



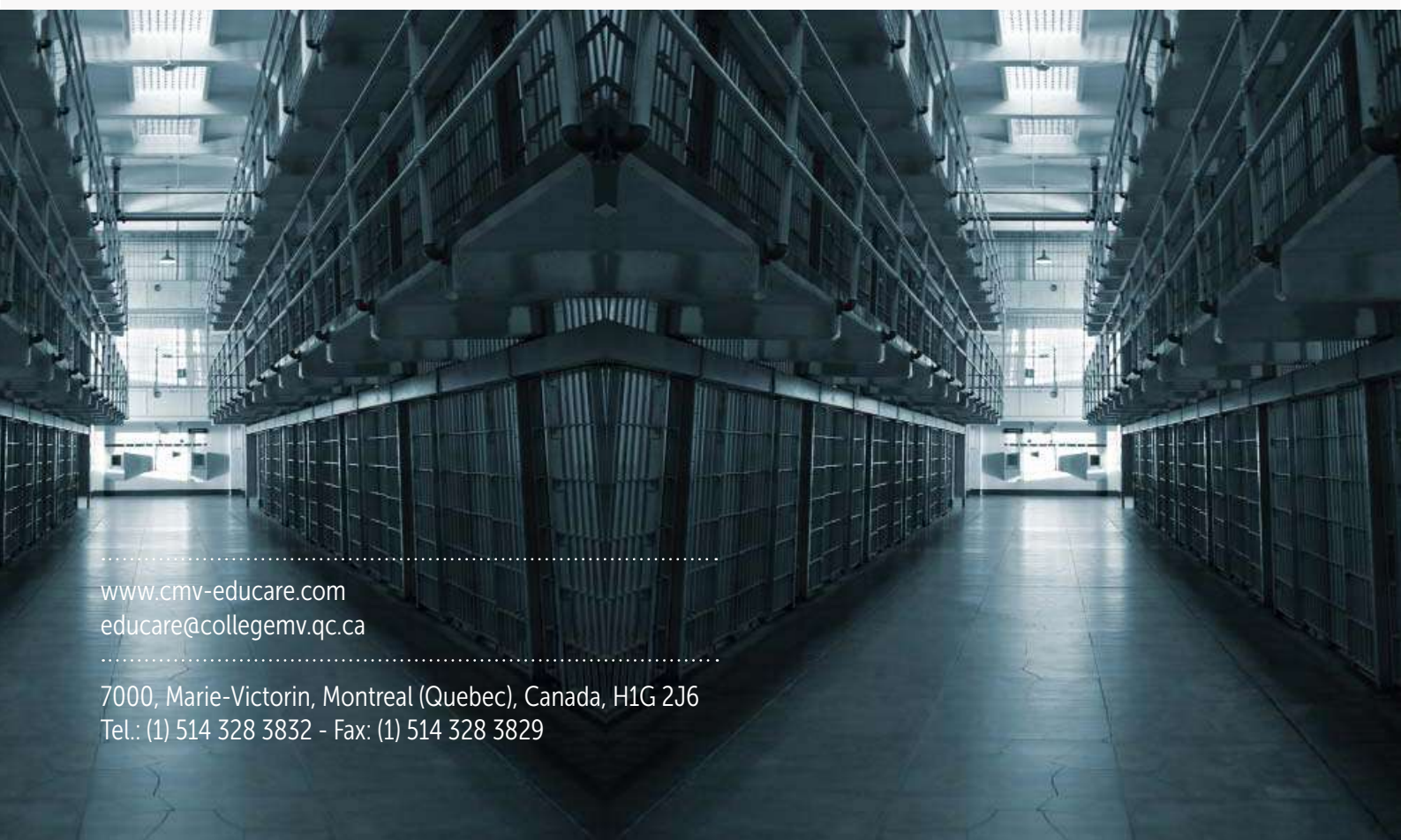
UNESCO Chair of applied Research  
for Education in Prison



---

# Newsletter

Volume 10, Issue 1, February 2022



.....  
[www.cmv-educare.com](http://www.cmv-educare.com)  
[educare@collegemv.qc.ca](mailto:educare@collegemv.qc.ca)  
.....

7000, Marie-Victorin, Montreal (Quebec), Canada, H1G 2J6  
Tel.: (1) 514 328 3832 - Fax: (1) 514 328 3829

**Geneviève Perreault**

**Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair  
in Applied Research for Education in Prison**

Access to a fundamental education is a recognized international right, while the Belém Framework for Action presented at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education organized by UNESCO in 2010 committed the states present to "ensuring adult education in prisons at all levels" and to adopting a comprehensive approach to education (UNESCO, 2010). Despite this commitment to a broad view of education, it is clear that the right to education in prison is frequently associated with "school education". Moreover, the beginnings of the Chair bear witness to this tacit bias. Indeed, the UNESCO Chair in Applied Research on Education in Prisons was built on expertise and reflection on post-secondary education offered in certain federal penitentiaries in Quebec. Implicitly, we were focused on promoting formal education in prisons, noting persistent challenges in the education of prisoners. The challenges of schooling and access to education in general remain significant. However, our understanding of the notion of education has been considerably enriched over the years, allowing us to include all educational initiatives and programs, which illustrate practices and learning environments that are much more diversified than the basic school classroom. We take advantage of this introductory word to present and defend the broad notion of education that we now defend in our various activities.

As we have discussed, people tend to reduce *education* to *school*. While international data on the provision of and access to education in prisons unfortunately do not provide an accurate picture of education in prisons internationally, we do know that education systems differ considerably from country to country, but also that the understanding of education varies greatly. We also know that initiatives and programs that promote learning for incarcerated people extend well beyond the formal school setting. In order to sort out the picture of prison education in all its forms, we have come to adopt the typology of education formulated by UNESCO, which distinguishes between formal, non-formal and informal education.

Formal education, often referred to as schooling, includes all learning activities that are organized and structured around competencies to be developed or specific learning objectives, then evaluated and sanctioned according to rigorous validation mechanisms. Formal education thus includes all school-based training, such as literacy, basic education, general adult education, vocational training, secondary and post-secondary education, recognized and sanctioned by the competent ministerial authorities and educational institutions, regardless of the educational model. It also includes some work-based learning programs recognized by the competent authorities.

