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Introduction to Organisation

The University of Gloucestershire (UOG) is a diverse, vibrant community that offers its students a specialised and dynamic place to learn, grow and make lasting connections. In the School of Education and Humanities, our practice is based on a clearly defined set of values; the transformational potential of education, the centrality of social justice to our actions, the value of community and a belief that diversity enriches learning. As educators we are interested both in the immediate impact our practice can have as well as the investment in the futures of our learners.

Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi MBE has a background in Psychology, is a recognised academic in the study of young people in conflict with the law, and has years of experience working with troubled youth in both formal and community settings. Dr Shafi's research focuses on the education of young people in custodial settings with numerous publications in the field of youth justice and education. The most recent being a Special Issue in an international education journal (International Journal of Educational Development) entitled *Children's Education in Secure Custodial Settings: Towards a Global Understanding of Effective Policy and Practice*, with contributions from across the world. She is now leading on two Erasmus+ funded multi-year projects focusing on re-engaging young people in conflict with the law, with education and learning (RENYO), and using active games to improve the future prospects of this same group (AG4C). While these current projects focus primarily on young people, the theory behind the ideas, and their application into practice and applicable to learners of all ages.

Tristan Middleton is an experienced practitioner in primary education and SEN, whose research now focuses on educational inclusion, SEN and educational resilience. He is also the Associate Editor of the International Journal of Nurture in Education. In his current role as Chair of Directors of Leading Learning for SEND Community interest Company, he has worked on a number of projects feeding into DfE development of SEND provision. Tristan is part of the core team leading the Erasmus+ RENYO project.

Chris Jones is a research assistant working on numerous Erasmus+ projects focused on young people in conflict with the law, and the engagement of young people in politics through open schooling. His own research, including the focus of his recent MA Education, looks at various elements of families' partnerships with schools. Chris is part of the core teams leading the Erasmus+ RENYO and AG\$C projects.

- What is the purpose of education in prisons?

Research on education within the secure context is not plentiful (Hart, 2015). Much of it is focused on specific education interventions rather than the overall approach to

education provision. The Ministry of Justice (2013) indicate that a period in custody represents the structure and boundaries which many (young) people in conflict with the law have not experienced in their lives. A good quality educational experience can form the basis of this structure (Ministry of Justice, 2013).

The purpose of education in prisons should be transformational in terms of rehabilitation and changing the life course of the individual (Behan, 2014). This is particularly important because as many as 9 out of 10 (young) people who receive custodial sentences have dropped out of school in the six months or so prior to incarceration (Little 2014; ahmed Shafi, 2018). This demonstrates that the educational experiences of those who come into conflict with the law are disruptive and unfulfilling (Cripps and Summerfield, 2012; Little, 2015). Many of them become disengaged and disaffected early in their educational careers (Graham, Van Bergen, & Sweller, 2015).

Thus, the purpose of education in prison has to play two important roles (i) to supersede the previous poor educational experiences and replace with an alternative model of learning with the prerequisite soft skills required for effective learning and; (ii) to be transformative by providing an opportunity for learners to exercise their own agency in preparation for successful transitioning into the communities. Success has to mean an educational or work placement which enables the learner to have meaningful work to go on to on release.

An Erasmus Plus funded project entitled Re-engaging Young Offenders with Education & Learning (RENYO) which is currently ongoing and led by the University of Gloucestershire seeks to replicate research by ahmed Shafi et al (2017) in custodial settings in the partner countries; Italy, Spain, Germany and the UK. Early findings are showing that it is possible to re-engage the young people providing the conditions are met (see below). The Project utilises Authentic Inquiry as a means to re-engage young people with education and learning, whereby the learner begins with an authentic starting point for learning. The project details may be accessed via this link <https://skills4youth.eu/>.

Therefore, the purpose of education in prison must not just play the role of transmitting knowledge and skills but has to have a more transformative effect. And it is important to have this ambition for prison education rather than a 'time-filler'.

- How well are additional learning needs met by the prison education and youth custody systems, including SEND and language and communication needs?

Within the context of the need for education in secure institutions to have a transformative impact upon individuals who have previous negative experiences of education, the context for those with SEND is particularly significant.

