

# *Educating for freedom*

TRAJECTORY, DEBATES AND PROPOSALS  
OF A PROJECT FOR EDUCATION  
IN BRAZILIAN PRISONS



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
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UNESCO  
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## TRAJECTORY, DEBATES AND PROPOSALS OF A PROJECT FOR EDUCATION IN BRAZILIAN PRISONS

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## FOREWORD

One of the most important legacies stemming from the perfecting of democracy in Brazil is the perception that, in certain circumstances, Governments and Society need to take courage and be daring enough to face up to the realities of exclusion and invisibility, on pain of transforming the constitutional idea of a society that is free, just and imbued with solidarity into a mere verbal exercise.

The project “Educating for Freedom”, a partnership between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and UNESCO’s representation in Brazil, with the support of the Japanese Government, has been bold enough to overcome the prison walls, starting from the perspective of affirming the human rights of all citizens and including persons deprived of their freedom in the daily celebration of that democratic ideal.

It is in this sense that “Educating for Freedom” has become a fundamental reference in the construction of an integrated and cooperative public policy, the mark of a new paradigm for action, not only in the sphere of Adult and Adolescent Education, but also in that of Penitentiary Administration.

The publication “Educating for Freedom: trajectory, debates and proposals of a project for education in Brazilian prisons”, consists of a systematization of that experience, and contains two texts written by international specialists, as well as a reference document based on the rewarding debates that took place among representatives of all the States of the Brazilian Federation. We hope that it will help to stimulate the imagination and the active participation of administrators, professionals and citizens, in constantly improving our institutions and reaffirming our commitments to education as a universal right.

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Minister of Education

*Márcio Thomaz Bastos*  
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Director of UNESCO in Brazil a.i.

## ABSTRACT

This publication sets out some important conquests stemming from the project “Educating for Freedom” which was carried out on the basis of partnership established between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and UNESCO’s representation in Brazil, with the support of the Japanese Government.

The first text, entitled *International Cooperation, Government Partnerships and Social Inclusion through Education*, seeks to systematize the experiences of the project. After having reviewed the background of its conception and implementation, it identifies the major lessons learned during the process, and offers important inspiration for future actions in this area and in others in which the recognition of diversity and the inclusion of particularly vulnerable groups are in play.

The second text entitled *National Seminar for Education in Prisons: meanings and proposals* is a synthesis of the Project’s main features: creating spaces for dialogues, and guaranteeing that the definition of an agenda for the sector originates from truly collective construction. As the result of a broad movement listening to the views of social actors involved in offering education in the prisons, it puts forward concrete directives for the Public Authorities and Civil Society in regard to the situation, with the intention of offering supporting elements for concrete and exemplary experiences of transforming it.

The last two texts help to situate the project within a broader context. They are studies undertaken by renowned international specialists showing that education in prisons is a problem that crops up, with some local variations, all over the world but always against the same background: the need to overcome prejudices and reaffirm citizenship and to consecrate definitively the understanding that Education is a Universal Right.



# INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS AND SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH EDUCATION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROJECT “EDUCATING FOR FREEDOM”

by Fábio de Sá e Silva

## INTRODUCTION

There is a well-known phrase of Nelson Mandela’s (1994) which declares that “nobody really knows a nation until he has been inside its prisons. A nation”, continues the former South-African leader, whose political militancy also had its most expressive moments in a prison environment, “should not be judged by the way it treats its citizens in the most elevated positions, but by the way it treats those in the least elevated positions”.

At the present moment, when prison sentences are recrudescing all over the world as a precarious strategy for handling social conflicts, this remark seems to represent very well the challenges that will have to be faced by people engaged in constructing more ecumenical societies, with greater solidarity and in which the language of rights prevails over the language of violence.

Throughout their historical existence, prisons have always shown themselves to be institutions where asserting citizenship is a difficult and intricate task. Even where there has been some progress in the formal recognition of fundamental rights and guarantees of men and women prisoners, this progress ends up being diluted by inhuman and segregationist custody models in which there is no room for anything other than prison bars and warders.

Providing Education in Brazilian prisons does not escape this context. Although there is no lack of allusions in the internal and international spheres according to which there should be set in motion “ *comprehensive education programmes in prisons, with the participation of inmates, to meet their needs and learning aspirations* “; the results obtained so far are still very modest <sup>1</sup>.

And so it is, that of the 240,203 people in prison in December 2004, according to the figures of the Brazilian Ministry of Justice, only 44,167 were involved in any kind of educational activity, which corresponds to around 18% of the total number. Such is the situation, in spite of the fact that most of that population was made up of youths and adults with low levels of schooling: 70% have not completed basic education (8 years) and 10.5% are illiterate. (BRAZIL, 2004).

Furthermore, up until now, this situation has only been confronted by voluntary, improvised practices that generally depend on the initiative or agreement of each prison’s administrating board. There is no close contact between the Ministry of Education and the Administrative Bodies of the Prison System that might allow for a coordinated offer of education, with more precisely defined basic concepts<sup>2</sup>.

The present document sets out to report on an initiative that was aimed at contributing towards transforming that reality in such a way as to engrave, in the collective imagery and the practices of the Authorities and of Civil Society, a set of commitments regarding the issue. This was the project “Educating for Freedom”, carried out during 2005 and 2006 and based on a partnership between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and the Representation of Unesco in Brazil, and sponsored by the Japanese Government.

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<sup>1</sup> The text reproduced here is part of the Declaration of the 5th CONFINTEA – International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg, 1997) to which Brazil is a signatory. However, in addition to this prescriptive document others may be mentioned: The Brazilian Federal Constitution (Article 208), Law n.º 9.394/96 (Bases and Directives for Education– article. 37 § 1.º), CEB Technical Opinion n.º 11/2000, Law n.º 10.172/2001 (National Education Plan), Law n.º 7.210/84 (Law of Penal Execution), and CNPCP Resolution n.º 14/94 (Basic Regulations for the Treatment of Prisoners).

<sup>2</sup> It should be pointed out that this situation does not pertain to Brazil alone, as shown by De Maeyer (2006) and Rangel (2006).

In other words, an attempt is being made to carry out what educator Oscar Jara Holliday (2006) denominated “systematization of experience”, consolidating the lessons that have been learned during the course of this project so that they may inspire future actions in this and other areas where the recognition of diversity and the social inclusion of particularly vulnerable groups, are in play.

In this sense it may be considered as a text describing past events but establishing important connections between them and the future, frankly expressing its educational vocation to help us to visualize the unfolding of new eventualities for this theme that can prolong and project in time and space the democratic conquests which the project has helped to construct among us.

## **THE BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT: SOME MEMORIES**

The history of the project dates back to some approaches made by the Ministry of Justice (MJ) to the Ministry of Education (MEC) at the beginning of 2005 for the purpose of setting up a Working Group to discuss strategies for strengthening the offer of Basic Education inside the country’s Penal Establishments<sup>3</sup>.

The proposal was well received as the Ministry of Education had just decided to incorporate the themes of diversity and social exclusion on its agenda for action within the sphere of the programmes run by the SECAD (Secretariat for Lifelong Education,

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<sup>3</sup> All the Ministry’s actions in this project were attributed to the General Coordinating Body for Teaching of the National Penitentiary Department (CGEN/Depen), a unit specially created to elaborate public policies for qualifying professionals for work in Penal Institutions but which ended up taking on questions related to the “social re-integration” of convicted persons and released detainees of the Prison System. The last time it was re-structured, it was transformed into a “General Coordinating Body for Social Re-integration and Teaching which had the responsibilities of conceiving and implementing public policies directed at improving prison services (focus on the prison staff) and the attention given to the prison population. In any event, within this structure a specific unit was created to deal with educational policies directed at prisoners and released detainees and entitled the Education, Work and Income Coordinating Body.

Literacy and Diversity). Indeed, reaching out to the prison populations was considered by the SECAD/MEC as a sort of Test Case to verify the existence of that spirit of inclusion that had originally motivated its creation<sup>4</sup>.

The challenges encountered by the Brazilian Ministerial bodies in facing up to these situations fell basically into two categories: the extension of regular educational services by including the prison populations in the official policies of the Brazilian State for Adult and Adolescent Education (the educational modality most appropriate for the public in question); and the definition of parameters that would adjust and regulate a higher quality offer in consonance with the needs and aspirations of the public in question.

It was not therefore, a question of merely increasing the attention being given but rather, of promoting an education that might contribute towards restoring self-esteem and the posterior reintegration of the individual in society, as well as towards the goals of national education as a whole: personal fulfilment, the exercising of citizenship and preparation for work.

Recently Psychology has been making use of the term Resilience<sup>5</sup>, taken from the field of Physics, to characterise the individual's capacity for psychological recovery, and ability to resist situations of violence and adversity, reconstructing his or her bonds of affection and social and professional relations. The education that is to be offered, in addition to the formal aspects of its subject matter's being suitable for the schooling levels and degree of maturity of those being educated, should further contribute towards this capacity for psychological and social recovery in order to become "the subject of his or her own life-story" and also be associated to an offer of professional training and income generation.

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<sup>4</sup> This statement was made by the secretary himself, Prof. Ricardo Henriques, during the holding of one of the Regional Seminars that resulted from the Project and they will be mentioned again later in the text.

<sup>5</sup> "Resilience is a universal capacity whereby a person, group or community prevents, minimises or overcomes the noxious effects of adversity" (GROTHBERG *apud* YUNES, 1995: 07).

Right from the beginning, the initiative showed itself to be hard work and at the same time very delicate. In addition to questioning an historical process of exclusion, it demanded the mobilization of a great variety of subjects and institutions with patterns of understanding of the problem that did not necessarily coincide: teachers, prison warders, management staff and administrators of both systems, Judges and Prosecutors of the Penal Courts and even the prisoners (both men and women) themselves, as well as released detainees.

In short, it was clear that the construction of a public policy of national dimensions to meet the educational needs of convicts and those being released from the prison system would require a considerable amount of political energy and a well- directed channelling of investments in order to provoke the impact that was necessary and desirable on the reality in the states.

It was in this sense that International Cooperation appeared to be a relevant element or even a strategic one. At the time, the Ministry of Education - MEC, had a partnership agreement with UNESCO in a project that sought to strengthen ongoing literacy training projects in the country as a result of the Federal Government's commitment to achieving the targets established in the Dakar Framework at the Education for All event (2000) and under the aegis of the "United Nations Literacy Decade" (2003-2012)"

The original proposal of the project, financed by the Japanese Government, considered the possibility of investing in four states (Ceará, Paraíba, Goiás and Rio Grande do Sul), chosen because of the commitments that had been formally made by their state governments to the objectives of the "Decade".