Non-formal education includes all training and programs that are organized and structured around specific objectives and of a specific duration, but which are not sanctioned by a school or government institution. The length of these training programs is varied, and in some cases they are of short duration. It is possible for people in prison to take several training programs simultaneously or consecutively. For example, some correctional programs, often focused on

criminogenic issues that have been well defined by criminology, correspond to non-formal education. In fact, some programs have been developed based on specific objectives and offer a framework that defines the message transmitted to the learner, which is part of non-formal education. Some workplace learning can also be associated with non-formal education when it can lead to the recognition of the professional experience thus developed. Obviously, the categorization of the educational offer is sometimes complex, but artistic programs such as those described by [Littman, D. M., & Sliva, S. M. \(2020\)](#) can be part of non-formal education or join the ranks of the informal.

The third category of flexible forms of learning is informal education, which includes all learning that takes place on an individual basis in more or less organized activities, where learning cannot be planned or anticipated. Access to libraries in prison is often included in this type of learning. Indeed, there is no doubt that visiting a library can lead to learning, even if it differs from one individual to another, depending on the reading experience or the random encounters that this place allows. Humour activities such as those depicted by [Timler, Kelsey and Marcela Jordao Villaçã. \(2021\)](#) can also be part of informal education. Learning that takes place with people on a daily basis is also an integral part of this definition, which makes it more difficult to recognize its significance in the continuum of reintegration for incarcerated individuals.

In addition to providing a more accurate picture of the situation in the various prison systems, this typology of education allows, in our opinion, a better empirical reading of the learning activities offered in prison. It also makes it possible to go beyond a hierarchical approach to education and consider the complementarity of learning in the comprehensive development of the person.

In light of these broad complementary categories, it is not uncommon for a prison inmate to be "educated" simultaneously through all three forms of education. While this situation is favourable for learners, it significantly increases the challenges of studying the impact of education on social and professional reintegration, despite numerous testimonies attesting to the benefits of education (see Learning Testimony section). To illustrate this issue, consider this hypothetical but likely situation: how can we reliably demonstrate the impact of secondary school education, taken in conjunction with anger management training, punctuated by discussions with the facility's chaplain? While it can be assumed that the skills acquired in this formal, non-formal and informal learning pathway will be complementary, it will clearly be more difficult to determine which elements are significant contributors to the effectiveness of prison education.

The combined presence of all of these forms of education, frequently simultaneously encountered by learners, thus compels a broad understanding of the concept of education. As [Buchanan, S. et Canning, C. \(2021\)](#) indicate, the needs of incarcerated individuals are multiple and we believe it is important to advocate for greater access to a variety of prison learning programs, both formal and informal, in order to influence the curriculum of incarcerated individuals and provide them with better conditions for socio-professional reintegration. And we would add that if fate and accidental encounters are allowed to dictate learning in prison, perhaps the learnings will not be those that offer better opportunities upon release. As [Todd-Kvam, John, et Mari Todd-Kvam. \(2021\)](#), meetings and learning programs are places of mutual recognition that mark the trajectories of learners and allow for the acquisition of pro-social attitudes that are instrumental in the process of exiting delinquency. Moreover, building bridges to the outside world through prison education programs addresses a significant need for incarcerated individuals and is often the beginning of an equally significant social change [Brown, Dale, et Zoann K Snyder. \(2021\)](#).

We encourage you to follow the work of the Chair and to read this newsletter with this comprehensive approach to prison education in mind. While incarcerated individuals are entitled to the opportunity to earn their high school diploma, we believe that they are also entitled to the full range of learning that characterizes human development.

---

### Partial Bibliography

Hamadache, A. (1993). "Linking formal and non-formal education: implications for teacher training." United Nations Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000100125>

Hart, S-A. (2013). "Apprentissage formel, informel et non formel, des notions difficiles à utiliser... pourquoi?". *Bulletin de L'observatoire compétences-emplois*, June 2013/Vol. 4/ No. 2  
<https://oce.uqam.ca/apprentissage-formel-informel-non-formel-des-notions-difficiles-a-utiliser-pourquoi/>

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2010) Confintea VI, Belém Framework for Action, Paris, UNESCO

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (1993) Articulation of formal and non-formal education. Implications for teacher education. Paris. UNESCO

Perreault, G. and Meilleur, J.-F. (2014). Portrait provisoire de l'éducation dans les établissements de détention de juridiction provinciale au Québec [Final report]. Exploratory study prepared by the UNESCO Chair in Applied Research for Prison Education for the Ministère de la Sécurité publique, the Ministère de l'Éducation du Loisir et du Sport, and the Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale.

## CONFERENCES – ROUND TABLES – WORKSHOPS

### **Conferences - National Social Rehabilitation Week in partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Quebec and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies**

On October 14, 2021, the Chair's team participated in a day of conferences organized by the Art Entr'Elles collective as part of the National Social Rehabilitation Week in partnership with the Elizabeth Fry Society of Quebec and the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. The main theme was the issues and consequences of women in the justice system speaking out in public. The panellists were mainly women who have experienced a period of incarceration in their lives.

The first conference focused on women speaking out after their period of detention. How can this expression become a tool for denouncing oppression? The panellists noted that it is difficult for women to speak out in the public arena. They note that, when it happens, the story is often fictionalized (in reference to television series on the subject) or caught up in a global political discourse (general denunciation of conditions in prisons). Without opposing this type of rationale, there seems to be no room in this panorama for the account of the actual experience of these women, i.e. the intimate testimony of their incarceration as a lever for denouncing the conditions of incarceration.

The panellists highlight the difficulty of delivering this testimony and having it heard by an audience. They point out that the discrediting of women's words (and therefore of their testimony) starts at the beginning of the prison process. In the prison environment, Louise Henry, author and member of CASIFQ, explains that their word is considered suspect (not trustworthy) and that women are perceived as unfit to be bearers of knowledge about the world or about themselves. Their word is not trusted even when it comes to bodily manifestations, which are seen as a tool for manipulation. Women's needs, when expressed, are often interpreted as misplaced beliefs or emotions, in short, lies. Later, once the sentence is completed, the story of the experience is difficult to express as the women have internalized its non-credibility. Fear of "non-compliance" is also a barrier to speaking out. Rehabilitation involves supervision by probation officers after release from prison, which directly or indirectly puts pressure on women's narratives. Catherine Chesnay, a professor at the school of social work at UQAM and a member of CASIFQ, says that the system does not yet take into account stigma, gendered institutions and epistemic injustice. A revision of the social base (taking into account the social and economic context of incarcerated people) is needed to avoid preventive incarceration, which they say remains a system of power and domination.

