UNESCO Chair of applied Resarch
for Education in Prison

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 1 – May 2023

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A WORD FROM THE TEAM

Marc-André Lacelle

Marc-André Lacelle, development and research advisor of UNESCO Chair of Applied Research for Education in Prison

At the age of artificial intelligence (AI), thinking about how to promote and facilitate education in prison is becoming increasingly complex and challenging. Under the right to education and the principle of standardization of learning conditions and goals around rehabilitation, access to digital technologies and the Internet in a prison learning setting should be more in line with our perspectives of action. Otherwise, societies would be imposing a "double sentence" on incarcerated people, especially for those with long sentences.

Access to these new learning tools and to their knowledge and operation constitutes an imperative for social inclusion. How can we ensure that this access does not constitute a mechanism of exclusion? As the return to society remains one of the aims of education in prison, how can we think about its deployment in a secure environment like prisons? The benefits of distance education must not be thwarted by a negative self-image linked to the complexity of access to technology, as reported by Monteiro et al It should be noted that in Canada, technological access to distance learning remains marginal, if not non-existent.

We also observe a growing interest in non-formal education or microlearning useful in a social reintegration process, as is the case with the Canadian prison indigenization projects analyzed by Tetrault. For their part, Little and Warr explore how the practice of informal discussion of so-called abstract topics can increase and facilitate the production of educational capital in prison settings. Pedagogical capital is defined by these authors as the symbolic capital associated with learning that enhances learners' sense of belonging and well-being.

This spring was also marked by the emergence of new concerns by communities of interest towards prison education as one of the ongoing processes of social reintegration. Whether it be through our participation in events such as the AQIFGA (Association québécoise des intervenantes et des intervenants en formation générale des adultes) Spring School 2023 or the biennial criminal law conference Justice, prison and the prison continuum, artistic practices of imprisoned women (the sound installation by the Collectif Art Entr'Elles, which we will discuss in our next newsletter) or the award-winning educational initiatives in prison, the desire to describe and understand the continuity of the prison experience, to innovate and improve educational practices in a continuous multidisciplinary process of social reintegration (both in prison, in the transitional milieu and upon return to the community) is becoming an axis of humanization for the community.

Finally, an interview with Stephen Akpabio-Klementowski, a former prison learner who is now a criminologist and prison education practitioner, addresses an argument that is not often made in the public arena about the rehabilitative benefits of prison education. From a holistic perspective, it seems necessary to highlight the societal benefits of educational support in prison for victim reduction associated with release. The common good should be more fully considered in the development of prisoner reintegration programs in order to increase their effectiveness. Education in prison remains an important means of ensuring reflective autonomy and the capacity for judgment of the person who is part of a continuum of social reintegration towards a form of freedom.

Enjoy the read!

CHAIR ACTIVITIES

Announcement – The Cégep's UNESCO Chair in Applied Research for Prison Education is renewed until 2027.

We are pleased to announce the renewal until 2027 of the agreement between UNESCO and Cégep Marie-Victorin concerning the UNESCO Chair in Applied Research for Education in Prison.

To learn more about the agreement and the Chair

CONFERENCES – ROUND TABLES – WORKSHOPS

Conference – The Chair at the International Level

Last December, the Chair team travelled to UNESCO headquarters in Paris to attend the international conference "*Transforming Knowledge for Just and Sustainable Futures*" as part of the 30th anniversary celebration of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Program.

Read the press release

Images (p. 3 & 22) generated from Open AI (DALL-E) – Learner studying in prison in the manner of Gerhard Richter and in the manner of Anish Kapoor

UNESCO Chair 2023 Award

The UNESCO Chair Award recognizes an innovative project, material or teaching strategy in the prison environment. It is awarded during the annual event on educational services in prisons in collaboration with the Centre de services scolaires de la Rivière-du-Nord and the Centre de services scolaires des Mille-Îles. This award is intended to highlight and recognize the exceptional work in education of teachers in prisons, which is done on a daily basis in federal penitentiaries in Quebec as well as in detention facilities under provincial jurisdiction.

This year, it was presented in person by the Chair's team during the event held on April 26th in Saguenay. On this occasion, the Chair held a conference to share observations and findings on practices and research in prison education. This conference was also an opportunity for the public to learn about the mandate, activities and research projects of the Chair.

To consult the presentation

The Chair had the pleasure of presenting the UNESCO Chair 2023 Award to Maude Proulx, Geneviève Pelletier, Nicolas Lansac, Elzbieta Korzycka, Barbara Jakubiec, Anne Richard, Jessica Tremblay, Mathieu Fournier – supported by the Assistant Director Luc Tremblay for the project "Papa raconte-moi une histoire", Donnacona Correctional Institution, and Luc Beauchesne, Émilie Gagnon, Christine Lepage and Jean-René Provencher for the project *"Une pédagogie parapluie"*, Trois-Rivières Correctional Institution.

Our congratulations to them!

To find out about the project

From the right: Team from Donnacona Detention Facility – *"Papa, raconte-moi une histoire"* ©Marc-André Lacelle
From the left: Team from Trois-Rivières Detention Facility – *"Une pédagogique parapluie"* ©Marc-André Lacelle

Research, Creativity & Innovation Week – Cégep Marie-Victorin

From April 17th to 20th, 2023 the Chair participated in the Cégep Marie-Victorin's Research, Creativity & Innovation Week. This year, the Cégep offered a series of portraits of researchers working in the institution through an exhibition and discussion booths. The objective is to immerse oneself in the practice of research in the college environment and to value and promote this practice.

