

Grundtvig Project : Effective Induction for Prison Teachers

Focus Groups Report: Estonia



Focus Group in Tallinn 06 January 2010

1. The Gymnasium of Jõhvi, The prison school of Viru, Estonian as a second language, teacher.
2. The Gymnasium of Jõhvi, The Prison of Viru, Russian as a foreign language.
3. In Tallinn Prison I work as a head specialist of the social department.
4. In the prison department of the Ministry of Justice.
5. Tallinn Building School, in Tallinn Prison computer science, speciality as a supporting subject.
6. Tallinn Building School, in Tallinn Prison as an electricity teacher.
7. Keila Community Gymnasiums Murru prison department, as a teacher of Estonian and literature.
8. Tallinn Adult Gymnasiums Tallinn Prison department as a teacher of Estonian and literature.
9. Head of Keila Community Gymnasiums Harku department.

Teaching and Learning

1. **What types of information about Prisoners' backgrounds - educational background, learning difficulties, psychological/mental health problems - would help you do your job more effectively and why?**
 - Prisoners learning background and qualifications
 - Learning difficulties that might have an impact on the ability to learn
 - Prisoners' mental and psychological problems

2. **How do you currently assess student educational level and their progress in prison? Would you benefit from training in this regard? What kind of training would you like to see?**
 - According to the curriculum
 - Student's progress is assessed by traditional types of exams based on national criteria; we should get rid of that type of exams and the exams should be adapted to suit prison education (academic subjects)
 - The problem is the different level of knowledge
 - Some kind of individual approach or lessons are urgently needed
 - We often appreciate the learning process

3. **How do you motivate and encourage Prisoners to engage in learning? To what extent is this process encouraged and supported by the prison authorities?**
 - The grade is terribly important
 - Positive assessments of the relatively little things, are very important
 - School is one way to get out of the chamber
 - To the 9th and 12th grade graduation they each had the opportunity to invite a close person
 - In principle, prison authorities support us.
 - The main thing is finding internal motivation

4. **What is the content of the curriculum in your prison? Do you think the current curriculum is adequate? What would you add/change?**
 - We have the same curriculum as in other units but the curriculum has to be applied to suit to prison teaching (more practical skills in vocational training for example)
 - Different curriculum for prison schools would take away the motivation (prison schools certificate is for everyone to see where I acquired it)
5. **What are the teaching and learning methods in detention, and whether these methods are suitable?**
 - a flexible learning plan to encompass the needs of the group
 - The teaching and learning methods we must reinvent itself to fit.
 - There is no such method which is suitable for anyone at all to use.

Prisoner Psychology and Health

1. **Do you need/want more information on mental health issues of Prisoners? How would this help or hinder you?**
 1. Why is he behaving like this, why he considers himself like that today?
 2. Teachers need to know how to behave. As far as possible, the aid it should become from a teacher.
 3. We need to get andragogical training, because our students are adults.

2. **Have you experienced manipulation by Prisoners? Did you know how to deal with it? Have you been given training in this area? If so, who provided the training?**
 1. All interviewees had experienced manipulation
 2. The test-and-error method

3. **Is it important to know the Prisoners' criminal record? What sort of information would be useful and why?**
 - All prefer not to be aware of any details around a prisoner's criminal record.

Security

1. Were you provided with formal training regarding security issues prior to starting work in the prison?

- At least once a year.

2. Were you given a paper copy of security guidelines when you started as reference? If yes, who provided these?

(A few have received it, some do not remember.... Here was much controversy about what can and what should not be taken into the prison)

3. Do you think the training provided was adequate? If not, what sorts of issues would you like to have seen covered? Please be specific and relate your answer to questions and problems you had as a new prison teacher.

- It is necessary from time to time to remind teachers, where they are staying.
- Any additional training would be very good.

4. Did you make any mistakes in relation to security when you first started? How could you have been prevented from making such a mistake?

- Errors occur when you move between the two schools
- These ignorances were from absent mindedness
- You should be always check, what are you talking about.

5. Would better 'intelligence' (i.e. knowledge) of prisoners' criminal convictions, mental health status help in managing classroom discipline? If yes, tell us how you think it would help?

- In general, it would be good.
- There is no universal psychology. Just as we all have a difference, the same is with the ones arrested.

Prison Teacher Networks

1. Would you find it helpful to have access to an electronic forum which links prison teachers and acts as a source of advice and information for the profession?

- Silence

- Can you apply this new way of communicating?

- All: Of course

2. Whether and how much you're willing to commit their time to this, there to communicate, whether you're willing to do the work during free time?

- Yes
- Subjects teachers could discuss by the lesson, and exchange experiences.

3. Are you currently involved in any prison teacher networks?

- All: Does such a thing exist?

4. Are you aware of the EPEA?

- One interviewee was told last autumn

5. Do you think it does a good job of representing you?

(silence in general)

- I don't know English, and this is just an obstacle“
- It is an international organization, it would give us the opportunity not only to talk to each other, but also to find out what is happening in EU .