Educational outcomes and opportunities for learners with SEND in schools is well documented; Learners with SEND experience higher levels of exclusion (Timpson, 2019), lower outcomes and value-added measures show less progress than those without SEND. These factors are recognised to have a negative impact on learner motivation (Timpson, 2019).

Young offenders with recognised SEND are significantly over-represented in comparison to the whole population. Government data published in August 2019

identify that between 42% and 56% of young offenders at the end of Key Stage 4 were identified with SEND, in comparison to 17% of the Key Stage 4 population as a whole who have SEND (Moj / DfE, 2019). 29% of 16 and 17 year-olds in custody have learning difficulties, which is six times more than the national figure for that age (Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice, 2017)..

Amongst adults in prison in 2017-18, 34% reported having a learning disability or difficulty and 62% of those entering prison were assessed as having a reading age of 11 years or lower (Prison Reform Trust, 2019). In addition, 60% of prisoners experience communication difficulties (Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities, 2012), however there is a significant gap in screening for this need (Bryan *et al.*, 2015). The co-morbidity of social, emotional and mental health difficulties with communication difficulties, and the lack of provision in this area (Snow *et al.*, 2015), adds a further layer of disadvantage for young offenders. Neurodevelopmental disorders are particularly over-represented within young people in custody, as is the prevalence of traumatic brain injury (Hughes and O'Byrne, 2016). Research also indicates higher rates of Autistic Spectrum Disorder within the prison population (Lewis *et al.*, 2016). Diagnosis of language impairment amongst young offenders is reported to be as low as 25% of those in need (Hughes, Chitsabesan and Bryan, 2017). Kirby *et al.*'s (2020) recent work points to the fact that significant neurodevelopmental disorders remain undiagnosed for many offenders, as they have missed opportunities for diagnosis as a result of non-engagement with schools, which provide opportunities in this area, as well as the ease of mis-diagnosis as 'bad behaviour'.

In 2004, Ofsted's 'Out of School' report identified that the educational achievement of young people within the Youth Justice System was under-researched, and this continues to be the case. There is, however, a recent study (Winstanley, Webb and Ramsden, 2020) which has identified that young offenders with developmental language disorder are twice as likely to reoffend than those without this special educational need.

- How can successful participation in education be incentivised in prisons?

Incentivisation has to be at two levels: the internal and the external. The internal incentive has to reach to the internal motivational drivers at the individual level and these then have to be matched with an external connection to outwardly valued outcomes (personal to the public) (Deakin-Crick 2012). What this means is that an incentive has to start off as personal to the individual and matched with an external motivator such as an attainable goal which may come in the form of a certificate, qualification, or other educational or employment opportunity that extends beyond the incarcerated period. Motivation and engagement are both inter-related concepts that refer to the internal and psychological mechanisms which help connect to the individual at the internal level.

As pointed out by Case and Haines (2015), and Prior and Mason (2010), engagement is a necessary pre-requisite for any 'intervention' to have a chance of success. Research by Ahmed Shafi (2019, 2020) demonstrates how even the most disengaged learner can be re-engaged with education and learning in a relatively short space of time, if certain conditions are met. These include task-value, agency (ability to be self-directed),

autonomy (to feel a sense of competence), a good mentor and an external environment that is conducive to learning in this way. The same research indicated that to do this at individual setting level is possible provided the leadership group view education as a means to rehabilitate and act as an opportunity for transformative experiences.

In order to effectively engage learners, it is important that they have the necessary social and emotional skills to be able to ready for learning. The Active Games for Change (AG4C) project <https://www.activegames4change.org/index.html> is an EU Erasmus Plus funded 3-year project involving 10 partners across 7 European countries. It focuses on developing social and emotional competencies in young offenders to help support their engagement with learning through active games and sport (see website for details and for the State of the Art Analysis Report

https://www.activegames4change.org/uploads/9/7/7/2/97721820/state_of_art_v4.pdf which outlines the literature which demonstrates the need to develop such skills).

The Project has designed specific games and activities which are tailored to be usable within secure custodial settings and to the identified needs of learners in prisons across the partnership. These are in the process of being piloted in custodial settings across the partnerships with the aim of collecting data and an evidence base for the effectiveness of this approach. These are situated within the educational provision in the respective prisons with the express aim of support education and learning. Such projects demonstrate the need to move away from 'intervention' and towards an embedded, holistic model of education that attends to the individual needs of learners.

