

Prison education as an agency of empowerment?

ACJRD Education Working Group Seminar: “Education: Empowerment through literacy”

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Lifelong
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Programme



acjrd Association for Criminal Justice
Research and Development



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Objectives of this presentation:

- To present and explore the importance of prison education as a mechanism for promoting prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration into society
- To briefly outline the **Reintegration into Society through Education and Learning network– *RiSE*** – which was established in 2011 with the primary objective of contributing to the social and educational participation of prisoners.
- By drawing on a multidisciplinary evidence base, to highlight how the ***RiSE*** position paper (Maunsell, McLoughlin, Carrigan and McLoughlin 2013) offers a unique perspective on prison education and learning which promotes the importance of a holistic learning approach, both in and outside prison.



***RiSE* PARTNERS**

GERMANY - FCZB FrauenComputerZentrumBerlin e.V.

BELGIUM - L4 Adult Education

LUXEMBOURG - Défi-job

FINLAND - Criminal Sanctions Region of Southern Finland

AUSTRIA - Vollzugsdirektion, Department of Care and Services

FINLAND - IJKK Vocational Training Center

GERMANY - Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Center for Continuing Education

IRELAND – EDC Educational Disadvantage Centre, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra



FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES OF PRISON EDUCATION

- Person at the Centre
- Common Co-ordinated Mission
- Continuum of Education and Learning
- Strengthening the Evidence Base
- Advocacy for Prison Education and Learning; Raising Awareness



The **RiSE** partnership adopts an approach which places the **person at the centre**. It views prison as a learning environment with the potential to support prisoners' building of social and human capital following reintegration into society.

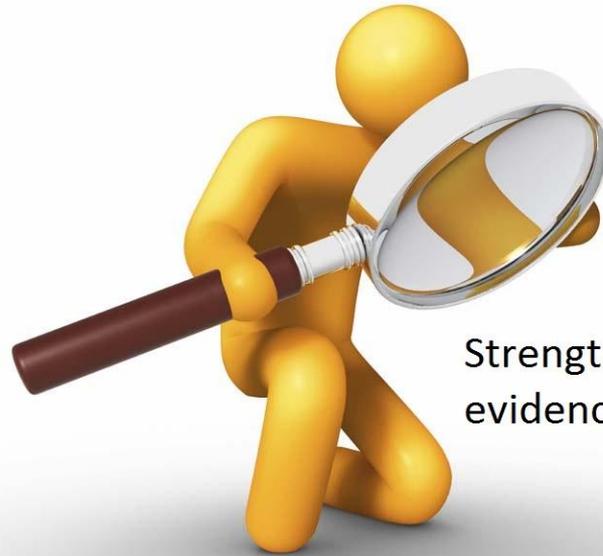


Common
co-ordinated
mission

A **common coordinated mission** is required through which prison/support staff, supported by decision makers inside and outside the prison, work in tandem with the prisoner as the person at the centre.



Adopting a **continuum of education and learning** supports the view of prison as a holistic learning environment.



Strengthening the
evidence base

RiSE acknowledges the potential of research to contribute to our understanding of prison education and learning and the need to **strengthen the evidence base.**



Raising Awareness

At both national and European levels, **RiSE** calls for the **advocacy of prison education and learning**, as integral to successful reintegration.

Theoretical Positions on Prisoner Rehabilitation

- 1970s and '80s dominated by 'Nothing Works' philosophy
- Lipsey's (1992) analysis of 443 treatment studies of offenders aged from 12 to 21 years shifted this paradigm to a 'What Works?' approach
- Over 70 meta-analyses undertaken subsequently
- A meta-analysis produces a statistic called an *effect size* from which the magnitude of the difference in outcome between treated groups and controls can be calculated.

Theoretical Positions on Prisoner Rehabilitation

- The meta-analyses yielded a 'net effect' of all kinds of treatment – including deterrence, boot camps, group therapy etc.
- This net effect was a 10–12% reduction in reoffending for treated offenders compared to untreated controls.
- There was a diversity of effects of different types of intervention.
- Punitive deterrence-based interventions had a null or negative effect,
- Interventions that were **multi-modal**, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural or skills-oriented in nature had a positive effect.

Offender Rehabilitation Approaches

- Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model is now the predominant model in the field of offender rehabilitation; it informs several interventions including some with mentally disordered offenders.
- Good Lives Model (GLM), which is a 'strengths-based' approach that seeks to enable offenders to achieve legitimately the primary goals they currently gain through crime.
- When set against the RNR model, the GLM has been criticised for a lack of solid empirical base.

Strengthening the Evidence Base



Carrigan (2012) prisoners' educational life histories

“the school I suppose it is like, it’s a great escape, especially in prison”

“Just different, different, I suppose different atmosphere, different, at the end of the day when you come up here they don’t treat you like you’re a prisoner. They just treat you like you’re normal. But then we are normal people but there’s none of this like ‘I’m better than you’ and I get treated with respect when I come up here so. You’re not treated like a child; you get treated like an adult”.

Prisoners' voices

2011

Courtesy of Dr Jane Carrigan

Prison Education: From Right to Reality?

- The right to education is a universal tenet. However, Alan Smith, former director of the DGEAC notes that, “... *despite the right to education anchored in international agreements, provision is very unequal between and within European countries*” (2012).
- The Council of the European Union Resolution on a Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning (12/2011) includes the first specific reference to prison education.
- Thus, prison education has emerged as an issue “*which is now on the map*” Smith (2012).

References:

Carrigan, J (2012). *Educational experiences of prisoners studying within the prison system – A life history approach*. Dublin: Educational Disadvantage Centre, St, Patrick's College a College of Dublin City University (Unpublished thesis)

Maunsell, C., McLoughlin, L., Carrigan, J & McLoughlin, V. (2013) *Reintegration into Society through Education and Learning*. Dublin: Educational Disadvantage Centre, St Patrick's College

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