

Grundtvig Project : Effective Induction for Prison Teachers

Focus Groups Report: Portugal



They met in Sintra prison, teachers who have diving in prison, and teachers who have diving in EP of Linhó and College of Caxias, with the project coordinator, for analysis of issues proposed for the focus group

Participants

- 1 - Technician Penitentiary Treatment
- 2 - Teacher who teaches the seven years probation in college (young) - Caxias
- 3 - Teacher who teaches the seven years in prison Sintra
- 4 - Trainer of the work area, provides training in various prisons for five years
- 5 - Professor who teaches at two years in prison Sintra
- 6 - Professor who teaches at two years in prison Sintra
- 7 - Professor who teaches at one years in prison Sintra
- 8 - Professor who teaches the five years in prison Linhó
- 9 - Professor who teaches at two years in prison Linhó
- 10 - Teacher who teaches for the 1st time in prison - Sintra
- 11 - Teacher who teaches the ten years in prison Sintra
- 12 - Teacher who teaches the ten years in prison Sintra

Teaching and Learning

1st - whenever an adult enters back into the school system, information about his previous schooling is prompted to the last school he attended. Information on learning disabilities that these adults had in school is only given if a failure had occurred in various disciplines. It is not mention if the failure was due to integration issues, problems of language understanding, absenteeism, social problems, etc...

Information on the causes of their difficulties would act decisively to: differentiate the tasks designed for the students as well as selecting more desirable activities with an adequate level of difficulty according to their cognitive and emotional abilities.

Information related to the family is not very important. The most relevant is the environment build by the professionals who work in prison, including the psychological, emotional / affective characterization of the prisoner, his health status and other details that could be replicated in the individual report from the trainee to the teacher.

It is essential to update this information. Its use should be dynamic and linked with the extended team work, (pedagogical, educational and therapeutic), in order to improve the structure, implementation, evaluation and permanent adjustment of education.

For the development of work in the classroom it is not necessary to know the type of crime committed.

2 – The Portuguese prison population has low levels of education, has not the basic education of six or nine years and there is still a high number of illiterates. The educational level of these adult students is not substantially different from the adult students in the mainstream (general population), except in relation to the problems they bare inside themselves. In spite of this, their learning level, has reasonably responded to the expectations. Considering that only the material prepared by the teachers exists, a lot of motivation and some extra work are necessary in order to attend to the different activities and to adapt it to the trainee's abilities

Progress depends on the commitment and motivation demonstrated by the trainee during the lessons, obviously under the influence of his daily life and according to the characteristics of each individual. The progress level of each trainee is satisfactory and after the beginning of the academic experience most of the students continue their studies to the following levels.

It would be desirable to advise the teachers about the type of prisoners they will be dealing with. It would be good to provide training to the teachers, at least during the first month of classes, and at the same time encourage the senior teachers in the prison to support their younger colleagues.

3rd - Whether we are teaching in a school, a center or a prison the motivation that any teacher should when embracing this job has to be the same. The teacher's role is to encourage the students to learn, regardless of the location or living conditions of the student. First it is necessary to characterize the students, afterwards it is important to plan the lectures, differentiate the tasks and define their level of difficulty, always keeping in mind the target population. The teacher should enhance the student learning skills and encourage them to take responsibility for their education. These students need constant attention and the work proposed to them should vary and match their own interests in order to focus their attention that it is often hard to keep. Besides, they also need a permanent support that helps them to relate their present work and effort with their success in the future. It is also necessary a daily thought about their insecurities, anxieties and frustrations

It would be also important to have regular meetings involving the school and the educators to better build the RIP. The entire prison system supports the students who attend the school. Their attendance is only avoided for occasional security reasons.

4th The Education in prison is driven by the curriculum of the Education and Training of Adults in basic and high schools.