The second conference was presented by the *Art Entre'Elles* collective and moderated by Maria Nengeh Mensah, professor at the school of social work of UQAM and member of the board of Art Entr'Elles. The discussion revolved around the reception of the word of women prisoners in the public space and the artistic and collective work as a communication tool. Based on the panel members' experience, Geneviève, community artist, co-founder and vice-president of Art Entr'Elles, and Sylvie, community artist and co-director of Dénombrement, presented their approach in collective and community art. They proposed a reflection on the work of the imaginary used as an effective and positive means to deliver the account of their real-life experiences in order to make the speech visible, audible and communicable. The questions that guide them are the following: how to be heard and above all understood? How to avoid distorting the words?

The same findings apply: the real-life experience of incarcerated women is not considered truthful, making their words and their story not very credible. For Sylvie, the creation of an artistic collective offers several advantages, notably a positive means of self-affirmation. Speaking through the collective also allows her to tell her story in a less confrontational context than an actual interview with a journalist. The community artists, Sylvie and Geneviève, also note that this device seems to give greater legitimacy to their experiences through the staging of their testimonies, mediated by the artistic process. This device also helps to include the external public in a life experience and to arouse an emotional experience of the intimate rather than the spectacular kind. Thus, artistic self-representation becomes a freedom, facilitated by the collective work where participants reveal themselves for a common project.

The last conference was on women's advocacy in the prison system, presented by Sheri Pranteau and Johanne Bariteau, CAEFS (Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies) representatives. In this context as well, both panellists spoke of their own experiences of incarceration, noting that the voices and experiences of incarcerated women seem to have very little value to the prison system, especially if the behaviour in prison is not considered good by the institution. Regarding the system's response to possible demands, from health to legal advice, the panellists consider it to be one of blackmail (e.g. pushing for information in order to lighten one's sentence) and individual pressure, not taking into account individual backgrounds. The panellists report the same phenomenon at the first stages of the legal process: the history and the individual path are not considered. One becomes one's offence from the first minutes of the trial, relegating speech and testimony to the status of fiction or manipulated words. Thereafter, and throughout the detention, the prison system perpetuates this vision by giving little credit to women's claims. This is a way for the prison institution to disclaim responsibility for the moral and physical conditions of women prisoners. The panellists noted that the phrase "prison saved my life" may be justified in some situations but is generally a myth. For them, through a mistrust and then a perpetual discrediting of women's discourse, the prison system perpetuates mechanisms of rejection and systemic exclusion outside and inside the prisons.

At the end of these conferences, several questions remain: are we, as a society, capable of accepting these words and understanding these experiences collectively? Can the prison system hear them? How can we vary the different types of discourse and actors in this complex system? How to make these words visible? And finally, should the weight of this vocalization always fall on those who have experienced the system? It also emerges that supervised artistic practices, such as the approach of the Art Entr'Elles collective, are an important milestone in prison education, in the broad sense described in the introduction. Even if the outcome is not systematically the obtaining of a diploma, these women flourish and consolidate important tools for the social reintegration process.

See these conferences at: [Société Elizabeth Fry du Québec - YouTube](#)

**Annoncement – Société de criminologie du Québec (SCQ)**

**La société de criminologie du Québec is recruiting for a new Director General!**

[Informations and application](#)

**Annoncement – International Centre for Comparative Criminology (ICCC)**

[The International Centre for Comparative Criminology \(ICCC\)](#) is a group of more than sixty researchers from several Quebec institutions (universities, colleges, practice settings, etc.) and more than one hundred collaborators from around the world. The topics addressed are vast (reintegration, recidivism, victims, alternative prisons and parapublic sectors, marginalization and profiling, cybersecurity, forensic science, risk and protective factors, etc.) and are analyzed from different angles, thus allowing for a better understanding of criminology from a multidisciplinary approach.

The ICCC is offering lunchtime lectures accessible to all through the Zoom platform starting February 10. For the final program and to register, please visit this page. The ICCC is also pleased to announce the upcoming release of the second season of its podcast Le Panoptique.

To listen to the episodes, go here: [The Panopticon - ICCC Podcast](#) (available in French only).

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

[The Journal of Higher Education in Prison](#), published independently by the Alliance for Higher Education in Prison, is the only open access, peer-reviewed journal that publishes exclusively on topics and issues in the field of higher education in prison. Its purpose is to serve as a tool to facilitate theoretical and practical discussions about teaching and learning in prison.

Guidelines: <https://www.higheredinprison.org/jhep/submit-a-manuscript>

The International Review of Education - Annals of Lifelong Learning (IRE) is a scientific journal published by Springer and edited by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. It publishes articles from all parts of the world and is intended for policymakers, practitioners and the community.

*Manuscripts can be submitted online at any time at:* <https://uil.unesco.org/event/ire-call-papers>

## NEWS

### In the UK

Closing of the Learning Together Program

[Learning Together Program](#) is a British program that brings together on-campus and incarcerated students. It is based on a transformative vision of education also serving as a destigmatization process for incarcerated individuals. On November 29, 2019, a deadly attack took place at Fishmongers' Hall during a conference on offender rehabilitation also celebrating the fifth anniversary of the program, run by the University of Cambridge's Institute of Criminology.

On January 10, 2022, the University of Cambridge General Council decided to cease implementation of the program after hearing statements from the coroner of the jury inquest regarding an unsafe approach by the program. They consider the program to have been "lax" in inviting the defendant to the event as a former program participant.

The university's final decision has caused a reaction from the scientific and judicial community. More than 70 people, including professors, doctors and people working in the penal system, have written an open letter deploring this radical decision, which is detrimental to the program, whose goal is social reintegration through education. The Chair had received stakeholders and learners from the program as part of a [cross-discussion with the Canadian program Walls to Bridges \(W2B\)](#), in November 2021.

---

### For more information:

Weaver, M. (May 28, 2021). Inquest into London Bridge attack deaths finds police and MI5 failings. In UK News: *The Guardian*. Downloaded January 13, 2022: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/28/inquest-into-london-bridge-attack-deaths-finds-police-and-mi5-failings>

Cambridge University (January 11, 2021). Statement on future of Learning Together. In News: *University of Cambridge*. Downloaded January 13, 2022: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/statement-on-future-of-learning-together>

Weaver, M. (January 16, 2022). "Dismay" at Cambridge University decision to axe prisoner scheme after terror attack. In Prisons and probation: *The Guardian*. Downloaded January 16, 2022: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jan/16/dismay-at-cambridge-university-decision-to-axe-prisoner-scheme-after-terror-attack>

## PORTRAIT OF A RESEARCHER:

JOSÉ ANTÓNIO MARQUES MOREIRA



.....

