

Law students behind bars

Partnerships: Building bridges between prisons and society

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Agreements on Prison-University Partnership

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN DENMARK, DEPARTMENT OF LAW

- 12 Law students (outside-students)
- Enrolment of students at the “Open University”
- Lecturers and examination

PRISON (SØBYSØGÅRD)

- 12 inmates (inside-students)
- Classroom
- Access to prison (staff resources)

DANISH PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICE (PRELIMINARY AGREEMENT)

- Paying course fee (430 DKR per ETCS = 2150 DKR per participant).

Why prison-university partnerships?

LAW STUDENTS FROM OUTSIDE

1. To gain a deeper understanding of Criminal Justice matters/Law.
2. To challenge presumptions about prisoners.
3. To be aware of career possibilities within the Legal system.
4. To become a better Lawyer.

STUDENTS FROM INSIDE

1. To gain theoretical knowledge on Criminal Justice matters/Law.
2. To challenge presumptions about University/Law Students.
3. To challenge the prison culture and counter prisonisation.
4. Inspire inmates for (more) education.

SYNERGY

- A. Combining theoretical and practical knowledge of criminal justice matters.
- B. Building bridges/sharing knowledge between prisons and the outside society.

Number of students enrolled - rejected, completed, drop-outs and results

	2016	2017	TOTAL
INSIDE	12	10 (13)	22
OUTSIDE	12	12	24
REJECTED	0	14	14
DROP OUT	2	2	4
COMPLETED	22	20	42
AVERAGE SCORE	8,4*	8,5*	

*8 and 9=C

Evaluation methods

EVALUATION SCHEMES

- In total, 42 evaluation schemes were distributed.
- In total, 36 evaluation schemes were completed (anonymised).
- Response rate of 86 per cent.

FIELD NOTES/DIARY

- Notes written after each teaching session.

DOCUMENTS

- E-mails from prison manager, prison staff and guest lecturers.
- Transcriptions of radio and television podcasts.

INDEPTH INTERVIEW (N = 7)

- Students from inside (N = 6).
- Students from outside (N = 1).

Gaining more knowledge

“I have gained much more knowledge on **why we [society] punish**, how we punish and the various theories that **justify punishment**, and how punishment works. I think it has been so cool also because sometimes you just look at it with your own eyes.” (IP5, inside-student).

“I think that the course has **expanded my understanding** to look at a case from both sides and to understand that it is not black or white.” (Outside-student, comment in evaluation scheme, 2017).

Challenging presumptions

“I have experienced how people from the university are – and we are **not that different at all.**” (IP2, Inside-student, 2016).

“The first time I thought ‘when will the person who has killed somebody enter the room?’ But it was not as scary as I had expected it to be. I felt like ‘Okay you have killed someone’ [said in a relieved voice] and then I realised that they are just as **nice persons as anybody else** (...) they were so nice and very active during the teaching.” (outside-student in radio podcast, 2016).

<http://www.dr.dk/p1/p1-morgen/p1-morgen-2016-05-23/>
Radio programme podcasted between 7.24 am and 7.33 am.

Challenging the prison subculture and countering prisonisation

“We are very isolated and we are together with the same people all the time. To **meet other people** (...) some **who aren't a part of the criminal network** meant that we could talk quite differently with people.” (IP4, inside-student).

“It was really cool and it was really nice that the prison glasses and **the unwritten norms and rules were laid down** in the class. Afterwards you come back [to the prison section] and maybe you put on your **prison mask**, but it is just so nice to be in a **normal environment.**” (IP5, inside-student).

“The atmosphere [such as] the small talks between the students – and the experience of a **normal life in an abnormal setting** (...) It is such a positive side-effect to education.” (personal e-mail from prison manager, July 1, 2016).

Combining knowledge & achieving synergy

“There was something that prisoners knew about the law that outside-students had never thought about - and they got knowledge from our point of view (...) you get the **best of both worlds.**” (IP2, inside-student).

“When we should do writings, it was so good that the law students could write. I had the words, but they could write (...) We could **share our knowledge criss-cross.**” (IP3, inside-student).

“We are **‘experts’ in each of our areas,** and the inside-students often highlight important facts, which you would not have thought about yourself.” (outside-student, comment in evaluation scheme, 2017).

Building bridges and sharing knowledge

POLICE

- “It was **mind-blowing** to discuss our police work and principles of mediation. More of that!” (Personal e-mail from police officer, March 15, 2017).

PROSECUTOR

- “I was **enriched** by their debate on the sense of justice and how this sense of justice is used as an argument for rejecting probation or furloughs - without further specification of what the sense of justice means.” (Personal e-mail from prosecutor, April 20, 2017).

JUDGE

- “It is an excellent concept where **professional knowledge and practical knowledge** integrates as a unique **mutual learning**.” (Personal e-mail from Judge, March 15, 2017).

Prison-University Partnerships



<http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/PUPiL>

PROGRAM	PRISON	UNIVERSITY	COUNTRY	PERIOD
Dialogue groups	Huntercombe, Borstal	University of Oxford	UK	1950s
Dialogue groups	Local prisons	University of Oxford & Cambridge	UK	1960s
Learning together	HMP Grendon; HMP Hollesley Bay; HMP Lowdham Grange; HMP Wandsworth	University of Cambridge + East Anglia + Nottingham Trent + Middlesex	UK	2015-
Criminology	HMP Gartree & HMP Leicester	De Montfort University	UK	2016-
Creative writing etc.	HMP Pentonville	King's College London & London South Bank Uni. & Westminster Uni.	UK	2016-
Alcohol and drug abuse programs	HMP Prescoed	Cardiff Metropolitan University	UK	2017-
Criminology	HMP Feltham	Royal Holloway	UK	2017-
Criminology	HMP Full Sutton	Leeds Beckett University	UK	2017-
Social justice	HMP Onley	University of Southampton	UK	2017-
Inside/out	Graterford max.	Temple University	USA	1997-
	100+ in 37 states	100+ Universities	Canada, 2011 UK, 2014 Australia, 2015 Denmark, 2016	
Restorative Justice	New Jersey's Juvenile Justice Commission: local prisons	Rowan University	USA	1999-
The Jail project (litteratur)	Monroe Correctional Complex	Nazarath College	USA	2002-
Prison Studies Project	MCI-Norfolk og Framingham	Harvard University	USA	2008-
Prison-to-college pipeline	Otisville Correctional Facility	John Jay College	USA	2011-

Final remarks

Thus, in conclusion, partnerships between prisons and university/educational institutions are **Win-Win-Win:**

- Outside-students gain insights.
- Inside-students gain outlook.
- Society gains from both.

Thanks for listening