The proposal that the MEC put before UNESCO was to focus that project on the prison population in such a way as to guarantee greater efficiency in applying the resources and greater visibility in regard to results, and at the same time meet the demand that had sprung up from the dialogue with the Ministry of Justice for the elaboration of a consistent public policy for Adult and Adolescent Education in the country's prisons.

It is from that moment that the existence of “Educating for Freedom” as an authentic project can be dated more precisely, that is, its existence in terms of an intervention in reality, with a purpose, objectives, targets, deadlines, means, form and field of operations clearly determined and specified

It should be noted that aggregating the partnership with Unesco meant that the results of the dialogues among the several governmental bodies could be aligned and translated into a more solid agenda, thereby creating an authentic point of confluence from which were to emerge new political practices and institutionalisms.

## THE PRESENCE OF UNESCO AND INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTION

UNESCO’s presence in the project, together with that of the governmental bodies, made it possible to situate Education in Prisons within broader issues; the enforcement of Fundamental Human Rights (in this case, the right to Education)<sup>6</sup> and the construction of a culture of peace<sup>7</sup>, objectives towards which the efforts of the entire international community are directed<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Among the major instruments of international law that guarantee education as a fundamental human right, are: The Declaration of Human Rights, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and specifically in the case of prison populations, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, which declares that “all prisoners shall have the right to participate in cultural and educational activities” (Principle 6).

<sup>7</sup> Promoting a Culture of Peace was established as a target by UNESCO at its International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men (Ivory Coast, 1989) and subsequently consolidated in the Declaration and Action Programme for a Culture of Peace. It is understood the project has contributed to promoting a culture of peace insofar as it created conditions for reducing urban violence through educating for the social inclusion of the prison population..

<sup>8</sup> In this regard it is worthwhile mentioning the special attention that the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Education (Hamburg, Germany) has been dedicating to the cause, which expresses itself in the maintenance and support given to the International Watch on Education in Prisons. For further information on the Institute and the Watch’s activities cf. <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie> and <http://www.educationinprison.org>.

Indeed the commitments that have emerged from the implementation of the “Educating for Freedom” project have been completely in consonance with the deliberations of the International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), which urged:

“Providing prison inmates with information on and access to different levels of education and qualification;

Developing and implementing comprehensive education programmes in prisons, with the participation of inmates, to meet their needs and learning aspirations;

Facilitating the educative activities undertaken in the prisons by non-governmental organizations, teachers and other educators, thereby guaranteeing prison populations access to educational institutions and encouraging initiatives that link courses carried out inside and outside prisons.

In a similar way there has been an attempt to put into practice the Education for All agenda to achieve the targets contemplated in its third objective (Promoting Adult and Adolescent Education) and the fourth one (Reducing Adult Illiteracy) set out in the Dakar Framework for Action, without neglecting the inspiring words of the preamble to the World Declaration on Education for All, according to which:

“Every, child, youth and adult has the human right to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs in the best and fullest sense of the term, an education that includes learning to acquire knowledge, learning skills, learning to live together, and learning to be. An education directed at valuing the talents and potential of all individuals and developing their personalities in such a way that they may improve their lives and transform their societies.”

Furthermore, in contributing towards the literacy skills and education of adults and young people in the prison system, the project is promoting the objectives of the “United Nations Literacy

Decade” (2003-2012)” and its Plan of Action. As UNESCO is the leading agency for the Decade within the sphere of the United Nations System, the programme *Literacy for Empowerment, LIFE* was created which stresses the intimate relationship between literacy training and empowerment of individuals and communities

## THE PROJECT IN MOTION: A PANORAMA OF THE ACTIVITIES

The project activities began in July of 2005 with diagnostic visits being made to the States that were listed as beneficiaries of the project and that had become considered to be the focal points for the proposed interventions.

The reports resulting from the visits confirmed the impressions of the institutions involved in the Project in regard to the problems that would be encountered, and helped to define more precisely: in which dimensions the project would be operating; and the methodology to be adopted.

The first dimension was related to the *mobilization of the Education Authorities and the Prison System Administration Authorities in the States for the purpose of ensuring a coordinated offer*. If this had not been established on a solid basis then the tendency would have been for the system to be always seeking to place responsibility for not meeting the demand on the shoulders of others. Thus, it was necessary to create or strengthen a channel for dialogue among those institutions and those in charge of them, and to that end the actions of the Federal Government and of UNESCO itself as protagonists were strategic.

The second dimension encompassed the *identities and practices of the professionals that help to organize the provision of educational services inside the penitentiaries*. On the one hand, it highlighted the need for a differentiated qualification for the teachers so that they might know how to deal with the characteristics of the environment and the public they would be working with. On the other hand it revealed how the divergences between those working with security and those with assistance only served to infringe on the rights of the prison



population. Furthermore, it highlighted the need to value more the most diverse segments of the penal execution process and ameliorate their poor image in the eyes of society at large and those of the prisoners themselves.

Finally, the third dimension consisted of *aspects of an educational nature*. Although this dimension involved a very particular reality (prisons), it showed itself to be a tributary of other discussions, equally well-based in the fields of Adult and Adolescent Education and Popular Education. How could it be ensured that Education in Prisons would help to promote the autonomy and emancipation of those involved as its subjects?

The idea of the Project partners was that the response (theory and practice) to such queries could, and should be elaborated from the base up and through the attribution of new significances to the ongoing experience. Thus such questions ended up becoming the “generators”<sup>9</sup> for the first Workshop held in Brasilia in October of 2005. The idea was that, when faced with such questions, the Prison administration personnel and the Adult and Adolescent Education teams may be led to reflect on their own situations and initiate the delineation of proposals for improvements in the services being dispensed.

The workshop (which also enjoyed the presence of the States of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, invited in consideration of the sizes their respective prison populations) also served to inaugurate the partnerships in the states, thus extending the relations of the two ministries beyond the federal level<sup>10</sup>.

It was agreed that from there on, the participants in the workshop would serve as mediators of the proposal, and carry out in the States the functions of replication and awareness-raising among the other relevant actors so that this might culminate in a Seminar held in

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<sup>9</sup> The term “generators” is used here in the same way as Paulo Freire used it when speaking of “generating words”: things taken from daily life starting from which the person being educated can develop his or her reading of the world as well as of the words.

<sup>10</sup> It would not be inappropriate to point out that many of these teams had never taken part in a joint meeting, which confirmed the lack of integration detected in the diagnostic visits of and showed the correctness of the project’s proposals in regard to creating or causing to be created, the channels necessary for such integration and dialogue to take place.

each of the States. And so it was that, at the end of 2005, the first of these events was held: the “1st Seminar of National Advocacy and Construction of Directives for Education in the Prison System” in Rio de Janeiro.

The Seminars were envisaged as spaces with a double function. On the one hand, they would serve for collecting supporting elements for the formulation of a public policy to orientate Education in Prisons. On the other, they would serve for forging new agreements among teams in the States where they were being held and/or inspire similar movements in the neighbouring states.

In order to give greater impulse to this kind of protagonist action, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health decided to set up a specific, shared initiative for financing the projects and consisting of the following lines of investment: support for the process of coordinating the offer of education inside the prison system; qualification of the professionals involved in the teaching/learning relationship; and the elaboration/printing of teaching material.

The projects that fell within the scope of such financing were elaborated by the local project managers on their return from the Brasília Workshop, and presented to the Ministry of Education to draw up the necessary agreements. Altogether 1.2 million reais (US\$ 564.000) were invested in 06 states (Ceará, Paraíba, Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro and Tocantins)<sup>11</sup>.

Seminars went on being held in 2006. There were four events, in Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraíba and Ceará, and the presence and participation was registered in them of teams from Tocantins, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí and Maranhão.

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<sup>11</sup> Although it had not taken part in the Workshop, the State of Tocantins found itself very much in tune with the contents of the discussions and took the initiative of presenting a project which was considered adequate by the financing entities. On the other hand, the State of São Paulo showed no interest in producing an agreement and failed to take steps for holding a regional Seminar.

Little by little, the Seminars began to assert themselves as valid spaces for collective construction where the voices of a wide and diversified public could make themselves heard. In addition to administrators with formal links to Educational Authorities and Prison Administration Authorities, educators, prison warders, researchers and specialists were all participating. That is why it was no surprise that, at a certain moment, the absence became very apparent of those most concerned in the matter: members of the prison population itself.

In this case the glaring omission gave rise to a dilemma. What should be done so that the voice of these people might also be heard? Would it not be possible to bring them to the Seminars or would it prove to be very difficult. The alternative found was to investigate the possibilities of making use of another collaboration agreement that existed in the federal sphere, this time between the National Penitentiary Department and the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido (Theatre of the Oppressed Centre - CTO/Rio) in Rio de Janeiro: the project “Theatre of the Oppressed in Prisons”.

The project “Theatre of the Oppressed in the Prisons” uses the Theatre-Forum technique as a strategy for establishing a dialogue and generating commitments to transformation within the prison system. After participating in workshops for capacity-building in Theatre-Forum methodology, the various actors in the system produce short plays that bring up the situations of oppression that are part of their daily lives.

The plays are put on inside and outside the prisons, thereby inaugurating a Forum in which the authorities and society at large are present. The inhuman aspect of the system reveals itself and questions us. Indifference begins to give way to solidarity and new perspectives and attitudes in regard to the problems.

Within the sphere of the “Educating for Freedom” Project, 05 (five) sets of activities of this type were carried out from which important contributions emerged. Of these five, eventually included in the document resulting from the Seminar in Brasilia. It is worthwhile highlighting two as an example. One revealed the cultural shock that existed between security and education. The prisoners acted out a sketch dealing with the problem of the cell searches in which the school material was all damaged, thus creating problems in the classroom when the

teachers complained about the lack of care taken with it. At the end, some curious suggestions were made, such as making cupboards available in the school room where the material could be kept, so that it would not need to be taken to the cells. Another suggestion revealed the urgent need for the country to adopt a policy of remission of sentences for studies undertaken. The women prisoners staged scenes depicting dropping out of classes and the high turnover rate in enrolment, resulting from the fact that, as new work posts were opened in the Unit, the prisoners preferred work to study. Curiously enough, all the themes that had been dealt with in an abstract manner by the participants in the Seminars appeared spontaneously, in a concrete dramatized form, in the plays staged<sup>12</sup>.

The final result of the entire process was then presented for discussion at the 1st National Seminar for Education in Prisons. The Seminar was the high point of the Project.