Find out more about the researchers' journeys

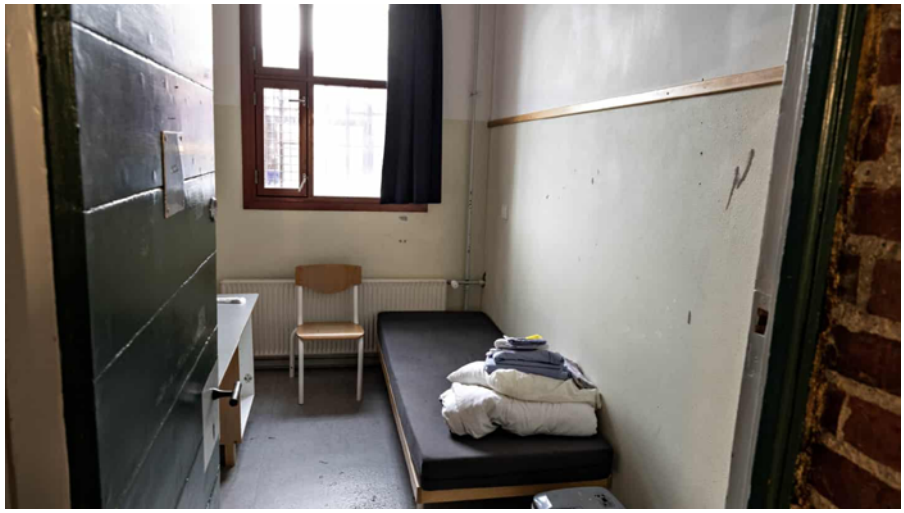
NEWS

In Denmark

In Denmark, one out of every three individuals brought to justice is in pre-trial detention, despite the recommendations of the European Commission's Ministry of Justice, which advocates giving priority to alternative solutions. This increase in pre-trial detention is accompanied by increasingly long sentences. Denmark is thus becoming one of the countries where the number of people in pre-trial detention is one of the highest in Europe. Professors of Criminology Linda Kjær Minke (University of Southern Denmark) and Anette Storgaard (Aarhus University) are surprised that other known options are not used. They point out the negative consequences of the increase in pre-trial detention: worsening psychological health, risk of suicide and self-harm, increased recidivism, and socio-economic problems upon release. They also point out the pressure on the current shortage of staff and space in Danish prisons. Anette Storgaard mentions that there are many possibilities for alternative measures in the *Administration of Justice Act*, such as confiscating the offender's passport or requiring the prisoner to report weekly to a judicial controller. The electronic leg monitor mentioned in the article appears to be an alternative, although a more stringent recourse. According to the researchers, a new reflection is needed within the Danish judicial system, unused to alternatives to preventive detention, except in cases involving minors or mentally ill people. On April 19th, the Chair welcomed the two researchers for a webinar on the Scandinavian model.

To watch the webinar

Østedgaard Nielsen, E. (March 19th 2023). Danmark i top tre: Vi varetægtsfængsler mere og mere, selv om der er andre muligheder. In *AvisenDanmark*. March 29th, 2023.



In pre-trial detention, prisoners stay in cells such as this one 23 hours a day.
© Michael Bager

In Porto

The 3rd edition of the International Symposium of Correctional Research (CRS) was held from March 27 to 30, 2023, under the title *"Rehabilitating Reintegration: Research and Reflections on What Works"*, organized by the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris), the International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA) and the General Directorate of Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais del Portogallo (DGRSP). At this conference, researchers, prison directors, members of service networks, members of the criminal justice executive and former inmates met to discuss various themes including new approaches to rehabilitation for offenders, international perspectives on the main challenges in rehabilitation, mental health and recidivism. Participants discussed these topics and presented their research and practices. Among the panellists present were: Fergus McNeill (University of Glasgow), Seena Fazel (University of Oxford), Sonja Snacken (Vrije Universiteit), Rui A. Gonçalves (Head of the DGRSP), Brian Lovins (Principal for Justice System Partners, USA), Fergal Black (Director of the Irish Prison Service).

Summary of the guest researcher Sergio Grossi as a participant in the Symposium

PORTRAIT OF A RESEARCHER:
STEPHEN AKPABIO-KLEMENTOWSKI

Stephen Akpabio-Klementowski (AFHEA) is an associate lecturer in criminology with The Open University (OU), a regional manager for the OU's *Student's in Secure Environments* (SiSE) team, a PhD candidate with a focus on higher education in prisons, and former prisoner. Stephen's unique experiences include real-life experience of the CJS, earning an undergraduate and two postgraduate degrees during an 8-year period of incarceration. He currently works with over 60 prisons to facilitate OU study as a regional manager for The Open University whilst tutoring 1st and 2nd year criminology students as an associate lecturer and conducting research in prisons.

Frédérick Armstrong – Can you give us an idea of your background, that is who you are currently and who you were before?

Stephen Akpabio Klementowski – I have been a regional manager at the Open University's Students in the Secure environment team for the last eight years. This team is dedicated to supporting and facilitating university-level studies for prisoners. I'm responsible for prisons in the Midlands and the North of England, about 60 prisons in total. My role is providing support to both prisons and prisoners to facilitate their studies. I'm also an associate lecturer at the University and I have been lecturing in criminology for year-one and year-two students for the last four years. I am also a researcher, in the final stages of my PhD program. My thesis focuses on higher education in prison and its role in terms of reducing reoffending. Before going to university, I actually went to prison. I got convicted for drug-related offences and I received a 16-year sentence in 2002. It was my first custodial sentence. My personal background led me into all sorts of criminality, but mostly dealing drugs. I was born in London; my parents are immigrants and we lived in social housing. I can't claim these are all direct factors in my offending. I have to take some responsibility in terms of my personality and how I conducted myself at the time, because I do have siblings and they managed to stay clear of prison. I'm not making a correlation between my background and "I'm going to prison." But they played a role in some of the things I did leading up to my criminality. For example, I left school at 14 without qualifications and without the basic skills you need to secure employment. You know, if you don't have a job and you need access to finances, then you turn to crime.

F. – In a previous interview, you said something like "education was not my thing at the time." Can you elaborate?

S. – I think I was alluding to my personality before I went to prison. I had a very strong personality from a young age. I claimed my own thoughts in my own understanding of things, even though, I realize now they were kind of ignorant. But, at the time, I had a sense of maturity. I thought I was mature enough to look after myself. I didn't need adults to tell me what to do. I needed my friends, my mates.

F. – If I understand correctly, it was more the sort of obligation or the authority that often comes with education that "was not your thing", right?

S. – I think that's exactly right! I questioned everything! I wanted answers and I'd question the whole purpose of education. From my own community, I hardly saw evidence of its benefits to those individuals who had taken the trouble to get educated. I saw people who struggled all around me in terms of education, in terms of school and in terms of just getting on day-by-day. Education was something I felt was, not a luxury, but I just thought that I didn't have quite the resources: time, money, effort.

F. – Did you struggle with the material itself?

S. – Well, I didn't engage, and I think that's what's the saddest thing for me, because I couldn't deal with the environment. I never got down to actually working constructively, purposefully with the material. I think that's really a key in all of this was that I actually never applied myself. It was only when I got into prison and had this opportunity that I began to apply myself and then the results were almost instantaneous.

F: What's different about education in prison that made you want to apply yourself?

S. – The type of education I was engaging with in prison was what we call distance learning. You get your materials, and you have a tutor, who's going to support you and off you go! What I liked about this particular approach to learning was that it was all put down to me. If I put the efforts in, I'd get through it. It was a clear contrast to the type of education where you're being talked down to by some clever person, in front of the class. As I now realize, one of the things that I find particularly pleasing in my job is that, because I have an unconventional background and an untraditional lecturing style, my students constantly remark about how refreshing my approach is because I align myself alongside my students. I take the view that I'm quite likely to learn just as much from them as they are from me. And my students find that it makes me accessible to them and the whole academic experience an accessible one too. The results demonstrate that too.

F. – What was your relationship with the tutor in your first experience in prison?

S. – My first tutor is a good friend of mine now. What he did for me, which was invaluable, was to give me a sense that, even though I had no background in formal education, my thoughts and my opinions on the material were valid! He validated my understanding! Part of my issue with education in the past was that I felt that I wasn't quite up to it, to be honest. I didn't think I'd make the grade... I thought I wasn't capable, and my school report seemed to prove that. My tutor's attitude made me begin to have a little bit more belief in my own ability.

Like I said before, I left school at 14 without any qualifications. In our penal system, 42 % of prisoners were like me. They had left through school for whatever reason, without formal qualifications. That's a huge number. In the UK, we've got a prison population pushing 90 000 — 42 % of that is a huge number. You know, when you go back to school so late, you do question yourself, you question your ability. I had always questioned my own intellectual ability to study and do these things. So that in itself is a barrier. But that barrier can be overcome if you have the right access to the right tutor, to the right facility, to the right instructors, because they can help build your own confidence.

