

ON OFF Study visit in Faro (PT) – FR Presentation by Annie Bresson

As we agreed with José, I will now discuss two topics :

- One specific to the French system of education in prisons: the co-existence of two devices: Vocational training and education.

Why these two ways?

What are the differences between the two systems?

How can they be linked?

Are they competing?

- The other theme is the heterogeneity of classes and how to face this heterogeneity; this theme is probably common to all of us and is not specifically French

From where does this heterogeneity come?

How to set up a personalized program for each learner?

How to manage a heterogeneous class in prison?

VOCATIONAL TRAINING and EDUCATION

Initially, that means in the years 50s after the war, when the prison education got structured, education meant learning to read and write to illiterate inmates in large numbers.

On its turn, vocational training intended to learn professional postures and jobs quickly.

Today, however, one does not go without the other: it is clear that illiterate people or people with great difficulty in reading, speaking or people who do not speak French are struggling to follow vocational training, even in a workshop.

Both systems can be complementary in two ways:

- the education unit can teach people in great difficulties before their entry into vocational training to enable them to perform better *that takes time (time to familiarize with practicing oral French for non-French talking persons and only after the entry into vocational training: 6-8 weeks + class time to integrate the vocational training + time of the training session: it will take at least 6 months, while a lot of people do not stay as long)*

- the education unit may help those already in training session if they are at a better standard level *for example, they can take an additional one-time in education as mathematics and geometry for a joiner qualification but they can follow a general course (French, mathematics, English, computer) that requires professional capacities technics a higher level of review that requires professional technical and basic training on basic knowledge.*

Both devices can very well complement in both ways for the benefit of inmates.

But the reality makes that the two systems are very often and unfortunately in competition. Why?

- One pays learners, the other not: vocational training system give wages when education, as a public service, does not pay learners. Therefore, there are other objectives than teaching for people who need to earn money in prison. The choice will often focus on vocational training for people insufficiently trained in basic skills and so bring to a lot of desertion and failure.

- Vocational training in prison is subcontracted with private organizations which have to fulfill their groups of trainees and to do so they will remove their inmates from the same "tank" than teachers; overnight, we see a learner who leaves school without having reached his plan to go to join vocational workshops.

- There are also staffs who are struggling to work together and who can not share their goals; simply because they have goals to complete and that each system wants to take benefit from validations of its students.

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- Also because the inmate's schedule is forced in a day and can not complement both training workshop and regular classroom (there is movement' problems in prison, scheduling problems, time for walks, etc.).

What interest exists to keep these two ways?

Firstly, history, economic issues, positions established for prisons staff do not always treat this matter with the necessary objectivity.

But there is also a strong interest for inmates that is to bring them quickly to a job and quickly because there is short time in prison to train considering the average time of sentences (less than 9 months and less of 50 % of inmates stay less than 6 months). Thus it's important to learn both basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics, computer) and to learn a professional gesture because it is very difficult to pursue an education after the release (outputs are too quick to anticipate a registration in a vocational centre that could complete the training, people are often overtaken by their difficulties once outside: family problems, housing problems, financial problems so training becomes secondary in their goals) because it is very difficult to go on the job market without having obtained a qualification and learned to respond to a job offer.

There is there a strong issue to process for the benefit of inmates' training.

HETEROGENEITY of LEARNERS in CLASS

For various reasons, there are in our classrooms students whose levels are very different.

We believe that a learner must get at least six hours of instruction per week in order to progress. We also believe that these six hours must be distributed over four sequences of 1h30.

- In small prisons (less than 100 inmates), there is only one teacher who practices the single class to allow learners to benefit from maximum hours and come several times a week; it will therefore consolidate all learners in the same sequence.
- If the team of teachers is most important, although we will find in a same class group persons with different levels because entries are permanent and therefore progress of each learner will be different;
- Finally, we all know, heterogeneity also comes from the ability of each to progress at its own speed.

Here we have two types of responses:

- The teacher will, as soon as the inmate enters the prison and as soon as he joins training, set with him goals and an individual learning pathway according to its initial level, the estimated time of incarceration, his personal project (the choice of certification, certain matters in particular, individual planning) : it's a project very individualized and personalized.

- Secondly, the teacher will have to manage in the classroom, at the same time students with different objectives and different requisites. He will have to create interactivity and adjust the progress of each from around a common subject that will animate the sequence. It may therefore combine some learners to intermediate objectives; it should in any case avoid personal tracking who could turn into tutoring (distribution of personalized exercises and individual work successively with each student) to the detriment of managing a group of a class with all the risks of agitation, loss of motivation that we know when we do not receive the attention of all members of the class.

This results in better management of behavioural problems (and we have many learners with manic behaviour, especially among young adults or people with psychiatric disorders), a better socialization of people who learn to behave in a group (prison gives quite a few opportunities to work behaviour on group), respect of the level of the other in an environment where the weak are vulnerable.

The writing workshops and all kind of activities such as cultural, creative, sporting can help the implementation of individual projects around a group project.

I thank you for your attention.