Firstly, because it permitted the participation of people from all the states, whether attached to governments or not, expanding to the maximum the outreach of the consultation.

Secondly, because it concentrated activities that enriched the Project not only in its conceptual aspects (outstanding here was the presence of the two foreign specialists Marc De Maeyer and Hugo Rangel, who brought with them the accumulated experience of the International Observatory of Education in Prisons attached to UNESCO's Lifelong Education Institute); but also in its political aspect (there was a demonstration-debate in favour of Remission of Sentence through Study, and a round table with other sectors of the government to discuss a possible inter-relation between the offer of Education and the promotion of other social rights, as in the case of Work).

Finally, the seminar served to sediment a consensus and provide supporting elements for new advances, as registered in the document "National Seminar for Education in Prisons: Meanings and Proposals", systematized by UNESCO. Based on this document the

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<sup>12</sup> The process has been partially documented by the NGO "Observatório de Favelas", of Rio de Janeiro, in a video that was shown during the National Seminar in Brasília.

States and the Federal Government can more legitimately renew their discussion of their financing dynamics and move forward to the consolidation of more advanced directives for the sector and to that end, involve the relevant government bodies, namely: the National Education Council (CNE) and the National Criminal and Penitentiary Policy Council (CNPCP).

This opening of spaces for maintaining dialogues and the collective construction of references for the sector may be seen as the project's greatest virtue. To a certain extent, it has helped to create what contemporary political theory refers to as "an ample non-state, public sphere where Governments, Society and its various constituent subjects establish new pacts in regard to a certain issue at the same time as they discover other possibilities for their transformation-promoting actions". This will become very apparent in the topics dealt with below.

### **OTHER RELEVANT RESULTS STEMMING FROM THE DYNAMICS CREATED BY THE PROJECT**

If we were merely to limit ourselves to the chronological evolution of the partnership between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and UNESCO (through the support of the Japanese Government) we would certainly be able to point to some important acquisitions: the diagnosis of the weaknesses that permeate the offer of Education in the Prison, the collective elaboration of orientations capable of transforming these conditions, and the financing of concrete experiences for facing up to the problems, already point to a new profile for the situation in the sector. However, there are other important facts that have taken place parallel to all of that, and which reinforce the movement created by the Project.

The first of such facts is the formalizing of a Protocol of Intentions between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice on September 27, 2005. The signing of this protocol does not only express the good intentions of the two bodies, but stimulates a new form of institutionalism to face up to the specificity of the demand for Education in Prisons.

Thus, this drawing together of the two Ministries initially led to Resolution n° 23/2005 of the Literate Brazil Programme that provided for a differentiated treatment of the question of Literacy Trainers working within the prison System and foresaw the need for a differentiated methodological approach. The initiative was repeated with the publishing of Resolution n° 22/2006 of the said programme, thus affirming a tendency for the administration of the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE) and for the application of Federal resources directed at literacy training in general.

Furthermore, it stimulated the inclusion of prison establishments within the scope of the National Secondary Education Exams (ENEM), which has not only refined the MEC's capacity to evaluate the profile of students deprived of their liberty who have concluded their basic education, but has also meant that some of them have gained access to a University by means of the Programme University for All (PROUNI). In the year 2006, the ENEM was held in prison establishments in 08 (eight) States reaching out to 141 prison units.

Another result that can be pointed to is the change in the pattern of applying public financial resources specifically destined for Education in Prisons, with the sharing of resources between the DEPEN and the SECAD to finance the partnership agreements with the States. Indeed this has meant more public investments in the area, greater geographical coverage and better criteria for the application of resources<sup>13</sup>.

Before the Project began, the DEPEN/MJ had only one agreement in force whose object was Education in Prisons. The work plan had adopted the methodology of Tele-Classrooms and the implementation of the project had encountered various problems such as student drop out, difficulty in forming groups, in equipment maintenance etc. After the SECAD and the MEC got together, over

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<sup>13</sup> The project's virtues were formally recognized by the Federal Court of Accounts in a joint decision handed down in Process n.º 000.070/2006-4.

12 (twelve) collaboration agreements directed at strengthening ongoing regular programmes, were signed<sup>14</sup>. In other words, the fact is that in a period of just two years the Federal Government invested resources in almost half the States for the improvement of public systems of Adult and Adolescent Education in Prisons.

Also outstanding was the inclusion of Prison Education within the agenda of Adult and Adolescent Education which corresponds to recognition that the detainees, both men and women, are indeed part of the target public for this teaching modality. In 2005 the theme was also brought up at the 7th National Meeting on Adult and Adolescent Education - ENEJA. In 2006, it was the subject of a Workshop held during the World Forum on Education in Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro. And in the same year it was the theme highlighted in one of the main publications in this field: the Magazine of the Support Network for Literacy Training Action in Brazil (RAAAB), which published articles on the theme and set in motion a process of reflection which can only tend to strengthen research and activities in the area taking them out of the marginalised position that they sometimes occupy in the Education systems themselves<sup>15</sup>.

Another positive aspect was the decision to continue with the partnership between the Federal Government and UNESCO on this theme at the moment when the original project financed by resources of the Japanese Government came to an end.

The initiative is being undertaken because of an evaluation that it is fundamental to maintain and strengthen the bonds and commitments that the Project has helped to create between the relevant bodies of the Ministries of Education and of Justice at the federal level; which suggests the important role to be played by international cooperation in the sense of giving long-term sustainability to the advances achieved by these governmental bodies.

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<sup>14</sup> It is worthwhile mentioning that in addition to the 06 (six) agreements signed in 2005, another 06 (six) were drawn up in 2006 involving the states of Acre, Pará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Espírito Santo and Mato Grosso do Sul.

<sup>15</sup> The Educating for Freedom Project financed this issue of the *Revista* (Nº 19, July 2006), of which 2 thousand copies were printed, which sold out in less than six months.

In general terms, this new stage of the partnership must ensure the continuity of some of the actions that have been put into practice in the previous phase (above all, the spaces that have been created for dialogue) but must also open up opportunities so that what has been produced and accumulated so far may also be put into practice.

Further to all this, the project helped to consolidate a countrywide strong stance in favour of remission of sentence through study, whether by including the theme in the Regional and National Seminars and their debate with Legal authorities and Civil Society or through the elaboration of a Draft Bill that expressly seeks to sanctify this possibility in the Law of Penal Execution.

Written under the influence of the dialogue with Education, this draft bill brings with it the innovative component of “Reward through Certification” whereby it is sought to place a higher value on the act of concluding Basic Education, or Secondary Education, or Higher Education during the time of serving a sentence, and rewarding this by the addition of half as much again to the remission time that has already been accumulated in consequence of the hours dedicated to studying, provided that the conclusion is duly attested by the competent body of the Education System.

In this sense, the proposal expresses concern with guaranteeing the quality of the offer, providing for a system directed at promoting, stimulating, and recognising the advances and progression of those being educated, which all contributes towards the restoration of their self-esteem within the perspective of a harmonic reintegration into society.

The Draft Bill is presently receiving its final formal adjustments at the hands of the Office of the Minister of Justice so that it may be forwarded to the Civil Office of the Presidency of the Republic and from there, to the National Congress.

There is one more positive result to be tallied. It is the Literary Competition for Convicted Persons which the Ministry of Justice intends to promote, whereby the publication of the winning texts will serve as teaching material to supply activities in the states, as well as being a source of income for the authors. If it is true that the educative practices in the penal establishments suffer from a lack of



teaching elements that have any connection with the reality of those being taught and that are capable of effectively contributing towards their social re-integration, then perhaps this can be overcome by valuing their own view of the world they live in.

It is worthwhile pointing out that competitions of this sort are not new in themselves. But what is new is associating it to a much wider set of initiatives that seek to strengthen the systems of Education in Prisons.

The same thing could be said of the "prisoners vote". According to the interpretation of Brazilian law that enjoys the greatest consensus, the right to vote should be guaranteed to all prisoners (male and female) in temporary detention, that is, those whose cases have not received final judgement and sentence. Presently this would apply to more than 80 thousand people who are being deprived of this important political right.

The actions of the DEPEN/MJ in regard to this issue began in the municipal elections of 2004, with the forwarding of Official Correspondence to the States requesting that measures be taken to ensure respect for that right or, should that prove impossible, to ensure that prisoners were permitted to justify their non-voting. In 2005, that body was invited to participate in the International Seminar on the Prisoner's Vote which took place within the 5th World Social Forum, and to take part in the launching of the "National Campaign for the Prisoner's Vote" in partnership with several other Civil Society organizations.

As part of this Campaign, DEPEN/MJ was given the task of promoting a survey of the voting situation in the states, and of elaborating a subsequent report which was forwarded to the CNPCP and gave rise to a Working Group set up by the Electoral Supreme Court which in turn gave rise to a new resolution that directed Electoral Judges to install ballot boxes in the prisons. Presently the DEPEN/MJ is making efforts to conduct a survey among the Foreign Embassies in Brasília, in order to map out the situation at the international level.

However, throughout this process the DEPEN/MJ has always been careful to highlight the educative aspect of the vote in a re-attribution of meaning that has perhaps been stimulated by the “Educating for Freedom” Project. Within this manner of comprehending the question, the vote is not simply a question of depositing a piece of paper in a ballot box or pressing a set of buttons. It presupposes involvement and participation in a considerable array of deliberative practices that permeate the life of society. It requires a minimum ability to understand and take up a stance in regard to the world’s problems. It is, in itself, representative of a particular expression of the conquest of citizenship. In other words, with its basis in “Educating for Freedom” the “prisoner’s vote” has become a powerful instrument of Education for Citizenship.

For that reason the body has been invited to coordinate a working group for the discussion of the matter at world level at the International Conference on Education in Prisons that will be held in 2008 by the UNESCO Lifelong Education Institute. Once more the project “Educating for Freedom” has served to impart an organic structure to elements that were apparently isolated on the government agendas, creating a virtuous circle of human rights promotion.

One last topic that the Project’s vocation as a catalyst has revealed, is the regional and inter-regional exchanges that are taking place on the theme. This possibility was raised by the SECAD/MEC before the EUROsocial Consortium and was admitted for financing. The idea is that Brazil should act as coordinator and advocate of a Latin American Network for Education in Prisons, and that the products of the network should be exchanged with the European Union countries .

