

Education Delivery in Youth Justice Centres: Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program Pedagogy in an Australian Context

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Abstract : This paper discusses the transformative learning experience for students participating in the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program (Inside-out) and explores the value this pedagogical approach may have in youth justice centers. Inside-Out is a semester-long university course which is unique as it takes 15 university students, with their textbook and theory-based knowledge, behind the walls to study alongside 15 incarcerated students, who have the lived experience of the criminal justice system. Inside-out is currently offered in three Victorian prisons, expanding to five in 2020. The Inside-out pedagogy which is based on transformative dialogic learning is reliant upon the participants sharing knowledge and experiences to develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity and uniqueness of one another. Inside-out offers the class an opportunity to create its own guidelines for dialogue, which can lead to the student's sense of equality, which is fundamental in the success of this program. Dialogue allows active participation by all parties in reconciling differences, collaborating ideas, critiquing and developing hypotheses and public policies, and encouraging self-reflection and exploration. The structure of the program incorporates the implementation of circular seating (where the students alternate between inside and outside), activities, individual reflective tasks, group work, and theory analysis. In this circle everyone is equal, this includes the educator, who serves as a facilitator more so than the traditional teacher role. A significant function of the circle is to develop a group consciousness, allowing the whole class to see itself as a collective, and no one person holds a superior role. This also encourages participants to be responsible and accountable for their behavior and contributions. Research indicates completing academic courses, like Inside-Out, contributes positively to reducing recidivism. Inside-Out's benefits and success in many adult correctional institutions have been outlined in evaluation reports and scholarly articles. The key findings incorporate the learning experiences for the students in both an academic capability and professional practice and development. Furthermore, stereotypes and pre-determined ideas are challenged, and there is a promotion of critical thinking and evidence of self-discovery and growth. There is empirical data supporting positive outcomes of education in youth justice centers in reducing recidivism and increasing the likelihood of returning to education upon release. Hence, this research could provide the opportunity to increase young people's engagement in education which is a known protective factor for assisting young people to move away from criminal behavior. In 2016, Tarmi completed the Inside-Out educator training in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and has developed an interest in exploring the pedagogy of Inside-Out, specifically targeting young offenders in a Youth Justice Centre.

Keywords : dialogic transformative learning, inside-out prison exchange program, prison education, youth justice

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