F. – It's interesting, because you said that one of the factors that helped you persevere in education in prison was the fact that you could do it by yourself, but it seems that the relationship you built with your tutor also played a significant role.

S. – I couldn't agree more. These relationships are essential. It's almost like scaffolding. You start at the bottom, and you work your way to the top and you need somebody to hold your hand. Especially if you're talking about adult learners. People who had an interruption in their formal education. They need someone to rely on.

F. – It seems that you just started directly with post-secondary education material? How does this happen?

S. – In the UK, everyone who goes into custody is required to have an assessment on their literacy and numeracy levels. This assessment is conducted by the prison service. It's designed to establish where you are and whether there are there any gaps in your learning. I did my assessment, and I did very well on that. It came back above GCSE[1] level in both literary and numeracy.

I was on my way out of the room and the person who ran the assessment called me back. She says, "you've done very well... but you said you did not have any formal qualifications" and I said, "well, I don't!" She says, "well you've done very well! And this is the GCSE standard. So, if you had signed on to do the GCSE formally, you would have gotten your GCSEs today, because you've just passed it!" I was a bit shocked. I was at the start of my sentence. I had a long way to go. And she said to me: "Would you want to explore that?" And I thought, well, you know, to what end? I'm in here, you know, almost a decade.

I said "Miss, look, I can't see the point, really," and she said, "Well, you can start by getting your very first formal qualification so that you no longer can need to say 'I have no qualifications', at least you'd have one, you'd have your GCSE. How about that? You've done this in a blink of the eye. It's not going to take you long. Put pen to paper, get that under your belt. And, you know, you will feel good for having achieved that." And I thought, right, to get her out of my head, I thought, "OK, let's do it!"

After getting my GCSE, I became eligible for distance learning at the Open University. Through this interaction with this member of the staff, and when you talk about the relationship between the tutor and students, another relationship you need to really take into consideration is the relationship between prisoners and officers.

F. – What is the relationship between teaching staff and prison officers?

S. – One of the criticisms that I have is that teaching services are disconnected from the prison regime. It's almost like a bolt on, it's in a different block. There's just so much effort required to get up there to get into education. I think education should be embedded, I think it should be right there where you live, work and exist. More people would take it up, I think. Of course, that causes practical problems, because in the UK we know there's an issue with staffing levels in prison. Prison officer numbers are low. We know that these activities, rehabilitative activities, take time and resources. So, in the UK, prison officers don't have much to do with the education, but we also have civilian staff. Education in prisons is contracted out to private companies. So, we have private companies coming to deliver education in prisons to prisoners. But those civilian staff who come into the Education Department, they often don't have the same attitude, or mindset as prison officers would. They're trained with a totally different focus. Prison staff focus on the security elements and their responsibility is to ensure order. Civilian staff tend to have a slightly different attitude and approach to prison education, and you find that there are more in favour of it. And so, their role is therefore

1 — General Certificate of Secondary Education.

very important in supporting this. So what needs to be embedded is the provision, not the staff. As I said, the education block, where learning takes place, is separate from the housing units. To get to the education block, everything has to be working perfectly! You must have the right number of staff, because prisoners don't just walk to the Education Department, right? You need to be escorted and if you're low on staff, or staff are required to be on the wings to ensure this order we talked about, then the first thing is "There's no escort, there's no education today." The civilian staff are not qualified to escort prisoners. So, when I, as a lecturer, when I visit a prison where I've got a student, I'll be escorted by a member of the education staff to deliver my tutorial. They can do that, but they can't escort prisoners from the wing to the Education Department. So, that's why embedding education in the living unit is important. It's about access.

F. – Can you describe what education brought into your life?

S. – Everything! Literally. I guess that's why this level of study offers so much. Because it's transformative. Because if you could transform a life like mine, on my own merit, it's a win-win for all the different parties involved. For me, clearly, I've not returned to prison, I have not reoffended, I've not created any more victims, I have a gainful employment, in a role that has real prospects, prospects beyond my wildest dreams really. Those are the personal benefits for me, for my family. I have a young family. I have three girls. My first daughter was just three months old when I got my sentence. And, as I came out, having spent half the 16 years in jails, she was already 8. And one of my huge concerns was, as you know from the literature, children of prisoners and former prisoners, are much more likely to go to prison themselves, which was a huge worry for me! And I think this is a part of the reason why I've worked so hard. But I should add that I was lucky to have this opportunity. I think that's important to say, because if you want to do something and you don't have the opportunity to, then you're stuck. So, I'm very fortunate that I've had the opportunity to do this in prison. I've got two more girls, who are 12 and 13 and I'm closer to them, because obviously I was out here while they were born. They are very comfortable with my history because I've shared it with them. And it's great to see that they've been able to spin it positively. Well, it's positive because they say things like, "well, at least Dad now you're now going to help people. You're not offending anymore." And I think that that's only possible because this is something that has come directly as a benefit of my education. So, I've benefited, my immediate family benefited, my community benefits. People know that I work for the university. They approach me for information, or anything related to that. People know that I have my background. So, friends who have kids, who are in and around the justice system as I was, as a young person myself, come to me and I often get involved with that and try and offer them alternative solutions.

F. – Now I would like to shift the conversation to your work as a researcher. Do you think your life experiences bring advantages to your work as a scholar, as a researcher?

S. – 100 %! Not just my academic experiences, but my personal experiences as well! It brings light to theories and concepts. I was going to say not everybody is made to go to university, but I rode straight back, because I thought, "No, everybody can!" University should be for everyone, and everyone should be able to access it when I think about it in that way, I try to express that in my writings about criminality, so that we are not just regurgitating the official line on the official statistics. I think criminologists need to be braver. We need to get out there. We need to use the evidence that already exists to make a case for reducing the incidence of offending, or particularly reoffending in the UK. Reoffending in the UK costs about £15 billion a year, and that's only the financial cost of reoffending. We're not even talking about the individual and the personal cost of those victims: that cost is even higher. And we know that where people learn, because we know that 42 % of them have actually never been to school in their lives, they've arrived there with no qualifications of any sort, we know that! And so why don't we have a system that works to plug that gap? Because we know that, from the evidence, anecdotal evidence that's available, the impact that education can have not just on the individual, it's right across the board.

F. – What could we do better?

S. – I'm not sure what we could do better to reduce offending, but I do know that the repeat offending is what's problematic, because that suggests that the interventions in place are not working! We have a system where the reoffending rates have never come down – they've always gone up! We're building new prisons regularly now, because we just try to keep up. That suggests to me that interventions don't work and that one of the pillars on which advocates of prisons, as we know them, based their argument, prison as a deterrent, simply does not work in the UK.

F: What would work, then?

S. – I've been fortunate, in every aspect of my experience with incarceration. I say that because I hadn't prepared to get educated. I made sure that I kept contact with close friends and family, people who I knew I needed support. I was fortunate to stay in contact with my family when I got released. I had a family to come back to, who embraced me. I had a home to come back to, to provide a base for me. I had built myself a foundation through my education, so that when I came out, I'd have opportunities based on that educational foundation I created for myself. Many come out with no fixed abode. They're homeless. Many come out without qualifications. I came out with a good employment, which eventually materialized, but for many prisoners, that's not the case. Many prisoners have issues with their families. Their families may object to them, they object to their offences and what nothing to do with them. Because even though you've served your time there is still a sense of shame involved. So, what would work is to provide prisoners with access to good quality education and effective support to deal with social issues like housing, employment, addictions, and debt advice prior to their release.