The Basic Training Courses EFA to train and educate adults are composed by a number of areas of basic training:

- Citizenship and Employability (CE)
- Language and Communication (LC) in Portuguese and English
- Mathematics for Life (MV)
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The Higher Education Courses are based in three areas of key skills

- Citizenship and Professionalism (CP)
- Society, Technology and Science (CTS)
- Culture, Language and Communication (CLC)

Area (PRA Portfolio Reflective of Learning)

The curriculum is specific for each population and age group. However, it is important for all courses to have a professional aspect in order to develop work habits in the student population and to let them know a specific job. This is important because most of them have never had an occupation before.

5th The methodology for implementation of the standard procedures requires reflection and pedagogic transfer. The methodology is not only based on life experiences, but also on a set of teaching resources that support the training and provide simulations of the teaching-learning situation through the use of the interrogative, expository and active method. The activities proposed by the trainer, are diverse. This methodology allows the students to learn at their pace and to develop individual and integration skills, in the training group.

6th - Methodologically the two major approaches are very important; the one focus on the individual and the one based on the peers. They both allow students to develop autonomy and different competencies that are complementary. There are situations when the two approaches are use in the same class for the same content. Sometimes the tasks are performed in groups and exists the need to individualize them. The group teaching method favours the learning process because it develops a sense of cooperation and socialization. The atmosphere created by the allocation of responsibilities to the student and by his actions inside the group (with common goals and interests) encourages the development of cooperation and socialization.

Only teamwork can develop the spirit of cooperation and thus contribute to the realization of tasks of common interest. The student, interacting with the group, has the advantage of developing the social aspects that will facilitate their reintegration in society.

Prisoner Psychology and Health

1st- The teachers make the diagnosis at a cognitive level. The information is important but in order to help, it should be marked by the technical team who best know the whole context of the prisoner condition. Only one diagnostic is not enough and might create erroneous or negative expectations in relation to the trainee.

2nd - The attempt of manipulation often occurs. Although we were aware of these cases, only a small group of teachers were trained in "deviant behaviour" by the time they start teaching in prison.

3rd- It is not important and can be a factor of embarrassment in the student/teacher/student relationship.

The teacher does not need this type of knowledge to lecture.

4th - In the prison this problem has not yet emerge .At least the situation has not been seen If it had occurred it would have differentiated the type of work and attention devoted to each of the groups and as a consequence teachers would talk to each other to solve any issue. Again, without any rules, we try to manage the issues as a team against the scarce resources that we have in mental health.

Security

1st - Informally we have assimilated what relates to security. When a new teacher starts his job, the colleagues convey some basic safety precautions.

2nd - Ministry of Education - 30 hours

3rd - It is difficult to know how teachers can get to the government for the creation of networks of teachers in prison / in Education Center, as the population of teachers in these conditions is very buoyant. The teachers who are part of the school board are able to choose annually in which school they want to be placed. However, teachers who are not part of the board are unable to choose and change school every year.

It appears that next year even the teachers on board can change school which will definitely affect the idea of creating a coherent and stable community.

4th - Every teacher should have at least one hour daily to communicate with colleagues and therefore help and be helped.

5 th - We did not receive

6 th- Our schools are always relatively accompanied by surveillance services with experience and that would prevent such errors to happen.

7th - Knowing the mental health status we could have adapted the teaching procedures.

8 th - No. The safety of the teachers was never in questioned. We adapted ourselves to the safety standards procedures and tried to cooperate with the surveillance system.

Teacher Networks in Prison

1st - Yes. It would be very useful.

2 – It has several uses but the most important will be to allow the exchange of teaching experience, which undoubtedly will assist greatly those already in vocational education for some time, but mainly those who come for the first time. Furthermore, the hypothesis of sharing the issues faced during the solution of conflicts in institutions, that although not directly related with the teachers affects the classroom.

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4th - Every teacher should have at least one hour daily to communicate with colleagues and therefore help and be helped.

5 th - No.

6 th - We do not know the association, but we will try to know it.