José António Marques Moreira holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Educational Sciences and Art History, as well as a post-doctorate in Educational and Communication Technologies from the University of Coimbra. He is Associate Professor with Aggregation in the Department of Education and Distance Learning at the Universidade Aberta. He is currently Coordinator of the Center for Pedagogy Studies in Higher Education at the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Coimbra. He currently coordinates the Network Digital Teaching Course for Higher Education at Universidade Aberta and is a Collaborator of the General Directorate of the Ministry of Education in Portugal in the Digital Transition Plan. He is the Foreign Coordinator of the Digital Education Research Group at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), Brazil. Coordinator of the Distance Education Project in Prison Establishments (UAb) in Portugal at the Universidade Aberta and creator of the [EDUCONLINE@PRIS](mailto:EDUCONLINE@PRIS) Virtual Campus for the prison population in Portugal.



**Editor** - To begin with, can you introduce us to the virtual learning model you have developed? What vision/definition of education and pedagogical process does this model suggest?

**Jose Antonio Marques Moreira** - Firstly, it should be made clear that there is only one Virtual Pedagogical Model (VPM) at Universidade Aberta (UAb), a very inclusive model, which, due to its flexibility, also allows to meet the needs of students in the context of deprivation of freedom. The UAb's VPM, created in 2007, specifically designed for education in virtual environments, is based on a vision of learning based on the following principles: Teaching based on Diversified Interaction either at student-teacher level, or student-student level, or between the student and the learning resources and contents themselves; Teaching based on Flexibility of access to learning (contents and activities), which means a primacy of asynchronous communication and the absence of time or space imperatives or constraints; Student-centred Education, which

means that the student should be active and responsible for the construction of his/her own knowledge; and Education promoting digital inclusion, understood as both the facilitation of the use of digital technologies and the development of competences for the analysis and production of digital information.

**Editor** - What observations and conclusions have you made regarding the application of this model and the pedagogical process in the prison environment in Portugal? Can these models be transferred, in your opinion?

**JAMM** - Naturally, and considering the specificity of the context of imprisonment, inmate students do not navigate the Internet freely; their browsing is very limited, and they only have access to UAb's Moodle platform. However, and even though browsing is conditioned, the principles of flexibility and digital inclusion I mentioned before, present in the UAb's VPM, allow these students, with a differentiated user profile, to be integrated in regular classes and not in digital "ghettos".

In fact, the UAb VPM allows students/inmates to perform autonomously most of the work required to pass the curricular units of the courses in which they are enrolled, through the resources provided in the digital platform, since the interaction is exclusively focused on the content, and there is no interaction of students/inmates with the rest of the virtual community, neither with the teachers, nor with the class where they are part of. The student's profile only allows him/her to access the communication and interaction spaces of the platform and does not allow him/her to communicate or interact with other people. Despite this limitation, the student/inmate is allowed to access the syllabus and the "closed" resources on the platform, as well as the different assessment modalities, and can submit the electronic exams on the digital platform and perform the face-to-face exams in prison, under the supervision of the technicians who monitor the student's educational process. That is, students/prisoners are allowed to interact—one of the structural principles of the model—, but this interaction is only with the technological system and with the content and digital resources hosted in Universidade Aberta's digital eLearning platform. The interaction with other students and with teachers is not possible, mainly due to security reasons. Students can access the communication spaces, the forums, can read the posts entered by classmates or teachers, but they are not allowed to reply, i.e. interact with the virtual community, having only a profile of "listening" members of the learning community.

Moreover, Universidade Aberta's Virtual Pedagogical Model®, promotes student-centred teaching where the student/inmate assumes himself as an active and responsible agent for the construction of his/her knowledge. It also defends the flexibility of access to learning (contents and activities) with an interaction that takes place at his/her convenience and, obviously, of the prison context, with non-coincidence of space and non-coincidence of time. This allows an effective response to the needs of Universidade Aberta's students in prison, significantly increasing the quality of digital education in prisons.

There are, naturally, adjustments and fine-tuning that can and should be made to make the learning experience even more authentic and similar to the one performed in unrestricted environments. Adjustments, mainly, at the level of the creation of proper communication channels for inmate students, allowing them to communicate and interact with teachers, trying to create a close relationship between teacher and student, the essence of any teaching and learning process. It is, therefore, a model that can be transferable to the reality of prisons in other countries.

**Editor** - What is your opinion concerning adults' use of digital in prisons?

**JAMM** - In my opinion, the use of digital in prisons is fundamental for the social reintegration of the imprisoned individual. It makes no sense today to be inserted in a digital and networked society and have prisons that live exclusively in analogue realities. It is essential to develop in these citizens digital skills that promote social inclusion. The European Union itself recognizes that digital skills must be present in the inmate's training since they are currently considered indispensable for social integration. In this sense, the interaction between human training, literacy and digital skills facilitates adaptation to contexts where real and virtual, online and offline mix and hybridize more and more. Thus, Lifelong Learning programs that are tailored to the needs of their participants, in line with the ideas of social justice, can contribute to bringing different social groups closer together and ensure that everyone is given the same access to education. And it is in this sense of social justice that the development of digital skills can be considered a strand of social inclusion because it can provide access to technologies and generate the ability to create and produce meanings and sense in digital environments.

**Editor** - How can we improve this e-learning experience and develop digital skills for adults?

**JAMM** - These experiences can be developed with the creation of virtual campuses of education, training and digital citizenship for the inmate population, as we did in Portugal with the creation of the Campus Eduonline@Prison, whose main goal is, on the one hand, to promote education and training in virtual environments, and on the other hand, the development of inmates' digital skills.

Launched in the beginning of November 2018, the virtual Campus portal was created based on two Moodle platforms, one which gives access to Universidade Aberta's degree courses, and another, -ON@PRIS- which gives access to actions and courses created specifically for the inmate population, in terms of digital skills training.

It is precisely on this platform -ON@PRIS- that five training actions for the inmate population in the areas of citizenship and digital skills are currently being developed under the following names: 1) Active Citizenship and Participation; 2) Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship; 3) Health Literacy; 4) Digital Skills for Communication and Human Relations; and 5) Digital Competence and Citizenship. These are training actions in blended modality, with the support of the ON@PRIS digital platform, which integrates the EDUONLINE@PRIS Digital Campus.

These training actions are framed in the signing of the agreement between Universidade Aberta (UAb) of Portugal and Direção Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais (DGRSP), of this same country.

Having no spatial limit, nor nationality, this is a Campus that may extend its educational action to other countries, other prison realities, creating different responses according to the reality of this region. Thus, this training program can be replicated, selecting the priority actions and adjusting the model and modality and methodologies of the actions in question.