F. – What is the relationship between education and all these things – family, social network, ect.

S. – For me, education trumps all of them, because education is not contingent on other factors apart from access. Once access to education is guaranteed, people can go with it and take it as far as they choose to. Everything else is contingent on something else. How does your family feel about you? How does society feel about you coming back into the community? Education is neutral. If you've got it, you'll get the benefits of it regardless of other factors. In a way, education gives a kind of control on one's life. For prisoners, especially, education is often the only way to have a sense of control, because when you're learning, it doesn't involve any other person.

F. – How can we improve and promote current services?

S. – I think the reason, or part of the reason, people don't think education in prison is a priority is related to the fact that we've not been able to make a clear link between the notion of rehabilitation and the reduction of the numbers of potential victims. We've always talked about rehabilitation from the point of view of the individual, "you're not going to cause any more problems". But we never then take the next step to make it explicit that reducing reoffending equates to reduced victimization. I think you're going to get more people to pay attention with that particular framing. It's easy to see what the benefit is for the prisoner. When people get an education, they improve their prospects. This means that you end up with a reduction in reoffending because most people in prison in the UK are in for things related to money. But the public doesn't then take the next step in understanding to say, "You know what? He is not reoffending. That means he is not making any more victims." And that is the price. It's easily ignored because there's no explicit link between both the reduction of offending and the reduction of victimization.

F. – I would like to hear your thoughts on concrete solutions that would improve services and education in prison not just post-secondary, but education in general.

S. – You can make instructors, teachers, whatever you call them, relatable to their students. If they're not, students won't relate to what they have to say. That's an obvious one. I also think learning has to be fun. The prison environment is all too serious. The activity of learning can be manipulated

in so many ways to achieve certain outcomes. We just need to be smart, not lazy. When we put together learning materials, we need to put it together in a way that those who look at it and receive it feel excited about what they're looking at. They must feel like there's something there for them. Teachers also need to be empathic. They shouldn't make distinctions between different types of students, based on their crime, for example. One's attitude, as an educator, is to know that the goal is to educate, not to punish.

F. – For some people, it seems the only concrete thing that prison education brings is that it makes made imprisonment less painful. Is that enough?

S. – Of course, it is. I can't quote an exact figure, but I can tell you that we have had over 990 suicides in UK prisons in the last 18 months or so. We've had thousands of cases of self-harm. Prisons are the most inhumane and degrading environment you can find yourself in, especially if the regime is a punitive one. It's only in Scandinavia, as far as I know, where there's an understanding that prisons can be humane and the results there speak for themselves: across the world, the lowest rates of reoffending are in Scandinavia. They temper their punishment with humanity, which is just common sense. I mean, we locked people up over the pandemic, 23 hours a day. And then you're surprised that these guys get out, get furious or feel victimized. The system is creating all these unnecessary emotions in people when you can have something like what they have in Scandinavia.

A lot of people have mental health issues in prison, but most are still rational to the extent that they can understand what is of benefit to them. In my eight years incarcerated, there were no positives. Literally none. The only positive is education. So, when I'm in jail and I'm delivering a talk, I say to the lads: "Guys, you know as well as I do that there is nothing positive to take with you when you leave prison. What are you going to take, at the end of the day? If you've got, like I had, my undergraduate degrees, two postgraduate masters, I think you're taking about something positive. And people look at me and say: "I didn't think of it like that." You need to think of it like that. The prison environment is for punishment, nothing else. But if you're spending a long time in there, then you do want to have a sense that it's not been a waste of time. And if you don't want it to be a waste of time, it's down to you to do something about it. Prisons take away people's ability to think and to be rational because everything is done for them. It's like "don't decide, because you made bad decisions, right? That's what got you in here. So, no more decisions for you. We'll decide on your behalf" and then you're surprised that people are lacking the basic skills that they need to help themselves. I'm finding that, of course, the notion of rehabilitation is neither here nor there because there are loads of literature that's telling you that these things don't work. What works is people having a desire to improve their situation, and then somebody kind enough to stand by them and support them in doing that. That's how it goes. But if somebody keeps telling you and dictating, then you're not going to. You're not going to reach that potential for yourself. And that's problematic.

F. – It seems we can conclude that education can help everyone. Maybe your case is the ideal case, but it certainly doesn't hurt to provide it to everyone.

S. – Yes, I couldn't agree more. Not everyone will take it. You know, I was encouraged to take it, when I was offered like, the first couple of times, I thought the prison education staff was out of their mind, because I did not expect it to work for me. But eventually, they persisted, people don't have to take it. But if somebody doesn't take it today, it doesn't mean it shouldn't be offered. It can be picked up tomorrow you know. I think if you're going to do something as dramatic as having the right to incarcerate, I think there should be equally stringent duty of care. And the duty of care, I don't mean in the immediate, because I'm looking after you. I mean the duty of care, knowing that you're a vulnerable person and therefore putting in place a support system for you going forward indefinitely, if you need it, because anything short of that, you're going to keep coming back.

PORTRAIT OF A LEARNER

Interview with a learner at the Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines Institution on Monday, January 30, with Frédérick Armstrong. John is incarcerated in a unit of the Regional Mental Health Center. He agreed to talk to us about his experience of education in prison. In order to respect his right to anonymity, we have agreed to refer to him by a pseudonym. We would also like to point out that John received his high school diploma (DES) last April.

Frédérick – You went to school in different detention centres, are there any particular challenges at each facility?

John – In Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, there are fewer of us. The procedure is a little different: there is a search every day before going in. Otherwise, it's the same in all the prisons. When I was in the maximum, they don't search you, they don't touch you, but they put you through a metal detector.

F. – Was it more difficult for you to access courses at the CRSM (Regional Mental Health Centre)?

J. – It's easier there. It's pretty much self-paced. You don't have to apply. You have a team that is there to steer you in the right direction. We have social workers who are specialized in this. We are more supervised! In other places, you have to apply for it yourself and COVID didn't help. When I arrived in Cowansville, after my sentence, in 2018, it was easy. With COVID, since it was block by block, the movements were more controlled. They had to find a place where they could put you, when they are already limited with the number of teachers, with the time too. When something happens in the prison, everything shuts down. It can delay the process. They can close a long time. In Donnacona, it's harder, because it closes almost every other day: every time there are drones or fights, they close the whole prison.

F. – I guess going to school is not mandatory?

J. – It can be mandatory on your correctional plan. There are no big consequences for not following it, but still. For sure, if your correctional plan tells you to go to school and you don't, you'll never be recommended for anything.

F. – Why did you want to go to school?

J. – I've been incarcerated since I was 12 years old. I started in juvenile hall, we didn't go to school if we were in juvenile hall. They wouldn't let us go.