At the external level of incentivisation, there needs to be specific outwardly valued outcomes that can be achieved through the engagement efforts of the learner. These must be tangible and achievable, and above all valued by the learner (task value). This requires there to be a joined-up approach between the internal and external incentives and the external incentives in particular must be clearly articulated and connected to the internal incentive. Sometimes the external incentive will only emerge once a learner is engaged. And therefore, the internal incentives are the first aims of education in prison and even these may only be attainable if the individual is at the emotionally ready state. Research by Ahmed Shafi (2020) indicated the impact of the secure custodial setting on the emotional state, which is particularly relevant for young offenders, especially in relation to their learning. Emotion management and regulation is therefore a vital prerequisite to engagement with learning.

Thus, incentivisation for education in prison is not simple, it is a complex, multi-layered process and requires work at the most basic of levels in order to be effective. Often, superficial incentives are offered in prison and one of the reasons they do not work is because they do not understand the complexity of motivation and its connection to engagement. Our projects, at the University of Gloucestershire, are submitting our response based on this deeper and nuanced level.

We would therefore recommend incentives which appeal to the internal and external motivations of learners.

- Are current resources for prison learning meeting need?

Previous research has suggested that education and training in custody is fragmented and of a lower quality than mainstream schooling (Frolander-Ulf & Yates, 2001),

holding a marginal status in custodial settings (Jones & d'Errico, 1994). Teaching staff in prisons may be volunteers often with limited experience and almost always with little specific training of teaching in prison (Goldson, 2005). 'Instructors' rather than qualified teachers are more likely to be employed as prison educators, contributing to their marginal status and high staff turnover (Jeanes, McDonald, & Simonot, 2009). Staff do not always see the fruits of their efforts as students move on and the education or training may not continue, thus teacher expectations can also be low (Houchins, Shippen, McKeand, Viel-Ruma, Jolivette and Guarino, 2009). Furthermore, the youth custodial population is transient and the desire or focus to achieve is somewhat diminished from both the teacher and pupil perspective (Sander, Sharkey, Olivarri, Tanigawa, & Mauseth, 2010). Consequently, educational aspirations are limited (Williamson, 1993; Stephen & Squires, 2003; Oser, 2006). Such a wide range of issues which need attention, paint a bleak picture of education within secure custodial settings and considerable investment is required in staff rather than physical resources.

Much of the excellent initiatives by for, example, the Prison Education Trust or Nacro, may not always supported at the leadership level of prison settings. If we are to make education truly transformational, then we need to find a way to reconcile the purposes of education with the punitive aspect of prison in a way that they are no longer competing but complementing and looking to transition people into the community successfully.

We would therefore recommend greater focus on staff development, which includes those at leadership levels, to promote a deeper understanding of learning and how best it can be effective as well as invest in innovative pedagogies to support their development.

- How does the variability in the prison estate and infrastructure impact on learning?

Research has shown that the secure setting has a significant effect on the emotional position of young people in particular. Emotional distress has been shown to impact on learning. The structures of a custodial setting, of even a secure children's home, which is the 'softest' form of custody, can be a barrier to learning with regards to managing emotions and relationships with peers, teachers and care staff (ahmed Shafi 2020). Tensions within the UK youth justice system that fluctuate between a penal and welfare approach (Mclaughlin, Muncie, & Hughes, 2001; Muncie, 2008; Muncie, 2009; Case, 2015; Goldson, 2019) play a role in the less than integrated approach 'on the ground', where there are different 'lines of management' for the different aspects of the secure estate for children and young people.

Thus, whilst the broader infrastructure of the prison estate may itself impact learning, particularly if there are transitions between setting, eg secure children home to YOI, the micro infrastructure of the settings themselves have a more direct and immediate impact on, for example, the emotional position of the young person and their subsequent ability to engage fully with educational opportunities.

We would recommend a focus on:

(i) An enabling environment in prisons which facilitate the developing of relationships, especially important for the younger prison population. For example, exploring ways of joining separated lines of management for care and education and increase collaboration and communication. This could be advanced within the existing organisational structures.

(ii) Training and professional development for teachers and care staff in ways to address the specific educational needs of young people in order to be responsive to the need to develop facilitating relationships and to be sensitive to the emotional component of disengagement. Without these efforts, educational efforts could be in vain.

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