘what works’ approaches run the risk of becoming too instrumental with regard to applying instruments and techniques. How can we make sure that personalized trajectories contribute to the offender’s real behavioral changes?

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The expert team consisted of Alison Liebling (UK), expert on moral quality of prison life; Eric Maes (Belgium), expert on electronic monitoring; and Bas Vogelvang (The Netherlands), expert on probation and circles of accountability and support.

<sup>2</sup> Contribution of the Confederation of European Probation Organizations CEP to working sessions of Prisons of the Future, based on a small survey amongst its members.

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