**Editor** - What impacts have you observed regarding social reintegration?

At this moment it is still too early to make such an evaluation because we are talking about a very recent project and most students have not yet finished the Higher Education courses they are attending. However, the results are encouraging, because there is already data indicating a high level of educational success in many curricular units of the different courses. As few students have completed their courses, we hope to have results to present soon.

**Editor** - Can you tell us briefly about the virtual campus experience at Aberta University (issues, challenges and outcomes)?

**JAMM** - Building this Virtual Campus has been a complex challenge and has required a capital of collaborative commitment, ensured by the whole community, both at Universidade Aberta and at Direção Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais. I believe that this project will also contribute to give expression to Universidade Aberta's mission as a university anywhere in the world, which goes beyond political and geographical borders or the walls of a prison, creating conditions for everyone to have the opportunity to invest in their education.

Resulting from the protocols and agreements signed with Direção Geral de Reinserção e Serviços Prisionais, the Educonline@Pris Virtual Campus project, which currently includes about 20 prisons from different regions of the country, is already a reality that not even the COVID-19 pandemic could stop from moving forward. We also hope that the Virtual Campus and the digital signal of the ON@PRIS platform can be extended to other prison systems in the future.

Education designed for a public with the characteristics of students/inmates, using the mediation of technologies, will have benefits that I believe I have already evidenced. However, I am also aware of the difficulties that arise daily in this context, of the possible constraints and limits that need to be overcome, because, in fact, it is necessary to believe in the huge potential of this Campus both in terms of re-education and resocialization of these citizens.

[To consult José António Marques Moreira's articles](#)



### PORTRAIT OF A LEARNER:

RODNEY SPIVEY-JONES

.....

Rodney Spivey-Jones graduated from Bard Prison initiative (BPI) in 2017 with a degree in Social Studies. His story is featured throughout Ken Burns and Lynn Novicks award winning documentary, *College Behind Bars*, with a focus on his senior project. He was a founding member of BPI Debate Union team, which made international news for beating Harvard in 2015. Rodney's senior project, which is a featured storyline in the documentary, *Messianic Black Bodies*, was recently edited to include current events and published as *Black Disfigurement and the American Hieroglyphics of Race* in the *A-line Journal*. He returned home in 2021 and lives in New York state with his family. He is currently writing his first book and studying for the LSAT (The Law School Admission Test). He plans to apply to law school in 2022.

The Chair team had the opportunity to discuss with Rodney Spivey-Jones, who shared with us what he had learned from his journey and his reflections on education. Here is a summary of his generous discussion with us.



**Editor** - How would you describe your relationship with school and education before your incarceration?

**Rodney Spivey-Jones** - It's funny that you ask that because for a lot of students from the BPI, the experiences are the same. They have very spotty education and didn't have much of an interest. That wasn't the case for me. I graduated from high school, and I was enrolled in community college before my incarceration. So, I knew that I needed a college education but the way I valued education was pretty narrow. Education was simply a means to an end. If I had an associate degree, I knew I could earn \$67,000 as an electrical engineer. And I knew if I had a stable income, I would be able to buy a home and raise a family. That was the extent of my motivation. When I was incarcerated, it shifted. It took some time and I started to value education a lot differently and to think about the real value of education.

**Editor** - What made you want to enroll in college while you were incarcerated? What were the main motivating factors?

**RSJ** - I want to make myself clear. I was a student at the time of my arrest, and I just felt it was a great loss, not only of my freedom, loved ones and family but also of education. The education that I wanted so badly, that opportunity was gone. The two college in prison programs I participated in were BPI and Cornell. Cornell University offered college courses within Auburn Correctional Facility.. For the program in Cornell University, they offered course credits, but they couldn't offer a degree. I did these for two years. At some point, I was in another facility, and BPI was holding its first pilot program. I was part of the first cohort. We were 16 people to start with. 150 people filled out the application and took the exam, 50 of us were interviewed and 16 of us were part of the first cohort at Cocksackie Correctional Facility. When they came to Cocksackie, they made an informational speech on the auditorium, and I had a complete tunnel vision. It was what I was waiting for. I think I had been in prison for seven years and finally, there was an opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree. At that point in my life, job prospects, I mean, I was serving 20 to life, so I wasn't thinking I was able to have a job opportunity after my graduation from Bard College. I think what drove me at that point was to accomplish this thing that I really wanted to accomplish but I had messed up. And you know I was a very studious person, and I was looking for spaces where I could just exercise my intellect and be around people who could have engaged me in that way. And Bard offered this space. Everyone in the classroom, whatever motivated them, was doing what I was doing. I could finally sit down and have this deep conversation with someone. When I first enrolled in BPI, I had my eyes on the bachelor's degree. When you're first admitted to BPI, you're first admitted to the associate program and then you have the opportunity to apply for the BA degree. You know, I was attending the program with the attitude "I'm going to get straight A's and not do anything more." But right before I applied to the BA, something else happened. I knew how to write; I knew how to get an A. I was now concerned with trying to produce a better paper, each time, and trying to write something that was better than the last. It didn't matter if it was for an A or a B+. That was irrelevant. The important thing was to be more sophisticated with my thinking. I wanted to be able to explore an idea more deeply than I did the last time. I don't think if I had been enrolled in any other college or any other program, I would have been able to do that.

**Editor** - Can you elaborate on this last point? Why this particular program?

**RSJ** - Everyone knows the name Cornell University, everywhere, right? I think they came into that prison space with a perception of us that was off. Somehow, we couldn't work as the same level as the students on Cornell campus. When you're doing that, when you enter a space with that perception, you're not giving us enough. BPI was different. Teachers give you a lot of books and they expect you to read them. There are a lot of writing assignments, and they expect that you complete them. Sometimes, I had ten books for history class, and the course reading could be from 25 different books. Nothing was ever like that at Cornell. I remember Dylan Miller; I think she was the director of college operations back then. She came to Cocksackie before BPI started its first cohort. She explained to all of us that expressed an interest or were attending: "This is a lot of writing and a lot of reading, and we expect a lot from you." And when, you start and you see the work to accomplish, you're like "okay, that was what they mean."

**Editor** - What was the selection criteria for the program?

**RSJ** - A high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED), that's the only requirement. Then you need to take the entry exam, of course, and that included an essay. They give you a prompt and you write the essay in an hour or two.

**Editor** - Attending this program, you earn a bachelor's in social sciences. Can you say a little bit more about that experience?