F. – So between the ages of 12 and 16, you didn't go to school?

J. – Depending on the centre, as soon as you receive your sentence, no matter if you are a youth or an adult, they transfer you whenever they want! Often, it's sad to say, but it becomes a question of budget. They have a budget, let's say 7 million a year, for transfers. In April, believe me, they must have spent all that budget, otherwise they will lose it next year! We become victims of bureaucracy, getting moved around. Every time you change, it takes 2-3 weeks for the others to take your school profile so you can start. In the meantime, they transfer you back. Take me for instance. I did 49 months of provincial before I was sentenced, not being able to go to school... You know, there are a lot of guys who spent several years waiting, when they could have been doing something productive, learning, and not just that! You think about the victims out there. It's a snowball effect. It's important that we get an education, because I got out of jail a few times, and then I always went back to what I knew because I had no opportunities. I had a black mark on my name, no education, no work experience, it doesn't leave a lot of choices! Plus, I have kids. There are a lot of guys, they have young kids and therefore responsibilities. They're not able to compete in the job market. When I was young, in the 90s, we didn't have access to certain technologies (computers, Internet). Even if we have our DES, we're not at the same level of knowledge. It was very limited. We would need liaison officers, for example, so that we could have access to the Internet. There must be a way! I know, I watch shows, I see this in the United States: they have iPads! I had a 15-year sentence. In that time, a lot will have happened in the world. You stay behind and it increases the chances of reoffending.

F. – Can you talk to me about the way you see the programs and the teachers?

J. – School is the one place where I don't really feel like I'm in jail. I've always liked school. In Cowansville, it's a place where you're not surrounded by guards. You know, it's your own little space. But I know that there are a lot of guys, because they have learning disabilities, behavioural disabilities, they have a hard time managing their feelings. It's easier for them to just let go and then go use. Drugs are everywhere in prison, all the time, and it's easy. I'm telling you there's a lot more guys that are going to get out with substance abuse problems and then get criminalized than there are guys that are going to get out with a DES, but it becomes a choice of each individual. For sure, if they made it more attractive, more guys would want to go.

F. – You said that the guys were not able to deal with their feelings and that it made it difficult for them to get into school. What feelings are you talking about?

J. – I'm talking about personal failures. Guys feel humiliated. They don't want to experience those feelings, so they avoid it. That's why you drop out of school when you're young. You don't feel like you can handle it. It makes you run away instead of facing it. This is the case for almost everyone who is involved in crime: They run away from problems by committing a crime. Ultimately, it becomes much harder than having to work. At first, you don't think like that. After that, it becomes a way of life. Most guys, they all use. Substance abuse, mental health, crime, it all goes together! Poverty, lack of education and opportunity go together. There's a correlation, for sure.

F. – Are you comfortable talking to me about your mental health issues? About your diagnosis?

J. – I'm diagnosed with BPD (borderline personality disorder). I've been suicidal, depressed, and I also have post-traumatic stress disorder. You know, inmates don't come here for nothing. There's something wrong with us that makes us come here. Me, I'm a guy that was raised in the system: I was taken away from my parents because they were considered neglectful, because they were using. I have an older brother, who was not placed in the youth protection system. I look at where

he is today, and I compare myself, and I think my mom did a much better job than the youth protection system, especially in terms of education. My brother, he was 17-18 when he finished. I'm 39 and I'm close to finishing. I have two credits left. When you get to the federal level, they start taking care of your education, but they should be taking care of it long before you get here.

F. – What made you persevere?

J. – I'm a persistent guy. I guess I have a lot of discipline when I make up my mind about something. I get paid the same if I go to school or if I work. I might as well do what's right for me. When I started, I had to start all over again, high school level. There were times when I wanted to give up. But I have the support of a mental health team. It helps me a lot. I have that support that other guys don't have, because I'm a youth protection guy. They have had all my files since I was a child. They know my problems. There are other guys who would need it more than me, let's say, but they're not diagnosed. They're not ready to deal with their situation, to try to work on themselves. You have to realize that you have problems before you can work on them.

F. – How does the support of this team work?

J. – You go and talk to the mental health team, the psychologists. After that, they assign you a social worker, a psychologist or a psychiatrist, depending. Personally, I have all these people on my team. I get seen a lot in a week.

F. – Could you describe the difference it makes in your day-to-day life whether you are able to attend school or not?

J. – For sure, if you don't keep yourself busy, chances are you'll use or get in trouble. There's only negativity in these environments. You have to be strong to persevere and then stay positive in an environment where it's just crime. After that, it all depends on what you want to do with your life. I've done several sentences where I wasn't motivated. Every guy needs his own thing to stick with. I was lucky, I was able to find motivation. But a lot of guys who are in prison, they don't have family, they don't have support, they don't have anybody. That world, it's a lot harder to get motivated than for a guy like me. I have family, kids who love me.

F. – How do you feel about being this close to graduating from high school?

J. – Pride! It opens doors. I'll be able to take college courses and do more with the time I have left.

F. – When you started, did you think you would be able to finish?

J. – Yes, because I had had a 15-year sentence, so I figured I had time. I knew that no matter how many transfers I had, I had time to do it. Then with COVID, everything slowed down, so that added time. And when school started again, I was happy.

F. – Do you have plans for your release?

J. – My mom has a business, so I want to take a business class while I'm here. We'll see what my options are, it's limited. For example, I might have to pay.

F. – Can you ask these questions to your support team? Are they present?

J. – Even if I didn't want to, they would be there for me [laughs]! There are days when you don't feel like it, there are days when you're depressed, angry. But no matter what, they're there to try to help you. They are very understanding. They're used to working with guys who have behavioural problems. I'm blessed, in my situation, to have that opportunity. I know I did a lot of years in prison before I could come here. I'm sure they would love to accommodate everyone, but it's limited. If the guys aren't ready to do the work, they'll wait, then as soon as your team gives the go, it's good. They see that you're serious, if you've been doing psychotherapy for 2, 3 or 4 years.

F. – What do you like at school?

J. – I really like history, because it's real facts, you realize where you come from. I see the evolution and how we got here. I'm also a musician. I play guitar, so I like languages. It's very important to me. I get good grades in English. My first language is English.

F. – Will your DES be issued by the French school board? Would you have preferred to do it in English?

J. – Not really. I'm an English-speaking Quebecer. The fact that I have done my course in both languages makes me proud. Not everyone is able to do that.

F. – Is it specific to Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, to have this choice?

J. – No, it's pretty much the same in every penitentiary. There are a few different electives, depending on the teachers and the security level as well. There are security issues all the time, and that's out of their control at the school.

F. – Having finished high school, what impact does this have on your reintegration plan?

J. – It opens doors for me. Right now, you need that degree. For example, in my relationship with my employer, I'm sure he'd rather have a guy who did 10 years in prison, but who did something during those years, than someone who accomplished nothing. I'm going to have done everything I can to grow, to be a better person. That's got to be worth something.

F. – What did you learn in school besides the actual subject matter?

J. – I learned how to learn! You know, before, in my 20's, I thought I knew everything. I thought I had all the answers. Now I'm 39, I know I don't know anything, and I guess that's what I learned in school. I also tried to find the fun in it. Plus, power comes from knowledge!

F. – How was your relationship with your teachers?

J: I've always had a good relationship with them. To be a teacher in a prison, it takes a certain type of person: someone who is very open-minded, who believes in what they are doing. They are very patient and invested in their students.