Still in the year 2006, a Mission made up of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice directors and technical staff all involved in “Educating for Freedom” will get to know some experiences in Europe whilst a meeting to be held in the city of Belo Horizonte, during the 3rd Mercosur Educational Forum will mark the beginning of activities for the Latin American Network. The seminar will bring together representatives of 15 countries that are part of the Consortium. In addition to promoting greater visibility for the issue, these initiatives

will help to increase the ministerial bodies' accumulated experience in this field and to imbue future actions with even greater consistency.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Getting back to Oscar Jara Holliday (2006:28), we should stress that systematizing an experience is not merely a question of describing a sequence of events but rather, detecting the meanings that emerge from a given social practice. That is why he states further on (2006: 73), that the reflection behind any systematization must be “why did what happened, happen? “

Throughout the brief existence of the “Educating for Freedom” Project, some of the presuppositions seem to have become well settled. Perhaps putting them in order will give us a clue as to the answer to the question.

The first presupposition is that International Cooperation can play a fundamental role in the development of the country if it is put at the service of actions that transform reality and give rise to new pacts between State and Society. As was stated previously, it may help to tack together dispersed desires and transform them into consistent, sustainable agendas.

Another relevant presupposition is that of the importance of governmental partnerships at all levels. “How?” Education in Prisons should be guaranteed and “For what Purpose?”, are questions that cannot be answered without the participation of the Education Authorities and the Justice Authorities at least in the federal and state spheres. Without them, even though unwillingly, citizenship will continue to be denied: studying may become merely infantilizing, working merely mechanical, the creation of income, mere social assistance and the condition of release may correspond to the total absence of any support whatever.<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Sufficient references to this proposal are the Joint Decision n. 223/2004 handed down by the TCU and the study of the prison system carried out by Julita Lemgruber (2004) within the sphere of “institutional architecture of the Unified Public Security System”, available at [http://www.segurancahumana.org.br/susp/nacional/s\\_arq\\_cap8.htm](http://www.segurancahumana.org.br/susp/nacional/s_arq_cap8.htm).

There is one last presupposition, and it may be the most important one, and that is the Desire to Include. Declaring that education is a Universal Right may mean very little in a society that Boaventura de Sousa Santos has described as “politically democratic but socially fascist” (2002). That is why willingness is essential, as well as a certain measure of courage, in order to explore those frontiers where the unknown and the invisible reside.

Insofar as Government bodies, UNESCO and Civil Society engage in the conceiving and implementation of a public policy of dedicating special attention to this historically weakened public, so the possibilities and the expectations for a different future will be broadened.<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Within the sphere of the Ministry of Justice, this experience has inspired other confluences. In the middle of this year dialogues were established between the National Secretariat for Solidarity Economics of the Ministry of Labour (SENAES-MTE) and the S System. In all these cases the “Educating for Freedom” Project was cited as an example of the course to follow, which means that it is viewed as a “best practice”, at least at the level of Penitentiary Policies.

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# NATIONAL SEMINAR FOR EDUCATION IN PRISONS: MEANINGS AND PROPOSALS

## INTRODUCTION

The National Seminar for Education in Prisons was held in Brasília from the 12th to the 14th of June 2006, as a unique expression of the efforts that the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice, jointly with UNESCO's representation in Brazil, have been making towards creating conditions and possibilities for facing up to the serious problems that affect the social inclusion of convicts and those being released from the penal system<sup>1</sup>.

Indeed, ever since 2005, these institutions have been working together on the Project "Educating for Freedom" which has given rise to a series of activities and achievements in the field of education in prisons. Technical workshops, Regional Seminars, Proposals for alterations to the Laws of Penal Execution, Financing for projects, jointly with the State Prison systems, as well as the strengthening of relations between those bodies responsible for the issue in the federal sphere, are just some of the results achieved over this period that deserve to be taken into account.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be pointed out that this project is financed by resources donated by the Japanese Government and administered by the UNESCO representation in Brazil and that this has been responsible for a considerable part of the results that have been mentioned here.

All this enthusiasm is based on two fundamental convictions: first, that *the right to education is a universal right of all people*; and second, that *the conception and implementation of public policies seeking to dedicate special attention to structurally and historically fragile segments of the population correspond to one of the most significant ways in which Society and the State can renew their commitment to the accomplishment of that right and the democratizing of the entire society*.

Indeed, space and time within the penal system confirm such suppositions. Although there is no lack of allusions in the internal and international spheres according to which there should be set in motion “*extensive teaching programmes with the participation of prisoners in order to meet their needs and aspirations in terms of education*”, the results obtained so far are still very modest<sup>2</sup>.

And so it was that of the 240,203 people in prison in December 2004, according to the figures of the Ministry of Justice, only 44,167 were involved in any kind of educational activity, which corresponds to around 18% of the total number. Such is the situation, in spite of the fact that most of that population was made up of youths and adults with low levels of schooling: 70% have not completed basic education (8 years) and 10.5% are illiterate. To make things worse, respect for the right of prisoners to education does not only fail to appear among the demands of what is conventionally referred to as public opinion, but it is frequently met with disapproval.

In historical terms, this situation has been confronted by practices with very little systematization and generally depending on the idiosyncrasies of each prison’s administrating body. There is no close contact between the Ministry of Education and the Administrative Bodies of the Prison System that might allow for a coordinated offer of education, with more precisely defined basic concepts. Thus, no recognition is given to:

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<sup>2</sup> The text reproduced above is part of the Declaration resulting from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education - V CONFINTEA (Hamburg 1997) to which Brazil was a signatory. However, in addition to this prescriptive document others may be mentioned: The Brazilian Federal Constitution (Article 208), Law n.º 9.394/96 (Bases and Directives for Education– article. 37 § 1.º), CEB Technical Opinion n.º 11/2000, Law n.º 10.172/2001 (National Education Plan), Law n.º 7.210/84 (Law of Penal Execution), and CNPCP Resolution n.º 14/94 (Basic Regulations for the Treatment of Prisoners).

- the accumulated stock of theory and practice that the country has at its disposal in the field of Adult and Adolescent Education, as a specific educational module for meeting the needs of the public in question, and quite certainly the most appropriate educational module for facing up to the challenges it presents;
- The unique nature of the prison environment and the multiplicity of subjects, cultures and types of knowledge that are present in the teaching/learning relationship; and
- The need to reflect on the importance that meeting educational needs inside a prison unit may have to the social re-integration of the persons whose needs are being met.

It was within this context that the National Seminar was conceived as a moment when the discussions held throughout all the activities undertaken as part of the Project - or stemming from the Project - could be put forward to serve as *concrete guidelines for the Public Authorities and for Civil Society in regard to this particular environment with the prospect of inspiring the production of exemplary experiences in transforming it.*

The present report serves to consolidate the results of the debates and proposals that were put forward by all those who, in one way or another, have been involved in this process of collective dialogue and construction<sup>3</sup>.

## PROPOSALS

As a spin-off of the Regional Seminars, the National Seminar adopted a didactic division of the proposals, aligning them with three main axes which have been preserved in the present text and are duly set out and described below. Obviously, each one must be read bearing in mind its complementary relationship with the others.

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<sup>3</sup> In this sense the following could be considered as protagonists of the Seminar: administrators engaged in Educational Bodies and Prison Administration Entities, educators, prison warders, researchers, specialists and even prisoners (both men and women) whose statements have been obtained and systematized by means of Theatre Workshops held in the States of Espírito Santo, Mato Grosso do Sul, Rio de Janeiro and Rio Grande do Sul, in collaboration with the Centro de Teatro do Oprimido of Rio de Janeiro (CTO/Rio).



## **A – ADMINISTRATION, ARTICULATION AND MOBILIZATION**

*The proposals aligned with this axis are designed to offer supporting elements for the actions of the Union, the States and Civil Society, with a view to formulating, implementing and monitoring public policies for education in prisons. In this sense, according to participants in the Seminar, in order to ensure quality education for all within the penitentiary system it is important that:*

1. The Federal Government, through its Ministries of Education and Justice, should take on responsibility for fomenting and inducing Public State policies in the sphere of Prison Education, establishing the necessary partnership agreements with the respective States and Municipalities.
2. The offering of education within the prison system should be the fruit of the interaction between the Education Secretariat and the Prison Administrating body at local level, and responsibility for managing and coordinating the offer in accordance with the guidelines of the National Directives, should fall to both of them.
3. Articulation involves making available Adult and Adolescent Learning material to the schools that are being run in the Prison system to serve as a basis for the formulation of teaching projects adjusted to the public in question;
4. Opportunities for financing this coordinated work can be found in the respective State Administrations and the Ministerial bodies, specially when the enrolled students are included in the School Census;
5. The managing bodies will be open to establishing partnerships with other areas of government, universities and civil society, following the orientation of National Directives:
6. Educators in this system should preferentially be drawn from the staff of the Education Secretariats, selected by means of public admission exams, and their remuneration should be enhanced by monetary advantages appropriate for the specificities of the post;

7. Administration should furnish adequate physical spaces for the educative activities (e.g. classrooms, library, laboratories, etc.), in addition to acquiring the necessary equipment and materials so as to avoid improvising and constant changes;
8. The construction of adequate spaces for offering education, as well as for sports, should be proportional to the population being attended to in each unit;
9. The authorities responsible for administration should transform the School into a space that is effectively integrated into the prison routines and those of penal execution in general, by including its activities in the security plan adopted;
10. A diagnosis should be made of the schooling record of the sentenced prisoners as soon as they enter the prison system, with a view to obtaining information so that an educational proposal may be formulated to address the circumstances of each individual;
11. Differentiated treatment should be offered to prisoners in closed, semi-closed and open regimes of imprisonment, prisoners in temporary detention, those on parole and those submitted to security measures, irrespective of any evaluation of merit;
12. The attention being dispensed should take diversity into account and be alert for questions of inclusion, accessibility, gender, ethnicity, belief, age and other correlated aspects;
13. Those responsible for the education offer should design strategies to guarantee continuity of their studies to those being released, negotiating with entities that offer them support like corporate organizations, councils, released prisoner support foundations and other civil society organizations;
14. Remission for education activities should be guaranteed as a right in the same way as remission for working activities, and that remission should be cumulative when both types of activity are engaged in;

