

Lead Editor's Welcome

CORMAC BEHAN

Welcome to Volume 6, Number 2 of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*. *JPER* was established to provide a place to publish research and practice in prison education. In this issue, we are delighted to have three practitioner papers showcasing the work of prison and correctional educators.

Our cover art 'Give Us Opportunities' was created by the Performing Statistics project in 2016. Performing Statistics is a cultural organizing project that uses art to model, imagine, and advocate for alternatives to youth incarceration. Performing Statistics' ethos looks to young people impacted by the juvenile justice system as experts society should listen to when considering policies that most impact them.

As always, we begin with our historical vignette from Thom Gehring. In his fascinating article, 'Call it What it is: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) From Life in Prison', Thom reminds us that we should never forget the impact of being exposed to the reality of incarceration on educators and caregivers. He argues that the intensity of the pain varies among nations, but prisons always hurt people. He challenges us to use language that describes this experience, which he concludes is "in our current language: post-traumatic stress disorder".

Dorien Brosens and her colleagues' research on participation by foreign national prisoners in the Flanders region of Belgium investigates which prison activities (e.g., cultural, educational, and health-related activities, sports, vocational training, and forensic welfare services) are available to, and accessible by, foreign national prisoners. They found that several initiatives have been taken to enhance foreign nationals' participation in prison activities and highlight the struggles that activity coordinators face in offering activities that are suitable for this section of the prison population.

Our first practitioner paper by Theresa Ochoa and colleagues is an extended practitioner paper on a university-based mentoring program that trains undergraduate students to serve as job mentors to incarcerated youth in Indiana's juvenile correctional facilities. The project, Helping Offenders Prosper through Employment (HOPE) allows undergraduate students to serve as positive role models to incarcerated youth during and after confinement to improve community re-entry. This will be of particular interest to practitioners interested in implementing peer mentoring in juvenile and correctional facilities, as well as scholars studying factors that reduce juvenile recidivism.

The practitioner paper by Terrance Hinton "I See You Have Been Convicted of a Felony; Can You Tell Me About That?" Workforce Development Challenges for Restorative Citizens Seeking Employment" begins by reporting that after a sharp increase in the prison population in the USA in the late 20th century several states, have in the last decade, overhauled their criminal sentencing and prison structures to lower prison populations. This has resulted in

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(Accepted: 22 February 2020) ISSN: 2387-2306 doi: <https://doi.org/10.25771/102f-1693>

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the release of thousands of citizens and has expanded the need for re-entry services. The paper examines the barriers that these citizens, and the social workers who assist them, face in helping former prisoners find suitable and sustainable employment. Hinton explores solutions for collaboration across criminal justice and non-profit agencies for the purposes of increasing employment opportunities for what he terms 'restored' citizens returning back to the community.

Prins, Stickel, and Kaiper-Marquez's paper on family literacy programs for parents in prison argues that research on these correctional education initiatives is scant. Therefore, they hope to contribute to the nascent literature on family literacy for incarcerated parents. Using qualitative data from fathers in a rural Pennsylvania prison, who were involved in their children's literacy and education before imprisonment, they found that during incarceration they sought to continue supporting their children's learning from within prison through the Read to Your Child/Grandchild (RYCG) program. These fathers used a variety of materials (video-recorded book reading, children's books, scrapbooks) to emphasize the importance of education, literacies, and numeracy that cultivated their children's literate abilities and cognitive, academic, and socio-emotional development.

We hope you have enjoyed and were challenged by some of the papers in this volume of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*. As we look forward to our next issue of *JPER*, we invite prison and correctional educators to join the conversation as we endeavor to cultivate our research outputs and develop pedagogical approaches together. I appeal to all those involved in prison education and learning to consider writing a research paper, contributing examples of best practice, writing a book review, or updating us on policies. I look forward to working with prison education researchers, prison educators and learners inside on our next edition of the *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*.

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