F. – When you were in school, when you were younger, you didn't experience that?

J. – No. I was a kid who was always in trouble. So, for sure, I was not a favourite. Here, they believe in us. They don't give up on us so easily. I can understand that it's normal that, when you're in regular school, when you see, for example, someone who is always dysfunctional, always negative, at some point, you wash your hands of it. Here, the teachers try to push us, they persevere.

F. – How could we improve prison education?

J. – When I was in Cowansville, I saw that they had started to buy small benches, where there are pedals, small chairs too. It's for the guys who have ADHD, because they can't stay focused. That's a big problem in prison. Guys can't focus, so they need little techniques. Having access to Internet and computers would be good too. Need more budget for that. It would also take more electives. We should also motivate the inmates to go to school, by making it mandatory, for example! I don't like the idea of making an activity mandatory, the guys already have enough rules to follow, but once the course is completed, the guys would definitely appreciate it.

F. – Many people who work on education in prison conclude that although at first the guys go to school to pass the time; eventually they get "hooked" on school (learning, education). Do you think this is the case?

J. – That's the first step. But I don't know how we can get them there without forcing them. But for sure, if the guys have a learning disability, it has to be tailored. They have to be able to achieve their goals. A guy is going to drop out if he doesn't have the level in math, for example. If they feel they can't get a degree because they haven't learned the basics, they will drop out! There should

be different scales of degrees. They need teachers who are able to handle learning and behavioural disabilities. I can also imagine that it can be very difficult to find employees, to get teachers in this hostile environment.

F. – Do you prefer a teacher who teaches you the material and takes you seriously as a student, or one who tries to elevate you as a human being?

J. – I guess it takes both. Regarding prison, I would go with the 2nd aspect. You don't just need a teacher who teaches math, you need a teacher who teaches you how to "manage yourself". In school, they don't teach students how to manage their feelings. In prison, these are often guys who learned everything the wrong way, so they have to unlearn a lot of behaviours.

F. – What is unique about school that you don't find with a psychologist or other programs?

J. – School opens doors for your future. When you work with a psychologist, the whole process is internal. It's stuff that matters to you. But it doesn't give you a job, let's say. School gives opportunities, or at least a chance. Because it's all well and good to have a high school diploma, but it doesn't carry much weight compared to a criminal record. But one thing's for sure, if you have a criminal record and didn't finish high school, you won't get a job.

F. – Why is prison education important?

Classroom, Archambault.

J. – There are many reasons, but if you let yourself rot in jail, doing your time, you're not going to evolve. Like I said, school opens your eyes. You learn your history, your math. It gives you skills that you keep for life. As they say, "If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime"! Education expands your opportunities, your horizon.

F. – Is this what you thought before you went to school in prison?

J. – No, I thought it was unnecessary. I could count money, I thought that was enough. It took an extraordinary event for me to get to that point! It took something extreme for me to learn that what I was doing was wrong, that it was unhealthy.

F. – Do you have anything to add to conclude the interview?

J. – I would like to add that I hope that with this research, they will be able to make sure that the guys have a better chance of getting out. Because it's not fair to the inmates, and then it's the citizens who end up paying, when the guys get out of jail and go back to drugs and crime. It could be your kid, your mom, your dad who gets robbed or worse, killed. If anyone should be educated, it's the inmates, and from childhood. I was taken out of school because I didn't show up, no matter what was going on at home. They took me out of my parents' custody but also completely took me out of school. It didn't make sense: you take me away from my family because I don't go to school, but you keep me from going to school. But then again, that's a topic for a whole other interview!

REPORT

Gordon, S., Miller, T. L., & Stanley, K. (2022). *Bridges from prison: Making the case for jobs and relationships*, FrameWorks Institute

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit think tank dedicated to developing ways to present and contextualize public discourse on social and scientific issues. In this report, the authors focus on how best to advocate for the importance of building bridges between prison life and life in society. The report starts from the premise that prisons exist and that we need to do things differently to help people after they leave prison. In order to present this issue, the research team first assessed what the public thinks about people in prison. According to their data, the public focuses more on the punitive aspects of prison than on its rehabilitative aspects or on why a person "deserves" rehabilitation services. This perspective prevents people from fully understanding the importance of the post-incarceration transition, especially for those who are members of minority groups. The authors suggest breaking through these thought barriers by focusing on a system to be changed rather than on individuals, showing the kind of transition support that could be offered to people leaving prison. In short, by emphasizing the societal benefits of a successful transition, the metaphor of the "bridge" from one world to another, and by describing successful pathways, the issue of post-carceral transition can be better perceived by the general public.

CHAPITRES DE LIVRE

Betts, N. (2022). People and Popular Music in an English Prison: Transforming Criminal Justice. In B. Powell & G. D. Smith (Éds.), *Places and Purposes of Popular Music Education: Perspectives from the Field*. Intellect Ltd., p. 24-29

Nathalie Betts teaches music and creative arts at Weston College in England. She also teaches music classes at the Young Offenders Institute in Portland, England. In this chapter, Betts explores how learning music can contribute to the development of a sense of community among incarcerated individuals by showing them that they can add value in a group practice. She advocates an approach to transformation that eschews the "saviour" mentality and holds that the primary goal of prison teachers should be to transform the prisoners' environment by providing opportunities for self-determined transformation. Music practice provides just such an opportunity to enhance their well-being by participating in positive and enjoyable social interactions, which promotes greater awareness of self and others and the formation of pro-social identities and attitudes.

ARTICLES

Eid, S. A. (2022). The Right to Education and Egypt's Prison Policies since 2013. *Hikama*, 3 (4), 125156.

In this article, Saif Alislam Eid, a researcher at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (Doha) compares the policies of the Egyptian prison system after 2013 with international policies that address the right to education in prison. After noting contradictions between international law and local laws, Eid demonstrates that Egyptian policies prescribe an authoritarian and punitive regime that undermines the right to education in prison for political prisoners incarcerated since 2013.

Finlay, J. (2022). Staff perspectives of providing prison library services in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, online, 1-14.

Jayne Finlay, Lecturer in Library Science at the University of Sheffield, presents part of her doctoral research project on libraries in UK prisons. The article details the results of questionnaires (N=31) and follow-up interviews (N=11) with librarians working in the three UK prison jurisdictions (England/Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). One of the main elements that emerged from the interviews was the dual management arrangement that currently exists in UK prisons: libraries are managed under service agreements by the local library authority and, at the same time, by the prison managers. This leaves neither party seeming to be fully accountable for the libraries, which leaves librarians in limbo and hinders recognition of their needs. In short, it seems that both managers do not really understand the reality of a library in a prison. This leaves librarians feeling misunderstood and isolated, a situation that Finlay believes should be improved. Without librarian support, libraries risk being reduced to "rooms full of books", and Finlay concludes by emphasizing that it is imperative that prison library staff receive the support and professional development opportunities necessary to continue to provide quality service to incarcerated people.

Johnson, R. M., & Manyweather, L. (2022). Examining the experiences of formerly incarcerated black men at community colleges: The role of community cultural wealth. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1 14.