15. Prison work should be of a formative nature and not the mere exploitation of labour, and it should be offered in conditions and at times compatible with the offer of study opportunities;
16. In addition to being compatible, prison work (and all other activities directed at social re-integration in the prisons) should become effectively integrated with education;
17. Non-stigmatizing certificates should be granted for the educational activities of those studying (whether the courses are regular full-time basic and secondary education courses, non-formal activities or professional training courses etc.) in a way that conciliates legislation governing certification with the interests of those involved;
18. There should be a policy of encouraging reading and books in the units with the implantation of libraries and programs not only seeking to serve enrolled students, but all members of the prison community;
19. Printed material should be elaborated encouraging the convicted individuals to participate in the educative programs and giving information on the question of remission granted for study activities undertaken;
20. Documents and material produced by the Ministries of Health and Justice and/or by the State Secretariats of Education and of Prison Administration that may be of interest to the educators in the system should be made available and socialized with a view to drawing closer together the spheres of administration and execution in the management of education in the Prisons;
21. Regional and national meetings on Education in Prisons should be promoted involving all the relevant actors, especially directors of Prison Units and those of the Teaching sector and the exchanging of experiences should be part of the agendas of such meetings;

## B – QUALIFICATION AND VALUING OF PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATION OFFER

*The proposals aligned with this axis are designed to contribute towards the quality of qualification and the good working conditions of administrators, educators, prison warders and security staff. In this sense, according to participants in the Seminar, in order to guarantee quality education for all within the penitentiary system, it is important that:*

22. When entering the daily life of the prison system, the teacher should pass through a training process promoted by the authority responsible for Prison Administration in collaboration with that responsible for education, whereby Education in Prisons should be structured in alignment with the guidelines of national penitentiary policy.
23. Ongoing qualification of professionals activities within the prison system should be undertaken in a manner that integrates all the areas involved, such as labour, health, education, sports, culture, security, psycho-social assistance and others, in such a way as to contribute towards a better understanding of the treatment meted out in prisons and the perfecting of the various functions of each segment;
24. Within the sphere of their educational policy projects, the schools dedicated to training professional prison staff should be run in an integrated and coordinated manner, so as to provide ongoing qualification to all the staff involved and perfect the education being offered within the prison system. In those states where such schools do not yet exist, they should be duly implanted in accordance with the provisions of Resolution N° 04 of the National Criminal and Penitentiary Policy Council;
25. Higher Education Institutions and Research Centres should be considered as potential partners in the process of qualifying the system's professional staff, in the implementation of training and qualifying projects, and in organizing the library collections;
26. Qualifying prison staff should encompass in its teaching proposal the educative aspect of the work of all the staff in regard to the prisoners;

27. The actors in the states should stimulate the creation of spaces for debate, qualification, reflection and discussion, such as forums and networks that reflect on the role of education in prisons;
28. Graduate courses in education and teaching degrees should include in their curricula qualification in Adult and Adolescent Education and, within that course, Education in Prisons;
29. Both educators and those being educated should receive the support of technical staff (psychologists, therapists, phono-audiologists, etc.) to ensure the constant improvement of the teaching-learning relationship;
30. The imprisoned individual with an appropriate qualification and profile, should act as a monitor in the educative process, receiving a continuous qualification that is appropriate for his or her teaching activities and with a right to remission and remuneration for the same;

#### **C – TEACHING ASPECTS**

*The proposals aligned on this axis have to do with guaranteeing the quality of the Education being offered in the Prisons and are based on the fundamental concepts and the legislation concerning Education for Adults and Adolescents, as well as the paradigms of Education for the Common People, supported on principles of the autonomy and emancipation of the subjects of the educative process. In this sense, according to participants in the Seminar, in order to guarantee quality education for all within the penitentiary system it is important that:*

31. Appropriate school regulations should be created to meet the needs of the teaching establishments inside the prison system with the intention of preserving the unity of the philosophy, educational policy, structure and functioning of the educational practices being carried out in the prisons.
32. Each state should elaborate its teaching projects for Education in Prisons taking into account the different dimensions of education (schooling, culture, sport and professional qualification) and the reality of the prison system itself in order to propose the appropriate methodology;

33. The production of teaching material specifically for education in the prison system should be encouraged, to complement the resources for Adult and Adolescent education made available by the local authority;
34. A curriculum should be elaborated that is appropriate for Education in Prisons and takes into account the time and space of the individuals that will undergo Adult and Adolescent Education in this context and that addresses the challenges presented in terms of their social re-integration;
35. Such a curriculum should be formulated starting from a Working Group that will represent all the subjects involved in the educative process in prisons (educators, those undergoing education, prison system managers, prison warders and researchers doing work on Adult Education and the Prison System);
36. Within the prison system, education for Adults and Adolescents should include qualification for entering the world of work which is understood to be a locus for the construction of the individual's autonomy and the development of his or her professional, intellectual, physical cultural and social capacity;
37. The prisoner's family and the community at large should be stimulated whenever possible, to accompany and participate in the educational activities that contribute towards the process of social re-integration;
38. The possibilities of distance learning in all its different levels, except for basic Education, should be broadened;
39. The possibilities of using technology in the classrooms of prison units should be widened with a view to enriching the teaching/learning process;
40. Autonomy should be guaranteed to the teacher in evaluating the student throughout the teaching/learning process.

## FUTURE ACTION

The Federal and State Governments, together with the Civil Society, must work to refine and materialize the present proposals. This demands keeping up the bonds and commitments that have been achieved by the Educating for Freedom Project and the National Seminar for Prison Education, as well as advancing in the direction of transforming them into the foundations of a consistent public policy for the sector.

To that end, being in consonance with the present document can be adopted as a criterion by government bodies when financing and evaluating local actions in regard to education in prisons.

Furthermore, their proposals can be forwarded to the National Education Council - CNE and the National Criminal and Penitentiary Policy Council - CNPCP thereby contributing to the debates and the measures to be adopted by governments at a subsequent moment.

# LEARNING AND UNLEARNING<sup>1</sup>

*Marc De Maeyer*<sup>2</sup>

On the occasion of a previous visit to Brazil, while visiting a prison in Florianópolis, I read the following message on a poster made by a prisoner:

“We always learn, even when we don’t want to learn”

That is true... however, instead of reiterating once again what new things could be done in prisons, or what could be done differently or with greater intensity, I would opt for a different angle, more optimistic but, at the same time, more cynical:

- more optimistic if we accept as a truism that a person always learns a lot in prison;
- more cynical if we think about what is learnt there, informally and permanently.

I must make it clear that I am not speaking of Brazilian prisons alone, but of prisons I have visited around the world, and of the conversations I have had with prisoners, released prisoners, educators, and administrators, and also listening to what public opinion has to say in regard to prisoners.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented by Marc De Maeyer during the *National Seminar for Education in Prisons* held in Brasília on July 12th, 13th and 14th, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Marc De Maeyer is a senior researcher in Lifelong Learning at the UNESCO Institute for Education. He is also Coordinator of the International Education in Prisons Programme. He is Belgian and was formerly the Director of the North American Office of the International Council on Social Welfare. He has also been a teacher and the editor of several films on literacy training, school evasion and people with special needs.



What does one learn in a prison and why?

The things everyone learns in a prison are not the detailed programs, structured modules or curricula carefully thought out by specialists in education. In prisons, as in any other place, there are needs to be met, needs and urgency. The need and urgency to survive in the world of imprisonment, the need and urgency to get to know the networks of influence, the need and urgency to adopt attitudes that will be held in favourable consideration for a faster release from prison, the need and urgency to find out how to improve the daily round, the need and urgency to preserve a minimum of intimacy, the need and urgency to simply exist. In this situation one learns fast and goes straight to the point.

The lessons learned are not entirely bad.

Such lessons are learned through peer education, in a permanent and informal manner within the group. Attitudes and behaviours are learned which will eventually become reflexes. Here, we are certainly in the presence of an education that will extend throughout life and not be restricted to the prison (except for certain individuals in certain countries). All the lessons learned are relevant, innovative and dynamic. We might say that they satisfy a demand, and that the educative supply is effectively available.

Prisoners develop a learning strategy: for the short term they seek the means for surviving in prison, and for the medium term they adopt attitudes that will enable them to leave prison faster. They learn a series of things that will enable them to leave as fast as possible a place that they do not like, and an environment and colleagues that they cannot stand. Such lessons are functional, perfectly adapted and correspond very well to what we call lifelong learning.

While the prisoners are learning these informal and essential lessons, the prison, due to its structure, will teach them to unlearn, teach them to be passive:

- One eats when food is served; there is no need to shop for food, to organize the budget, prepare the food, wash the dishes etc.

- One learns to obey without asking why and not to take any initiative that might disorganise the order of things in the environment where one finds oneself: the prisoner must be passive, he must be given orders. He is to be a good prisoner after having been a bad citizen.
- One learns to live without worrying about a budget, without thinking about how to support a household or organise a schedule according to life inside and outside prison. One will do as all the others do, all the time, with very little to decide about, seven days a week.
- One works for a salary that is not really a salary at all.
- One learns to lose one's intimacy, to live in a homogeneous world, with no relations based on affection, with no love.
- The prisoner will have to unlearn everything that it would be necessary to acquire in order that, on leaving prison, he might be a dynamic, organised, structured person, capable of managing his human, social and affection-based relationships.

What a strange paradox!

Of course, I am well aware that what I have presented here is a somewhat caricatured vision of the reality within prisons, but you know as well as I do that it is not altogether untrue: humour or cynicism aside, we know that part of what have said is indeed a reality.

- every day in prison, the prisoners learn attitudes, behaviours, and values that in no way correspond to a preparation for leaving prison. Paradoxically however, the time spent in prison is supposed to be a time for reflection and learning with the aim of ensuring the prisoner's re-insertion.
- every day in prison, the prisoners learn to live without budget concerns and almost never come into contact with the opposite sex. They learn "to be" in featureless time and space.
- It is the structure of the prison itself -whatever the country or the implanted means - that makes them learn things they should not learn, and fail to learn things that they should learn.

It is not our task here to try and imagine an alternative to imprisonment. It must merely be pointed out that no great progress has been made in the social treatment meted out to offenders. Many countries have done away with the death penalty, and we are no longer in an age of banishment or public hangings, but even so, no great advances have been achieved. The prison is structured the way it is for lack of an alternative. It is a failure for those who enter it, and also failure for society, which found nothing better than denying space and time to certain of its members who are certainly no angels, and against whom it needs to protect itself.

The alternatives put forward to imprisonment do not really open up any new prospects. Community work or electronic bracelets which seek to reduce the number of prisoners in over-populated prisons and to minimise the negative effects of imprisonment do not in any way solve the system's inherent contradictions.

What can educators do under such conditions? What can they do in a place where they find themselves in a highly regimented situation, and often in very small numbers, with permission to go in there and "educate"?

What can we do in a place where the individuals are locked into the present, and their only future coincides with the date of their release from prison. To educate, to educate oneself, it is necessary to have an optimistic vision of the future. It is necessary to have a positive experience in regard to learning. It is necessary to accumulate positive experiences and react to the stimuli of colleagues.