**RSJ** - I have a major in social science. The very first semester and second semester students will all take the same courses. Anthropology, first-year seminar semester (FYSEM), a combination of composition and literature. You are going to do a lot of writing and it starts day one. The students are also required to take L&T, which stands for learning and thinking. It is ten days straight every day of instruction. The first year is like prep for the military; a reading and writing boot camp. The third semester students could select their own courses and have time to do one or two more classes. And after you earn your associate degree, you can select your major. Your associate degree is a liberal arts degree. I chose social sciences because it provided the most flexibility. I love history, politics, political theory, philosophy, no other major opened all those options.

**Editor** - You have to write a thesis at the end of your BA. Was there a professor or a person accompanying you during the writing process?

**RSJ** - Yes, I did have a senior project advisor. He was a philosophy professor and philosophers are looking for sound arguments. I knew he would challenge me. The way this works: I would write a draft; he would comment on it, and then we'd have a discussion. And it forced me to be very clear about the concept and definition. But he didn't choose my topic. In fact, Bard was a little bit afraid of my topic. I was working on Black Lives Matter and the murder of Michael Brown while the movement was going on. And you can imagine, prisons were on high alert about this situation. They didn't want me doing this topic, but I don't know how I managed, but I convinced them to do it.

**Editor** - Can you describe the impact that these different programs have had on your current life? Did your college education allow you to acquire a new perspective on life? If yes, can you describe that new perspective?

**RSJ** - I had this one class called *Race, Religion and Nation*. It was catalogued as a history class but was much more than that. The professor was using multiple lenses and relied on multiple disciplines, including anthropology. Anthropology taught me how to look at the way race, religion and nation work together. The argument for the entire course was that we cannot understand the formation of race in this country without recognizing the ways ideas of religion and nation played a role in a creation of race. And that was something new for me. I never approached anything like that, and it had a big impact on my senior project. You have these different identities that work co-constitutively and that create each other. Before then, this sophistication was beyond me.

**Editor** - With regards to your thesis, what did you learn about yourself by achieving this task?

**RSJ** - I think, because at that time I spent a lot of time in prison, you start to see yourself as other, as different from the people who are out in the world. And this project helped me recognize that no I am not an "other"; I am the same as everyone. I feel the injustices the same way as they do, I felt just like I would have if I was involved, if I was the victim of police brutality.

My thesis helped me reconnect somehow. Intellectually, I challenged myself and I didn't know if I would be able to meet the challenge. And I learned that I was not only able to meet the challenge but that I was able to get this thing published. I didn't approach this project with the idea that people would want to read it. I just wanted to do the best I could. I walked away from that experience knowing not only that I can write a good senior project but that I can write pretty well and people want to read it, not only the professor, and so other people were interested in things that I had to say and I never thought of myself that way. And I am actually working on a book right now. This is a memoir. This is a new challenge. I will do the best I can to speak about some of my experiences. I don't know yet what the focus will be, but I am working on it. I will be starting to write about my experiences in prison and my childhood and the success that I had so far in my life not just despite of the hardship but in some instances because of it.

**Editor** - Would you say that participating in BPI fostered a new identity for you or created something for you that you were not aware of?

**RSJ** - I speak about this often. At some point in the documentary, I say: "I am a scholar." Well, they left out the part where I say, "I'm not really a scholar but you are doing a scholarly work". So student is an identity I developed during the program. Before then, while I was incarcerated, I was a prisoner. You know, being in prison, inside a classroom with professors and other students who are also inside a prison, can be a little bit confusing sometimes. The lines, when you live in the classroom, when you live in that space, that academic space, you go down the hallway and you have to deal with the correctional officer. It can be jarring. And that emphasizes what we are doing in the classroom, that student identity. Being a student sometimes could be dangerous inside a prison because you are expected to be curious and push the envelope as much as you can but there are some boundaries that you can't cross as a prisoner because they are perceived as dangerous. You know, identity is a funny thing. For me, I was a student in and out of the classroom. For the correctional officer, I was always a prisoner. However, I was always unable, unwilling to allow them to force me into that category and that brought tension.

**Editor** - Do you think that correctional officers resent the fact that prisoners have access to education?

**RSJ** - For some yes but not all. Part of the education that I received made me aware of the complexity of making generalizations about any group. I can't say that all correctional officers resented the fact that we were studying, that we were earning a degree, and maybe a lot of them did, but there were also some of them that were saying, "good for you, it's good that you have this opportunity."

**Editor** - Do you see education now like you saw it before?

**RSJ** - No, I don't. Prior to my release, even when I was writing my senior thesis, I started to develop a greater understanding of the value of education. I began my journey with BPI with the main goal to earn a bachelor's degree, but now I see the value of the entire process. Education broadened my perspective on the world. Being able to stop in any space and assess it and figure how to contribute. I had no idea that I would learn as much as I did, that I would be questioning my place in society. You know, professors, they're used to doing that. They ask a lot of questions to engage us in dialogue. And at a certain point I was less concerned about coming up with solutions. Because the more you learn the more you know that you know nothing. I question everything I know now. That was not happening in the beginning, it came through the process.

**Editor** - In your view, what could be improved in the programs you have attended or in prison education in general (e.g. subjects taught, way of teaching, length of trainings)?

**RSJ** - I think you should make a distinction between a prison educator and people who come into prison to teach because, at least in NY state, there are teachers that are employed by the Department of Correction and their responsibilities are to teach inmates, and I deliberately choose the word inmate. They teach inmates what they need to know to earn a GED. And it is not good teaching for the most part. They don't seem to have a vested interest in whether the inmate learns. They treat the inmate as an inmate, the same way correctional officers did. So instead of having classrooms being a space to encourage learning, it becomes more about punishing them for things that they didn't do. Whereas professors who come into prison to teach, they are invested in the student and the inmate disappears. It is funny but as a prisoner you can figure out the difference between them based on temperament. There is this line that prison educators or anyone else that works for prisons draw between the inmates and everyone else and you can't cross that line as a prisoner. So it's very difficult to do something productive in classrooms like that. BPI professors come in and they see you as a student and they treat you like they are treating students on the campus and that is very important.

**Editor** - What would be the solution, in your eyes, to that particular problem (treating the prisoner not as a learner but as an inmate)?

**RSJ** - I think we have to rethink rehabilitation. Rehabilitation and education are very difficult to bring together. Because rehabilitation implies that the person that you are teaching needs to be fixed. If it is the case, I'm sitting in the classroom and listening to the professor or the teacher, and the professor is often white and many of us are often people of colour. We feel that divide, we feel those boundaries that I've spoken of earlier. It is very difficult for me to pay attention to anything that may be substantive in a room like that, where people focus on my brokenness. And this is more concrete. We need to bring more civics education in these spaces, more civic courses, everything that allows the incarcerated to recognize they are a part of the community even if they're away from this community. Any program that does that could be a good program but any program that doesn't even address that, every program that emphasizes this difference is a horrible program.