The two authors propose qualitative research by collaborating with a specific group of students in prison: formerly incarcerated Black men (FIBM) in the United States, who are overrepresented in American prisons. The article proposes the following research questions for the target group: their perception of the importance of access to college education and the factors that might facilitate its access as well as their thoughts on student retention. While providing a general picture of the situation of FIBM in the prison setting, the qualitative data collection helps to refine possible solutions that can be implemented to facilitate access and maintain persistence. For example, by pointing out that for many inmates, education is a matter of "life and death" both literally (being on the street without an education) and figuratively (education as a way to elevate oneself and be able to achieve one's dreams).

Little, R., & Warr, J. (2022). Abstraction, belonging and comfort in the prison classroom. *Incarceration*, 3 (3).

In this article, Little and Warr focus on the exchange value of education, learning through discursive practice, rather than the value of qualifications, the ability to produce skills and abilities. The article explores how the practice of informal discussion on so-called abstract topics can increase and facilitate the production of "educational capital" in a prison classroom. The notion of educational capital is defined by these authors as the symbolic capital linked to learning that allows for a greater sense of belonging and well-being for learners. In this research, the authors draw on a series of interviews with students participating in an eight-week program at a high-security prison in the Midlands, England (HMP Lifer), as well as their comments and reflections. The authors make several observations, including the possibility of creating a trusting learning space by highlighting prisoners' individual stories and experiences. The results suggest that the pedagogical approach promoting exchange created a safe, reliable, and equitable space for prisoners to express themselves. The authors make a broader recommendation to increase educational capital in all schools (prison and non-prison) by promoting this pedagogical approach for higher education.

Monteiro, A., Machado, A., Leite, C., & Barros, R. (2022). Female's self-concept as online learners in the context of lifelong learning in prisons. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, **0 (0), 1 17.**

Lifelong Learning policies must be inclusive and governed by humanistic principles of universality and accessibility at the national or international level. Within this framework, the authors conduct a study in Portugal, also based on various European statistics, in order to analyze how women in prison perceive themselves as learners when they follow e-learning training programs. Through qualitative research (two questionnaires and a focus group), the authors find a dichotomy between the self-image developed during training and the perception of distance learning in general. The experience of e-learning allows for a positive image as a learner (autonomy, efficiency, satisfaction in completing a task, self-regulation, self-confidence) and at the same time, the perception of this learning is seen as negative, as it brings about many organizational and systemic challenges for the inmates (e.g., a lack of means and competencies to support e-learning brings back negative pre-incarceration learning experiences).

Moore, S. Y., & Erzen, T. (2023). The Well-Being Impacts Associated with College in Prison: A Comparison of Incarcerated and Non-Incarcerated Students Who Identify as Women. *The Prison Journal*, **103 (1), 3 22.**

The authors, Moore and Erzen, conduct a qualitative study to demonstrate the beneficial effects of academic prison education programs, which are effective not only in reducing the risk of recidivism, but even more so in developing non-formal skills, such as improved self-esteem and coping skills, specific academic skills and abilities (e.g., argument development and writing), meaningful social connections, or "soft skills" (e.g., time management and stress management). These skills increase coping, academic investment, and overall well-being. This article shows the importance of maintaining CIPs (College in Prison Programs) because the skills developed cannot be developed by themselves in the difficult conditions of the prison environment. To do this, the authors worked with a targeted population of prisoners who identify as female participating in the Freedom Education Project Puget Sound (FEPP**S)** program at the Washington Corrections Center for Women. The study thus demonstrates the beneficial impact on the mental health of this group, the vast majority of whom suffer from abuse and violence (trauma reduction and treatment). The article also has the broader aim of showing the strong causal link between education and increased psychological well-being, advocating for access to affordable academic education in the United States.

Noorman, K., & Brancale, J. (2022). Barriers to School Reentry: Perceptions of School Reentry Among Detained and Committed Youth. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*.

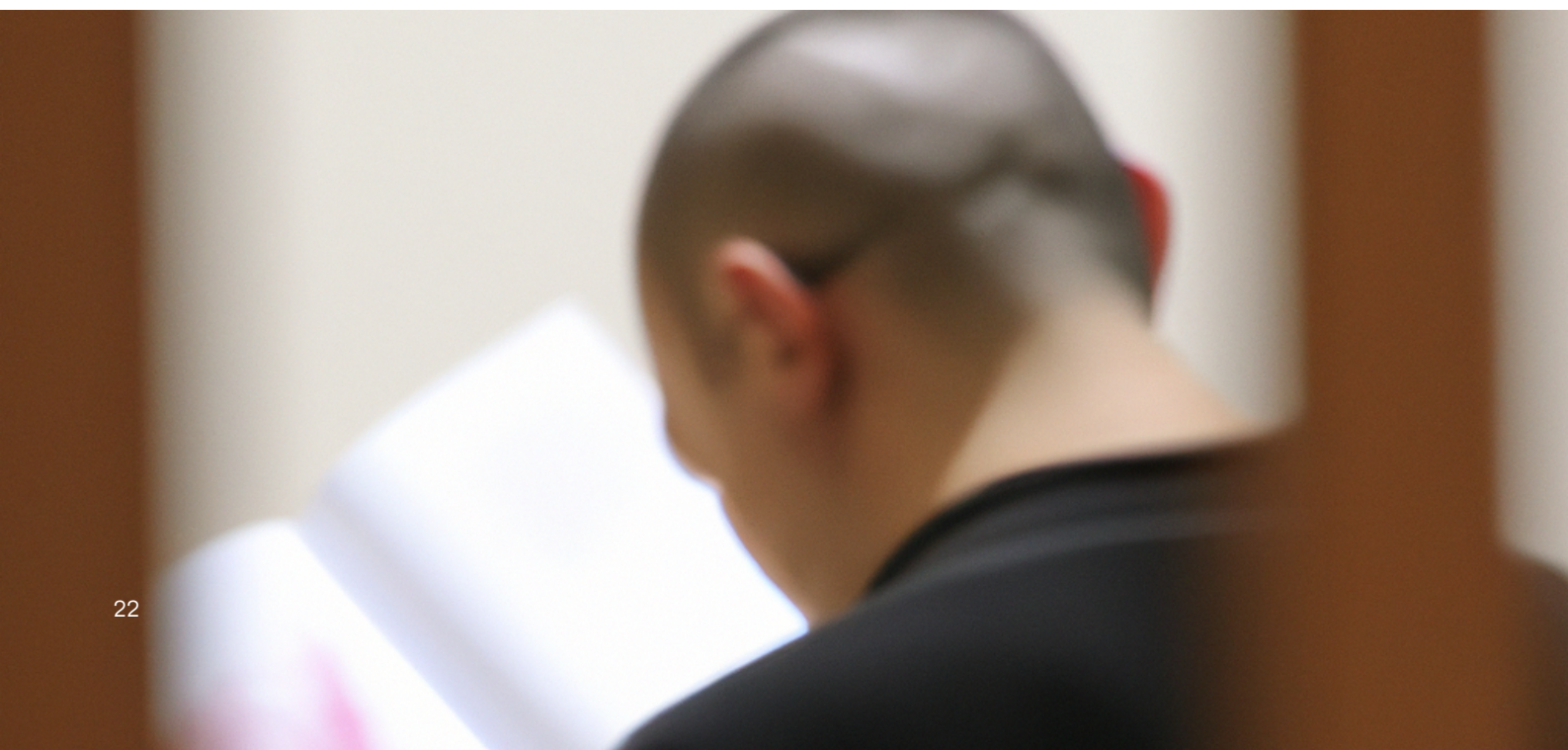
In this study, authors Kaylee Noorman and Julie Brancale examine the educational pathways of incarcerated juveniles in the United States by including the youths' perspective on their perceived self-reported barriers to education in their transition to release. The article highlights the gap between their educational aspirations and expectations (which are quite high) and the actual educational pathways of these juveniles (few even make it to high school after release). By analyzing data from the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement and comparing the educational outcomes of juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system with those not involved, the authors were able to target the main "barriers" identified by the juveniles themselves, primarily a lack of interest in school as an institution. They show that educational deficits contribute to an increase in recidivism among juveniles. They then propose to improve the reintegration process and especially to work on increasing the feeling of belonging to education.