With a little exaggeration it might be said that imprisonment and educating for citizenship are two ideas, two realities, that are antagonistic, contradictory. And in this situation, what can be done? To remain in cynicism and disheartenment or to try, in spite of everything, to do something for those adults for whom formal education did not work.

My suggestions result from what I have been able to see during visits to prisons in dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America

and Europe. There is no doubt that other things can be done, provided that we do not use education in an instrumental way, and do not expect from it results it is unable to achieve.

Our starting point is obvious: everyone has a right to education (consequently, prisoners do too); it is not a privilege or a service to be bought. We educators like to say that the moments of learning that take place inside the prison may sometimes correspond to a second chance for people who never had a first opportunity.

We need to find a way of allowing prisoners to enjoy moments of learning, have successful experiences and contacts with others that go beyond mere relations of force, moments in which to reconstruct their personal histories, spaces where they can express their emotions and carry out projects. That is what we call education in prison.

It is all about proposing new moments for learning, new lessons to be learnt:

- within the contradictions which I have presented briefly,
- in a prison system that exists, and will continue to exist for a long time to come, with very low budgets and insignificant amounts earmarked for education.
- for people who, in general terms, have a level of education lower than the national average and who have had very few gratifying experiences in school (that is, if they had the opportunity of going to one) and who, in any case, are not asking for anything in this direction.
- aware that the institutional framework and the specific context are not going to change, and that it is within these structural contradictions that the work must be done. Often the educators will enter the prison and have considerable difficulty in being accepted by the prison staff when trying to meet a demand that, when it does exist, is confused.
- recognising that by means of the educational moments, attitudes, values and lessons will be proposed that are in profound contradiction with the world of imprisonment.

We are here to:

- ensure that the right to Education, provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, be respected.
- ensure that civil society (represented here by the teachers or by the members of non-governmental organisations) continues to have access to the prisons and, in this way, avoid that this world apart becomes even more sealed off, so that nothing that is lived inside it ever gets out.
- avoid the needs of the prisoners being met by the market, that is to say, avoid the privatizing of education in the prisons, or its being passed to other activist or religious groups.

We are also well aware that we cannot abstract the deep reasons that motivate our interventions in the prison; what is it that leads us to declare that they are important when there are so many other things to be done around us and across the world, and with people that are much more likeable than some of the prisoners?

Why do we call out “PRESENT” when nobody even asked?

Education is a long-term project. It is also a permanent activity that demands coherence among all its protagonists - parents, primary and secondary school teachers, civil society, youth movements - so that the messages can be fully understood by the youths. The same is true of adult education: adults express their wish to learn according to their professional or family situations, or their professional goals and aims in life

What educational coherence can be achieved in prisons, considering that among those that come into regular contact with the prisoners (warders, members of the medical staff...) not all have the intention of listening, or are concerned about coordinating coherent interventions. Their professional attitudes and practices are sometimes contradictory to the Ministry of Education guidelines, or the social vision of the NGO's.

Thus we can delineate a first requirement:

1. education in prison is not just the education of prisoners, but rather, the permanent education of all those who have anything to do with the prison: prisoners, the team of warders, the prisoners' family members, and outside professionals that participate in the daily round of the prison. I believe that this is the essence of the challenge of lifelong learning, education that will be carried out by all, and not merely by the educators. A prison being what it is, it will be necessary to strengthen the attitudes of the various actors in their respective professional practices.
2. A second requirement stems immediately from the first one: the work of coherence and coordination must be assumed by the public authorities. We would be underrating the educational tradition of a large group of countries of the world were we to believe that we can educate merely by distributing, through the intermediation of private companies, manuals or educational modules in CD-ROM. The public authorities will have to act as the foreman in the task of providing education for all; they must ensure its coherence, stimulate it and seek to protect it. There is something gratifying in education, something about discovery and continuity that no private company can possibly offer. Consequently, education in prisons cannot and must not be privatised into the hands of the market or those of the churches. It is the group of relevant Ministries that must integrate in facing the problem of education in prisons. Obviously there must be coordination between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education. However, other ministries should have a role to play in the matter: Labour, Health, Social Development etc. A National Body coordinating the various public authorities would be the essential and most coherent instrument in this case.
3. A third requirement follows: to make room for the educator. Learning involves contact with another person, it is not just a question of registering information, but of facing up to the other person and learning with him. This statement does not

seem to be obvious to the prisoners, who often are not accustomed to listening, receiving or being corrected during an exercise. We would take as an example the new technology that is sometimes put forward as the solution for generalising education in prison. In all the evaluations made by the participants of training periods in computer skills or of self-teaching methods there is an insistence on the presence of a teacher, not merely to answer the technical questions that may arise, but also as an opportunity to meet another person. Correspondence courses and studying alone in front of a computer screen are extraordinary possibilities for you and me - that is, for people who have already had positive learning experiences. We have already been able to learn how to learn. However, you cannot learn how to learn alone, on your own.

Having enumerated the three basic requirements, what can effectively be done in prison? What kind of educational project can be developed in a place where residents are anxious to get away from it as soon as possible?

When I visit prisons with over a thousand inmates and am shown three or six classrooms, I realise that if on the one hand education in prison must be optimistic and demanding in its declarations, on the other hand its reality is necessarily very modest.

With due modesty, therefore, I propose four possible ways .

- 1. Establishing spaces for learning:** how can we turn the libraries in our prisons into places for learning and obtaining information on health, voter's rights, conflict resolution, and social information? How can we ensure that they contain interesting books and documents that are suitable for their public and up to date, and that they stop receiving leftovers from other libraries? In some libraries I saw some extremely technical reports of international trade committees, covered by thick layers of dust, of course. Nevertheless, there was a library. Must the prison library be the receptacle for all the leftovers? On the other hand, I saw some libraries that were

doing exceptional work with only very modest means, but with a highly motivated staff. We sometimes forget that the people who work in the libraries (sometimes the prisoners themselves) can, and indeed must, be among the main pillars of support for education in prisons.

The library could also serve as a place for the prisoner to meet with his family. This is naturally a very difficult issue because a prison is hard to administrate, and moving around dozens of prisoners is no easy matter. Once the spaces for reading and documentation have been established, how can we make sure the prisoners have access to them with all due autonomy? One would not only need dozens of librarians to learn and be capable of orientating the prisoners' choices - when many of them have never, or hardly ever, been inside a real library- but also dozens of guards to move the prisoners between their cells and the library.

But this can be put forward as an initial indication of the direction to be taken: improve access to libraries, have various library spaces in each prison, transform them into spaces for meeting, learning, choosing, distension and debate.

- 2. Valuing acquired experience:** valuing the individual's accumulated knowledge and not sanctifying the educative experiences being offered. Remember: we learn even when we do not wish to learn. Thanks to the educational experiences and the meetings with educators and teachers (our third requirement was that we should put ourselves in the position of the teachers), the prisoner can begin to evaluate his knowledge and capabilities. This process is more than just making an inventory of what we know or do not know. It means taking the risk of running the film of your life through backwards and searching for coherence (and an explanation for the actual situation of reclusion). It also means discovering possible directions for the future, discovering that one can do certain things, one has certain skills. Once this has been verified, then without a doubt it will be possible to try and construct a realistic project. It means discovering that we are not condemned to impotence.



Before any conquest can be valued one must first be aware of it; one must know which part of it resulted from personal decisions and which part was a mere fatality. People in the underworld often view their lives as a series of incidents, or even of accidents and fatalities, and not as the construction of a social and individual destiny, with the help of reliable people and more or less appropriate instruments.

It is an essential aspect of education in prison: it is desirable that personal life-stories be told, understood, analysed and re-appropriated. Needless to say that the context of confidence and confidentiality must be preserved, and that the criminal record must never be confused with the educational one. It is quite possible to narrate it, understand it and express it in prison without resorting to psychoanalysis or therapeutic treatment. Educating here means putting the pieces back together. This kind of re-structuring will be achieved by non-formal education: theatrical presentations, feeling emotions through drawing, poetry, writing and other art forms, but also working on attitudes. Putting the pieces together is sometimes a way of finding a motivation for learning to read and write, provided that the literacy training is not restricted to a mere technical performance (this matter will be approached again later in the text). Learning to read and write one's relationship to the world. Learning to read and write is a meeting between the individual and the letter.

- 3. Support for family study experiences:** this is a continuation of the first two paths. In educational spaces like the libraries, and giving due recognition to the acquired knowledge of the adult (father or mother of a family) it is possible - as it happens in few rare countries - to organise moments during which the children can study together with their imprisoned parents. This makes prison visits somewhat less artificial, re-establishes the mother or father in the role of educator and without a doubt, helps to avoid the children's dropping out of school, living as they do in a family environment that has become even more

fragile through the imprisonment of one of the parents. This suggestion is certainly not applicable everywhere, as it presupposes that the father or mother is in a prison located near the family residence, that such contacts are desirable, and that of both sides should be monitored in the process. It is a direction to be examined. It may not be possible to generalise it, but education, whether in prison or out of it, involves a set of different decisions aimed at different target publics, recognizing their differences and their capacities for choice.

- 4. The problem of professional training:** should a profession be learned while in prison? Is this the key to rehabilitation? Certainly nobody would deny the importance of professional training. If we ourselves are here today, it is because we have learned our profession or because we have the key to adapting ourselves to a new profession and carrying out tasks that are not learned in school. I do not know in which school I should have enrolled to be in the profession I practice nowadays. Obviously, first, learn Portuguese, but after that.....

Once more, it is necessary to view the problem in all its complexity and not as a simple sequence of things to be taught. There is the aspect of motivation to be considered: we know that a certain number of detainees come from poor families or poor backgrounds, where little or no jobs were available. They have learned to get by rather than how to work. This is the rule for a great number of prisoners. So why bother going to school at all?

There is also the question of security: if the libraries cannot function as they should for hundreds of prisoners, what about training workshops that receive 20 or 30 prisoners at a time, who are handed out saws, hammers, scissors and other dangerous tools? This is a very specific problem.

Yet another question is the material conditions: the number of workshops, the training of instructors, their employment, salaries and supervision.

There is also the problem of the prisoners being transferred from one prison to another: what can you be expected to learn when the teaching modules are cut short?

And there is the issue of the subject matter: should the proposal be for traditional professions or should something other than sewing and manicure courses be considered for women prisoners?