**Editor** - In Canada, social reinsertion often involves programs like AA or NA or courses on anger management and formal education is just a program among others. You think that education should be separated from other programs, or should it be more integrated?

**RSJ** - I will say separated. Programs that you just mention focus on the broken part. In my experience, and I mean by my experience also the people that I know that have participated to those programs, and especially the drugs program, they don't work. What they do a very good job at is letting the participant know there is something wrong with them. Imagine, in a classroom, we are talking about education here, you're reminded there is something wrong with you the entire time, like the very space itself. For example, in the contexts of teaching by prisons educators, they don't care. They earn a pay cheque, and it is an easy cheque. Many of the teachers have a classroom of 20 or 25, no matter what the capacity allows in that room and they have a work sheet, and they sit down and work on the work sheet the entire time. That is not teaching. The teachers from the university must meet certain criteria, right? And I don't think they want it in any other way. It is a great job, with a lot of benefits, and they are not great teachers.

**Editor** - Would we lose something if we didn't teach the liberal arts in prison?

**RSJ** - I think you can lose, yes. You are learning how to be civically engaged! I will say, specifically about higher education in prison, many of us committed a crime against our community in part because we didn't recognize that we were a part of this community. It is very difficult to transgress a group of people that you are affiliated with. I am not going to harm a member of my community. Liberal arts education teaches you that you are a member of your community, and you learn what your responsibilities are. And I also want to tell people who think that we should not pay for education in prison: maybe you should spend less time focusing on the fact that people in prison are getting free college education, and really look at why it is costing so much to go to college for everyone else. We must have that debate. That's the worthy question.

## ARTICLES

### JOURNALS FOCUSING ON PRISON EDUCATION

Buchanan, S. and Canning, C. (2021). "Exploring the rehabilitative cultural role of the prison library: addressing sensitive information needs via cultural activities". In Garner, J. (ed.) *Exploring the roles and practices of libraries in prisons: International Perspectives. Advances in Librarianship*, 49. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. pp. 11-37.  
Downloaded from: <https://www.stir.ac.uk/research/hub/publication/1701686>

In this chapter, Buchanan and Canning, professors at the University of Stirling (Scotland), explore the benefits of cultural activities in learning about women's informal needs, particularly "sensitive nature needs" such as mental health and interpersonal skills. They identify the role of libraries in the prison setting not only as an essential learning environment for understanding these needs, but also as a place to become aware of them (needs that are often suppressed or unknown). Through a review of the literature, the authors demonstrate how knowledge of these needs supports the rehabilitation process by helping prisoners develop literacy, socialization, and communication skills. They point to the lack of research and concrete initiatives and recommend establishing a collaborative model between prison libraries, creative agencies, and inmates to address these learning and information needs.

Littman, D. M. and Sliva, S. M. (2020). "Prison Arts Program Outcomes: A Scoping Review." *Journal of Correctional Education* (1974-), vol. 71, no. 2, pp. 54–82.  
Downloaded from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27042216>

From a scoping review perspective, Silva and Littman's article provides a survey of empirical research on the impact of arts programs on the development of social, emotional, and educational skills of women prisoners in the United States. To do so, the authors focus on studies that describe a rigorous methodology and develop recommendations and research directions. Through this review, the article highlights the link between arts programs and improved social and relational well-being for incarcerated individuals, but also for their families and/or communities. The article, mostly descriptive, also provides a prescriptive dimension. They call on the reader to draw on this review to enhance the function of arts programs in prisons and to expand the research.

Pritchard, D. (2021). "Philosophy in Prisons and the Cultivation of Intellectual Character". *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2021, pp. 130-143. Downloaded from: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1185&context=jper>

The aim of this article is to promote the integration of a certain type of philosophy teaching in a prison environment. The author demonstrates the value of using this particular form of teaching (the sensibility approach) which allows for the development of reflection, rationalization, reasoning and critical thinking skills. It is based on the use of the Community of Philosophical Instruction (COPI) pedagogical method which creates an inclusive space for discussion. The article highlights the epistemic goal of this learning method, which is less interested in the object of the training than in the intellectual process, which allows one to appropriate knowledge (how to learn and how to think). Based on a case study of a Scottish prison using this method, the author justifies the benefit of this approach in a context of incarceration by showing that the abilities developed become not only intellectual assets, but also practical skills (help in conscious decision-making, for example).

Timler, K. and Jordao Villaça, M. (2021). "Laughing behind bars: How stand-up comedy by people with lived experience of incarceration confronts and sustains stigma and marginalization", *Comedy Studies*, pp. 227-247. Downloaded from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2040610X.2021.1951109>

Stand-up comedy is a powerful tool for social criticism. It is also effective in communicating traumatic experiences, such as those of incarceration. These are the findings of the two authors, Kelsey Timer and Marcela Jordão Villaça. Based on a thematic literature review exploring contemporary understandings of mental health stigma in relation to prison contexts, the authors explain the link between non-holistic management of mental health issues and its negative impact on the stability and social inclusion of women prisoners (stigma). They then hypothesize that stand-up comedy, through the use of situational humour (incongruity humour), can build a positive identity by deconstructing social stigma. To complete their research, the authors interviewed several incarcerated comedians and analyzed their stand-up comedy as a privileged access to the prison experience. They conclude that humour, by highlighting the violence of social structures, has a therapeutic effect allowing a certain empowerment of people stigmatized in and by the prison environment.

Taylor, A. J. (2021). «High-Quality Education: An Update on the State of Kentucky's Juvenile Corrections» *Journal of Correctional Education* (1974-), vol 72, no 1, pp. 4–12. Downloaded from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27042233>

The article surveys the guidelines and good practices in matters of social reinsertion and education in juvenile detention centers as they are established by the United States Department of Justice. The author analyses the implementation of educational processes that should allow a better reintegration within the mainstream education system and lower the risk of recidivism. She focuses on the specific case of the State of Kentucky that implemented such a process during six years, using quantitative data on educational success collected since 2013. The author notes that, while many educational programs and transition services are offered within juvenile detention centers in Kentucky, educational score remain globally low. She concludes that these programmes must be improved to increase the chances of rehabilitation for youths detained in Kentucky.