Becker-Pestka, D. J. (2022). E-learning for Prisoners. Experience from Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany. *International Journal of Research in E-Learning*, 1 24.

In this article, the author analyzes the implementation and use of e-learning in different European countries (Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany). The targeted countries have a good implementation of this type of remote learning (marked use, access to appropriate material, consideration of the transformative potential, strong development of online tools). Also based on several authors who describe how e-learning works and its benefits, the author highlights the advantages of this practice within the prison environment. Remote learning reduces the exclusion of inmates, both numerically and socially, by keeping up with current events and breaking down territorial boundaries. Its flexible model also allows for the development and reinforcement of skills such as user autonomy or "self-discipline", which are important skills for prisoners to acquire. The author also points out that for an optimal use of e-learning practices, the staff of the penitentiary units should also be trained in its use and operation.

Castro, E. L., Royer, C. E., Lerman, A. E., & Gould, M. R. (2022). Beyond Pell restoration: Addressing persistent funding challenges in prison higher education toward racial and economic justice. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.

This article examines the impact of the reinstatement of the Pell Grant, the U.S. federal government's grant to fund college education in prisons for higher education programs. Is it really a benefit to prisoners? Through the lens of social, economic and "racial" justice, the authors demonstrate in their articles that, on the contrary, reinstating this scholarship in prisons would only accentuate social and economic inequalities between programs, prison institutions and inmates. Since the grant alone is not sufficient to alleviate the various problems of financing the programs, the authors propose a series of recommendations, including a significant investment in institutional resources and infrastructure.



Suleiman, I., & Umar, L. (2022). An Assessment of Library Information Resources and Services for Inmates in Correctional Centres in Katsina State, Nigeria. *Multidisciplinary International Journal of Research and Development*, 1 (6).

This article focuses on the importance of access to a standard library in Nigerian correctional centres, which is essential to the education process, but also important for its entertainment and learning purposes. The authors propose a series of recommendations regarding the services provided. After analyzing and assessing access, resources, and services in several correctional centres in Katsina, the authors find that these are poorly adapted. The paper recommends that libraries in correctional centres be made much more functional, in order to improve the rehabilitation and adjustment of inmates upon their release.

Tetrault, J. E. (2022). Indigenizing Prisons: A Canadian Case Study. *Crime and Justice*, 51 (1).

In this paper, Justin Tetrault presents more than a simple case study of the indigenizing project in Canadian prisons. He draws on the analysis of qualitative interviews with Aboriginal prisoners to severely criticize a part of the decolonial field of study that works from "a strident intellectual certainty" that indigenizing prison programs is nothing more or less than forced assimilation, a measure that is irretrievable and indefensible because it is inseparable from colonialism. Although a proponent of critical and decolonial criminology himself, Tetrault argues that when one takes the time to listen to incarcerated Aboriginal people, Aboriginal programming is valued and, in most cases, contributes to empowerment, healing and a sense of community among prisoners. In fact, the most common criticism among Aboriginal respondents is that indigenized programs are too difficult to access and too few in number. Tetrault thus criticizes part of the decolonial field for being too "theoretical" and emphasizes the importance of qualitative and quantitative empirical work that directly involves Indigenous voices in the search for solutions to the problems of colonialism. While he acknowledges that indigenizing programs is not a panacea, he believes that harm reduction should not be abandoned because it does not fit with the "outsider" view of decolonization academics. Tetrault concludes by reiterating the importance of supporting the full range of experiences of Aboriginal participants in order to encourage improved processes aimed at indigenizing prison services. No theory or ideological posture, he said, can substitute for listening to Aboriginal people.

MONOGRAPHIES

Bruno, G. (2022). ***Theory and Practice for Literacy in the Prison Classroom: An Inquiry Approach for Students and Educators.*** **Brill.**

Due to a lack of systematic means and resources, prison teachers and educators are unable to construct a critical and evolving reflection about their practice and field of work in prison. Based on this premise, author Gregory Bruno, assistant professor of English and coordinator of the research program at Columbia University, proposes to create a space for dialogue to allow teachers to interrogate their values, practices, and beliefs about applied prison education programs. Drawing on the work of Paulo Freire and Ernst Bloch, Bruno seeks to present an applicable methodology to better design and implement meaningful literacy pedagogy for incarcerated students, considering social, educational and political aspects.

Rostaing, C. (2021). ***Une institution dégradante, la prison.*** **Paris: Gallimard.**

With 30 years of experience in research on the prison institution, sociologist Corinne Rostaing, professor at the University of Lyon II and researcher at the Max Weber Center, offers a unified synthesis of her work. She draws on her empirical and fundamental investigations of gendered prison experiences and the relational processes that subjugate the lives of prisoners in order to understand the issues that structure the prison institution in France. Her work focuses on the institutional functioning of the prison and its degrading effects on the detainees, including the families it affects. By renewing the classic themes of prison sociology, from totalitarian defilement to the stigmatization of marginalized populations, this empirically supported synthesis makes it possible to think, through ideal types of prison life, about the conditions necessary for changing the prison as a place of training and education, favouring the positive reconstruction of prisoners.

Harmes, M. K., Harmes, B., Harmes, M. A. (2022). ***Histories and Philosophies of Carceral Education*****. Aims, Contradictions, Promises and Problems. Cham: Pelgrave Macmillan.**

This collective work deals with education in prisons from a historical, philosophical or simply reflective perspective. Starting with an Australian core, a group of international contributors from diverse perspectives (literary studies, communications, psychology, educational sciences, etc.) interrogate the underlying philosophical issues and public policies of prison education through the discourses and representations of prison education. The authors address the eclectic topics of higher education, the religious origins of prison education, sex offender education in the United States, the barriers and challenges of prison education research, artistic co-creation in prisons, the potential of remote learning, and more. In particular, Farley and Seymour emphasize the liberating potential of distance education to re-empower and reflexively empower these vulnerable individuals, as well as to reverse the stigma by making them role models for the university student community and some of the correctional officers. Finally, in his article on prison consultants, James C. Oleson offers us a beautiful metaphor for understanding the role of humanist education in prison, based on the character of Virgil in the Inferno of *The Divine Comedy* by the Italian poet Dante (1265-1320), who guides the author through the exploration of these hellish places, similar to the prison universe, and allows him to escape.

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