Supposing that all this can be sorted out, and supposing that the prisoner had time to follow the training of his or her choice, was successful, and that the chosen profession is acceptable to the market ... what happens when the prisoner is released? Won't we have created another moment of disillusionment, however unwittingly: the restricted labour market, the lack of professional experience, and the large gaps in the curriculum will all make the hiring process so much slower.

Let us further suppose that all that has been sorted out: what will happen once the prisoner has been hired in the profession he was trained for? His life experience and his term in prison have given him very contradictory messages in regard to attitudes and behaviour in the workshops. How is he going to accept the hierarchy, the remarks of his superiors, the working hours, his social difficulties and obligations? He did not learn any of this before going to prison and he did not learn it while in prison. He learned only how to dissimulate in order to get out of prison as soon as possible. How will he be able to keep his job in such circumstances? How will he manage to keep his job, search for a place to live, and reconstruct his human and social relations all at the same time, when he has unlearned all that in prison. Won't he be heading towards another failure? Unfortunately, we know that the answer is yes, and we also know that this is no reason for not favouring the offer of professional training.

The cooperative organisations that follow up the inmates in prison and after their release are, without a doubt, structures that work with the global aspect of the problem and, in that regard, there are some good international experiences.

We now come to two other requirements:

- a) rehabilitation objectives should never be the justification for education.** We are not even sure that education reduces recidivism (by a week, by a month, by ten years? How can we tell?). Even if education has no influence at all on recidivism, the right to education in prison must be maintained and preserved. Education must never be made a mere instrument. It is quite simply a right. We should neither explain nor persuade.
- b) The work proposed for the prison workshops, sometimes during the same hours as the educational activities, should have an educational content in addition to the training involved.** Otherwise, another counter-educational message will be put across in the prison: work is not gratifying, it is underpaid and boring. As soon as he is released, the prisoner will look for options other than undervalued, repetitive, automatic work.

Before concluding, I would like to say a few words about the specific problem of literacy training.

It is not here, in the country of Paulo Freire, that I am going to suggest that the illiteracy of some of the Brazilian and foreign immigrants now in prison is one of the causes of poverty that can sometimes lead to misdemeanours. Poor people are quite obviously not natural offenders but we do know that poverty may generate survival mechanisms that are not always in compliance with the law.

Literacy training is not restricted to learning to read and write; it is not simply getting acquainted with letters. It means arousing and maintaining motivation for a learning process that will not always be functional.

It is necessary to have specially adapted material on hand in the prison, to work on real life stories, to link the literacy training process to individual, family, cultural, social and economic concerns of the person and of his environment. Literacy training is a process, not a simple schoolroom class. You cannot do literacy training in the same way as you would decide to carry out improvements on an object.

There is no “before” that was not fine, nor “after” that is not better. It is a question of following up individuals, recognised as such, and who intuitively wish to participate and understand, to be a little more of a father or mother, a little more of a voter, a little more of an enlightened consumer, a little more of a patient concerned about health. A little more or a little better...

In conclusion:

1. Even when adequate financial means are achieved, it is not certain whether prison education reduces the rate of recidivism. Enrolling in an educational process organised and guaranteed by the Public Authorities is a Universal right and, consequently, it is also a right of prisoners - with no other justification necessary.
2. Education must never be justified in terms of economic purposes; it must be an instrument for building self-confidence and confidence in one's social relations. This is equally true for prisoners.
3. Educating means proposing subject matter that is in direct contradiction with the informal learning that takes place inside the prisons, and with the messages transmitted by colleagues and by television. It means an encounter with a person in an incoherent and transitory situation.
4. If we understand education in prison as signifying mere “training”, without taking into account the specific context and the implicit demands, then we shall not be educating, but merely transforming offenders into intelligent offenders - those are the words of an author whose name I have forgotten. But he is absolutely right.

If it were necessary to select a primary recommendation, I would be so bold as to put forward this one, which in my view sums up all that I have been trying to share with you:

It is necessary that a certain percentage of the costs of a prisoner (whatever that amount may be, it varies from country to country) should **COMPULSORILY** be spent in education in prison.

To conclude I would say that you learn even when you do not want to learn.

The trouble is that in prisons, contrary to its primary vocation, no education worthy of the name is offered. In such circumstances the prisoner continues to learn whatever crosses his path.

What we must do is to value their knowledge, identify among the lessons learned those that lead to failure at a certain moment, and propose to ourselves the building of a more positive vision of lifelong education, whatever that life may be. It is false to believe that learning begins in prison, it continues!

Education in prison is a reconciliation with the act of learning.

Perhaps education in prison is also a reconciliation with the pleasure of learning.

# COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF EDUCATIVE PRACTICES: SYNTHESIS FOR LINKING EDUCATION TO JUSTICE<sup>1</sup>

*Hugo Rangel*<sup>2</sup>

## INTERNATIONAL WATCH ON EDUCATION IN PRISONS

Good Morning. I would like to thank UNESCO, the Ministry of Justice and especially Michelle Morais, the organizers of this event, for inviting me and helping me to be present.

To make an overall portrayal of education in prisons around the world is very complicated. One can, to a certain extent, talk about educative systems in the various countries. However, quite often these systems do not make clear what is really going on in the prisons. That is why it is necessary to be aware of the different contexts in which such educative practices are carried out. This means a general perspective that will help us to understand the policies and how they affect the prisons and the people in them. Thus, it is essential to observe the contexts in which such educative practices have their origins in order to avoid artificial generalizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented by Hugo Rangel, during the National Seminar for Education in Prisons held in Brasília on July 12th, 13th and 14th, 2006.

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I will pass on to a brief general review, by continents, based more on tendencies and conditions than on statistics. In regard to Latin America I will devote some time to comments of a political and social nature, and subsequently, offer a series of notes as a form of synthesis of the comparative study.

## WESTERN EUROPE

Throughout a long period of stability, the levels of imprisonment remained constant. However, in some countries, there is a tendency towards accelerated growth in prison populations. Germany and England, for example, have increased the populations in their penitentiary centres. Spain is the country with the highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe. Holland shows a similar tendency as it has gone from 7 to 20 thousand prisoners in a period of 13 years. As a result, there has been a notable deterioration in living conditions, and the options available to prisoners are being reduced, as can be seen also in Spain and in Holland.

Some countries have implemented policies promoting studying for prisoners. In Belgium for example, payment for courses undertaken is obligatory by law. Even when it is merely symbolic, it is a positive incentive, and one that eliminates the absurd competition between working and studying. Nevertheless, only a minority of prisoners actually takes the courses.

It should be stressed that in Western Europe there is a super-representation of ethnic minorities in the prisons. This fact leads to the idea that the social structure is dysfunctional. The developed societies have important problems in their legal systems that make them unfair to immigrant populations in various ways. Social and economic exclusion are very obvious. A global vision of the ways in which countries could cooperate to offer a set of solutions for migrations and their effects is what is needed.

In regard to the educational model, it varies considerably, but what prevails is technical/mechanical workshops, which are not only



present in Europe but also in many other countries. This model serves as a complement to the factories of private companies, and the workshops are often at the service of such factories. The courses consist of carrying out tasks in the workshops, and frequently they are merely contracts with the factories. In France, however, this workshop model is being questioned by politicians and administrators alike. The said model has failed to meet the educational needs of the prison population. The French Senate has ordered a revision of the model which runs the risk of becoming a source of dependent, flexible cheap labour, and generally neither contributes towards qualifying the prisoner nor is of any real use to him.

On the other hand, training for the warders does exist, but it is done in an isolated manner and within hierarchical institutions, such as in Italy and Greece. Thus, there is no process for creating genuine sensitivity in regard to the prisoners' problems.

As for the Scandinavian countries, they qualify their warders in a more flexible way. Norway, for example, has a programme called "more than just guards" dedicated to both qualifying the warders and making them more sensitive. What is outstanding in these Scandinavian countries is the success of the educative practices consequent on the low rates of imprisonment, less violence and lower rates of recidivism. The educative practices in the prisons are directed at making the prisoner more independent, as is the case in Denmark. In this way, the prisoner does not feel merely as a passive user of the prison services. Prisoners cook, wash their own clothes and buy items for their daily use. This is a very useful lesson for those who are frequently dependent on prison services and incapable of functioning in daily life situations.

It is important to note the existence of courses that deal with concrete social problems that are frequent causes of the offences committed, like the special workshops directed at drunken drivers. On the other hand there are programmes linked to relations with the community and with the victims of crimes, as is the case in Sweden. This last fact means that they can count on greater support from public opinion.

There are also programmes that accept the existence of certain problems within the prisons, as in the case of co-existing with drug use. Accepting this reality is clearly difficult for prison authorities in any country. However, to accept it goes a long way towards facing up to it. This shows how necessary educative programmes are, and they demand complementary political distension and willingness to improve prisons. For example, in Holland and some other countries, measures have been adopted to avoid the transmission of contagious diseases through the distribution of needles to be used by prisoners who use injected drugs.

In regard to individualised educational measures, in England a parliamentary committee analysed the education situation in the prisons and concluded that an individual learning system tailored according to the sentence was necessary. Indeed, such an educational measure, which is presently being considered in Belgium and France, could be a useful tool, provided it is applied in accordance with the prisoners case and goes beyond merely bureaucratic functions.

In short, our vision in regard to Europe should be that there is diminishing tolerance for the false idea of the efficacy of imprisonment as an end in itself, which the harshness of the law presupposes. It should be noted that in Europe, with few exceptions, the teaching offered in the prisons continues to be public and non-religious.

## **EASTERN EUROPE**

Obviously, the countries of this region have fewer resources, which means prison overpopulation and scant education or treatment opportunities for prisoners. Options for women prisoners are also scarce and in some countries, such as Bulgaria, they do not even have access to traditional courses such as cooking and sewing.

These extremely precarious conditions have led to the appearance of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis in the Czech Republic, and HIV in a high percentage of the inmates, specially among the women.

It must be stressed that there is an inconsistency between the laws and the real possibility of implementing them. For example, several countries, such as Hungary and Bulgaria, have legislation that makes provisions for every detail of an education that in reality does not exist at all.

It should be mentioned that by means of cooperation agreements such as those being financed by Finland, some education projects are being carried out in the region.

In spite of the scarcity of resources, there are innumerable isolated examples of educational projects being implemented. In Romania, for example, non-formal education projects, and projects directed at young people have been functioning very well. However, it is difficult to overcome the residual effects of decades of total neglect of the prisons.

## THE UNITED STATES

It is very important that Latin America should observe the situation in the United States and, above all, perceive its limitations as a system and the impossibility of extrapolating that model.