Higgins, L. (2021). «Exploring the Relationship Between Education and Rehabilitation in the Prison Context», *Journal of Prison Education & Reentry*, vol. 7, No 2, pp.144-159. Downloaded from : <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1199&context=jper>

Is rehabilitation really possible or is it part of the prison system's imagination? With this question in mind, Lorraine Higgins examines the complexity of the relationship between rehabilitation and education in prison by looking at the values and principles that govern them in the context of Irish prisons. She hypothesizes that rehabilitation and education in prison function in a similar way, that is, as a means of controlling the individual based on the principle of security and whose sole purpose is to "restore" that same individual by normatively reintegrating them into society. Based on several theoretical writings that question these two notions, the author demonstrates that there can only be a contradiction between prison education used as a means of repression and the definition of adult education established by UNESCO, among others. The latter is seen as a space for dialogue, the aim of which is to foster freedom of learning and critical thinking. Thus, the author proposes to rethink this relationship by using liberty-centred models of education that take into account the individual in a holistic way (history, background, socioeconomic situation), the damage caused by incarceration itself without restricting individuals' ability to express themselves or to disagree. For Higgins, it is only on this condition that the prison system will be able to claim to offer a real educational pathway and promote social "reintegration" that is no longer based solely on "repairing" an individual who is dangerous to society.

Fairbairn, F. (2021). "Trust, Power, and Transformation in the Prison Classroom". *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*, vol. 7, No 2, pp. 160 - 182. Downloaded from: <https://doi.org/10.25771/0694-3a92>

Fran Fairbairn builds on the work of Pike and Hopkins and Mezirow on transformative learning to examine the various factors that can lead an individual to alter their perspective when confronted with new knowledge that does not fit their meaning scheme. Fairbairn thus proposes a five-stage model to describe the process of transformative learning — (1) initial position; (2) new data; (3) assimilation; (4) incommensurability; and (5) modified frames — and draws on grounded theory and discourse analysis of 19 teachers and teaching assistants to suggest that trust and power play an important role in transformation through language. According to these instructors, incarcerated students who appear to trust their teachers and feel empowered in the learning relationship are more likely to decide to have a transformative learning experience. Fairbairn acknowledges that it is problematic that she did not speak with incarcerated individuals directly and suggests that more data is needed to defend her thesis. However, she emphasizes the importance of the transformative role of learning and concludes that it must be built on a foundation that links trust and an equitable distribution of power.

## EDUCATION SCIENCES

**Todd-Kvam, J. and Todd-Kvam, M. (2021) "Talking Good: Analysing Narratives of Desistance in Norway". *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. XX, No. XX, pp. 1 - 17.**  
**Downloaded from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab087>**

Drawing on the narratives of nine (n=9) "desistors" — individuals who have been incarcerated and are in the process of leaving crime — John and Marie Todd-Kvam seek to describe the intra- and interpersonal aspects of the development and changes in the personal identities of ex-offenders. They also seek to describe how the self-narrative changes and how desistance is experienced in Norway. The authors propose an innovative theoretical framework that describes three important aspects of desistance: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic aspects. The idea here is to recognize that ex-prisoners have agency in their desistance process, but that they are also affected by others and by their context. The authors note, for example, that interpersonal relationships contribute to ex-offenders' empowerment while increasing their vulnerability. It is also noted that self-narratives change positively when ex-offenders find opportunities or venues for mutual and positive recognition. Again, however, vulnerability, or exposure to the other, remains a salient feature. Finally, the authors conclude that it is still difficult to provide an analytical portrait of desistance in Norway, even though it is clearly a difficult journey for a population that suffers the collateral effects of their traumas, addictions and punishments, despite a well-funded welfare state.

## LEGAL SCIENCES AND CRIMINOLOGY

**Brown, D., and Snyder, K.Z (2021) "Bridging a Gap of Understanding: A Model of Experiential Learning for Incarcerated Students and Non-Incarcerated". *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 200-2013. Downloaded from: <https://doi.org/10.25771/q05x-vp37>**

In this practitioner report, Dale Brown and Zoann K. Snyder, professors at Michigan State University, describe their attempt to establish a community service-learning program that is committed to the pursuit of meaningful social change in collaboration with community partners. Their "bridge" model is designed as a critical alternative to service learning programs that focus on the interests and needs of students rather than the community involved, and to Inside-Out programs. For example, for 15 weeks, 10 Michigan University students participated in experiential learning projects with 13 participants from a medium-security prison in a Midwestern state. These students formed small teams to work together on various projects. The authors conclude by describing the perceived benefits to both the outside and incarcerated students as well as the many challenges they faced. In particular, they note the difficulty of establishing a healthy distance between the incarcerated and the outside students, despite the intensity and closeness of their collaboration.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Valente, A. and Caravita, S. (2021). "Foreign Minors and Young Adults in Detention Facilities in Italy: Successful Pathways and Critical Factors in the Education Process". *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 111-134. Downloaded from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14658/pupj-ijse-2021-3-6>

In this study, A. Valente and S. Caravita analyze key factors of success and failure to be taken into consideration in the education process of young adults and migrant minors in detention in Italy. The authors focus on the status of these young people, who are overrepresented in these incarceration settings, and the impact of this situation on the development of their identity. Due to a double stigma (being in an ethnolinguistic minority and being incarcerated), they note that positive identity development is very difficult. Positive identity is understood here as well-being, or a number of dimensions of positive psychological functioning (such as self-esteem or meaning in life). The study then proposes to identify success factors and to demonstrate the positive impact that education can have on this process. Through a multifactorial analysis (related to students, school and prison factors and macro-systems), they have been conducting since 2016 a collection of quantitative data (attendance, diplomas obtained) and qualitative data (open-ended questions on the overall educational pathway or the role of the family) based on semi-directed questionnaires addressed to several educational leaders of JDCs (Juvenile Detention Centers). After analyzing these data, they made several observations about the situation of these young migrants in detention, such as the feeling of marginalization, the withdrawal of identity as a form of protection, the difficulties in acquiring the psychological skills necessary for well-being, and the negative consequences for the employability process. They then highlight the success factors that educational pathways need to incorporate as a framework and theoretical tools. They conclude that education should thus be seen as a network of skills to be acquired and allow for the establishment of a climate of trust and appreciation between the institution, the educators and the inmates.



Chaire **UNESCO** de recherche  
appliquée pour l'éducation en prison



Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture



7000, Marie-Victorin, Montréal (Québec), Canada, H1G 2J6  
Tél.: (1) 514 328 3832 - Fax: (1) 514 328 3829

Québec 