The conservative social policies exclude minorities and marginalise the poor even more. They also polarise society. Their punitive social policy, therefore, arrests people indiscriminately, further exacerbating the marginalisation and the polarization. The policies of the Republican party are contradictory as, on the one hand, they promote imprisonment and punishment, but on the other, they cut down on the minimum funds necessary for the very survival of the prisons and presumably those destined for education. It is in this context that the private sector came to flourish within the Penitentiary Centres.

In addition to this, the cutting down on budgets has reduced educative programmes in those states that had most of them, namely: New York, Philadelphia and Maryland. In states like California, such programmes are almost non-existent. Religious groups have become increasingly important, as is the case in Florida. The high levels of

imprisonment naturally make it difficult to offer courses to over 2 million prisoners. Furthermore, the increasing number of prisoners with life sentences (as an alternative to the death penalty) has altered the dynamics of the prisons. It is much harder to motivate such prisoners or to get any social resonance or internal support for them.

The racial profile in the prisons of the United States is glaring. The rate of imprisonment of the Negro population is disproportionately high. Over 45% of the prison populations are Negroes, while in the population at large they represent only 11%

## CANADA

The Canadian context is interesting when compared with that of the United States, as their divergent social dimensions and legal system models clearly differentiate them.

The rate of imprisonment in Canada is low: 107 persons per 100 thousand inhabitants are imprisoned, as against 724 for the United States, which is one of the countries with the highest levels of imprisonment rates and the highest absolute number of prisoners in the world. Even so, its conservative government plans to build more prisons.

Crime rates in Canada are also lower than those in the United States. This can be explained by the existence of social programmes and social equity policies. This kind of social context is favourable for developing educative programmes. It is worthwhile pointing out that the adaptations made to the courses take into account the sentences and the effective resources available. The Canadian experience has been relatively successful because, as we have seen, there is coordination among the institutions and their insertion in the judicial system. The decentralization of provincial and federal attributes must also be highlighted. That is to say, it is also a result of the efficiency of the federal administration system and of the legal system.

However, in a similar way to what happens in Australia and New Zealand, indigenous populations are over-represented in the prisons.

This is an expression of the poverty and precarious health conditions in which they live, and above all their lack of alternatives. The Canadian government has set up some programmes to face these problems and to take indigenous culture into account inside the prisons. However, the effect of the persistence of their adverse social conditions is what leads to the persistence of high levels of imprisonment rates among them.

## **LATIN AMERICA**

When analysing the experiences with prison education in Latin America we are forced to ask some basic questions first. For example:

What kind of penitentiary model do we want?

What kind of administration model and legal system model do we want?

The unfavourable conditions and the great lack of resources say a lot about society's lack of interest, the consequence of which is that Penal Centres are not allocated any priority by the legal or education authorities.

## **SCARCE RESOURCES AND PRIVATIZATIONS**

Given the cost of Penal Centres and the scant resources available in the countries of the region, privatizing penitentiaries is a tendency to be found in several countries like Chile, El Salvador, and Colombia, among others. A considerable number of countries have privatized services. This reminds us that all participation on the part of the private sector must be circumscribed by standards at once democratic and transparent. The problem is that, frequently, private sector participation in Latin America is far from meeting such standards. Educative practices should be centred on the individual and the community. Without wishing to demonise those private companies that take part in prison interventions, we do know that sometimes that is not the logic adopted by some of them. It is necessary to ensure that they do so.

When observing Latin American reality, the growth in prison populations is glaringly obvious, such as in Brazil or in Mexico, which have doubled the number of prisoners in only 10 years. This growth results from the national policies that attempt to lower the crime rate.

#### VIOLENCE AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Violence has taken control of a large part of Latin American societies. The murder rates are alarming, the highest in the world. Drug traffic groups wield considerable power, that permeates different parts of the social structure, the prisons, particularly. They are focal points for violence and mutinies, as we saw quite recently in São Paulo. There have been numerous other examples all over Latin America. In this context, education is more than ever necessary, in order to form groups and networks of inmates that can break down the domination and the fear imposed by groups of delinquents. It is necessary to create organisational alternatives.

In Peru, for example, the criminal factions do in fact run the Model Prisons, offering services and imposing rules. Such a situation serves to warn us that in a democracy the legal institutions need to be strengthened. When criminal factions effectively take command, democratic institutions are weakened. The educative programmes are more effective when there are democratic institutions, and societies strengthen themselves through their democratic regimes. The situation in the prisons reflect the situation of democracy in Latin America. Democracy is constructed in an ongoing and permanent manner, and that means that we must also renew our institutions. Unfortunately the prisons are institutions that are usually forgotten.

It is exactly in the construction of this democratic society that education is indispensable. Unfortunately however, this is only acknowledged and mentioned in political discourse, and very rarely put in practice. It is education and not the market that builds democracy: because education is indeed intrinsically civic, as Paulo

Freire held it to be; because it contributes towards creating equality of opportunity, that is to say, it contributes to building a fairer society; because, as Norberto Bobbio has stated, that is the sign of a democracy; because a democracy cannot be constructed completely if it is based on principles of exclusion; and because the modern republican ideal is the inclusion of all individuals, as Habermas insists. Indeed, democracy is above all, an ideal of justice and liberty (what Kant referred to as the Republican idea). Therefore this ideal is alive and has to be kept alive in Latin America.

We are all aware of the need to improve penal centres. However, what is needed more than anything else is to improve the communities of origin of the people who “attend” the prisons. In certain marginalised neighbourhoods and districts, the percentage of people who have been in prison is very high and therefore it is necessary to attend to these communities in order to reduce those percentages. Carrying out such actions means democratising our countries.

#### NOTES FOR A SYNTHESIS

As we have seen, the countries where educative programmes in prisons function with the greatest levels of efficiency are those where equity- promoting social policies are in place. Those that coordinate the projects conducted inside the prisons with the prisoners’ communities and families. Those that see the individual as the focal point of the programmes. Those that identify prisoners with behavioural or psychological problems; those that are complementary to an efficient legal system; those where the prisons are more humane institutions that take into account the needs of young people and women, offering them the professional courses and services they need, and identify those that require psychological treatment (and are a threat to society), but not adopting teaching as a therapy, that is, not viewing the prisoners as sick. In this sense, non-formal education is particularly important considering that its inherent flexibility offers the prisoners greater options. In short, education in prisons should be directed towards strengthening

democratic practices and institutions and contributing towards qualifying the individual as a citizen.

From this international point of view, intervention in prisons requires that various fundamental principles be considered, such as the principle of diversity. It is absolutely essential to recognise diversity. Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor proposes that there should be a policy of recognising diversity, recognising our differences in a multicultural society; those of indigenous people, of immigrants, and of groups with different skin colours or religions. There is even diversity in multiculturalism. It is not only the industrialised societies that are multicultural. Latin America has its diversity. Brazil has its own diversity. Octavio Paz stated that diversity is life and uniformity is death. Living means acknowledging diversity and tolerating it. Adult Education in prisons and the methodology for carrying it out are an education in tolerance that must recognise this diversity of cultures, skin colours and religions.

#### **PRACTICES**

Reducing the sentence through remission schemes is an important incentive for prisoners and a positive factor which should be discussed in the present event. This option does indeed come forward as an alternative because although it represents only a small reduction in the period involved, the impression that it gives is of enhancing the value of education in the eyes of the prisoner and of the legal system itself.

Many countries have no legislation regulating rewards for studying in educative programmes in the form of reduction of sentences. Nevertheless, in some countries such as Spain, France and Argentina, study and work are taken into account when each prisoner is being assessed.

In other countries such as Mexico, there is a federal law and a similar one in each state providing for remissions of sentence corresponding to studies undertaken or work done. However, the poor functioning of the legal system makes it difficult to apply these instruments adequately to benefit prisoners who show possibilities of rehabilitation.



## TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESSES IN PRISONS

In regard to methodology, the standard examinations, so common in the prisons of Latin America, leave little room for the teachers and prison administrators to teach prisoners based on their realities and characteristics (this may explain why the teachers always feel much more drawn to the prisoners than to the prison authorities). Thus, the development of subject matters and, above all, of methods, should be coordinated, so as to adapt them to the prisoners. It is necessary to create an original form of educating that is both practical and well-founded.

In this sense, non-formal education is particularly important since, due its flexibility, it presents the prisoners with greater options. Cultural and artistic activities correspond to opportunities, they open up the range of methodology and perception options. It is necessary to learn about art.

## INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION

Based on the experiences in various countries we can perceive that in order to develop educative programmes in prisons, institutional coordination is indispensable. The Parliamentary Committees in England and France, for example, drew the attention of their respective countries to the absence of any coordination in the implementation of education strategies in prisons. In both countries, confusion was detected in the distribution of responsibilities. This bureaucratic vacuum has caused improvisation of activities and sub-utilisation of resources. The Parliamentary Committees of both countries recommended that a leadership should define the responsibilities to be attributed to each public institution, and that actions should also be defined not merely to distribute the resources, but to determine strategies focussed on the prisoners themselves, from the moment of their arrival in prison onwards, and above all, following them up after their release.

This institutional coordination has several positive aspects ranging from the adequate employment of resources to the existence of a genuine social project to meet the needs of prisoners.

How to deal with the penal and social problems that Latin America is now facing? To begin with, it must be stated that in Latin America we must not imitate a model that gives priority to increasing imprisonment and building more prisons indefinitely. Building prisons may solve the problem of over-population but it will not solve those of insecurity and of violence, which are more complex.

As Voltaire declared, “in an effort to deal with urgent matters one forgets about essential ones”. It is necessary to face up to the essential issues like education rather than those which seem to be more urgent, so that we may combat violence, and combating violence, as we have already mentioned, is much more strongly involved in the construction and consolidation of democracy in Latin America.

I would like to say a little about Brazil, not to evaluate it, because you all know its problems better than I do. I would just like to say that in Brazil there are many positive elements present in education in prisons. Unlike other Latin American countries, there are institutions that have stable programmes, in addition to the presence of civil society groups that, with great vitality, in spite of the scant resources, manage to carry out very valuable work. In Brazil there is also, as the present meeting goes to show, interest on the part of the authorities to discuss and deal with the problems and the fundamental themes of education in prisons. This is also of great value.

To conclude, I would like to say that the educative perspectives that have been compared should also be shared. It is necessary to cooperate, exchange, create networks of professionals, of teachers, as well as dialogues among the ministries. To create bonds, as Saint Exupéry's Little Prince declares. In working with prisoners it is not possible to work in isolation. It is necessary to open up horizons with the prisoners and with the community.

It is up to you, ladies and gentlemen to take up the challenge. Good Luck!