



COUNCIL  
OF EUROPE

CONSEIL  
DE L'EUROPE

**LEGAL AFFAIRS**

## **Education in prison**

Recommendation No. R (89) 12  
adopted by the Committee of Ministers  
of the Council of Europe  
on 13 October 1989  
and explanatory memorandum

Strasbourg 1990

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Recommendation</b> .....	3	<b>Chapter VII: Vocational education</b> .....	31
<b>Report on education in prison</b> .....	6	The learning element in work .....	31
<b>Preliminary note</b> .....	6	Relation to the employment market .....	32
<b>Chapter I: Introduction</b> .....	6	Education for adaptability .....	32
Terms of reference .....	6	Unemployment .....	33
Participants .....	7	Adult education methodology .....	33
A wide concept of education .....	8	<b>Chapter VIII: Libraries</b> .....	34
Predominant themes of the report .....	8	Functions as in the community .....	34
Justifying resources for prison education .....	9	Educational aspects of the prison library .....	34
Common ground between prison educators .....	10	Cultural pluralism .....	34
<b>Chapter II: Aims of Education in prisons</b> .....	11	Professional standards .....	35
The right to learn .....	11	Access .....	36
Council of Europe adult education policy .....	12	<b>Chapter XI: Physical education and sports</b> .....	37
Adult education in a prison context .....	13	The importance of physical activities .....	37
<b>Chapter III: The place of education in the prison regime</b> .....	14	Distinguishing between physical education (PE) and sport .....	37
Possible tension between education and regimes .....	14	Aims .....	38
The contribution of education .....	15	Ways of ensuring quality .....	38
Equal status and payment for education .....	16	Interaction with the community .....	39
Prison officers' attitudes to education .....	17	Special adaptations .....	39
<b>Chapter IV: The participants and motivation</b> .....	18	<b>Chapter X: Creative and cultural activities</b> .....	40
Students in prison .....	18	Creativity .....	40
A dynamic concept of motivation .....	19	Cultural activities .....	40
Wages .....	19	Underdeveloped talent in prisons .....	41
Physical and social environment .....	19	Attractiveness of the arts .....	42
Status of education within the prison .....	20	Freedom of expression .....	42
A degree of autonomy for the education sector .....	20	Non-elitist and multicultural .....	42
Qualifications .....	21	Interaction with the community .....	42
Recruitment and "education markets" .....	21	<b>Chapter XI: Social education</b> .....	43
Teaching methods .....	21	The concept of social education .....	43
<b>Chapter V: Adult education methods</b> .....	22	Involvement of different staff groups .....	44
Educational disadvantage .....	22	Providing information .....	44
Features of adult education .....	23	Emotional and attitudinal issues .....	44
High "turnover" of students .....	23	Norwegian course .....	45
Small groups and individualised programmes .....	24	A pre-release ethos .....	45
Distance learning .....	24	Social studies .....	46
Personal computers .....	25	Flexible methodology .....	47
Combining education and work .....	26	Applications within the prison .....	47
Evaluation .....	27	<b>Chapter XII: The relationship between education outside and inside the prison</b> .....	47
<b>Chapter VI: Learning opportunities</b> .....	27	Education outside the prison .....	48
Deciding the content of education .....	27	Post-release education .....	48
Interaction with the community .....	28	Education within the prison .....	50
Diversity of provision .....	28	<b>Chapter XIII: Conditions for prison education</b> .....	50
Basic education .....	29	Staffing .....	50
Those with different first languages .....	31	Volunteers .....	51
		Educational planning .....	53
		Facilities .....	53
		Access .....	54

**RECOMMENDATION No. R (89) 12**  
**OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES**  
**ON EDUCATION IN PRISON**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 October 1989*

*at the 429th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the right to education is fundamental;

Considering the importance of education in the development of the individual and the community;

Realising in particular that a high proportion of prisoners have had very little successful educational experience, and therefore now have many educational needs;

Considering that education in prison helps to humanise prisons and to improve the conditions of detention;

Considering that education in prison is an important way of facilitating the return of the prisoner to the community;

Recognising that in the practical application of certain rights or measures, in accordance with the following recommendations, distinctions may be justified between convicted prisoners and prisoners remanded in custody;

Having regard to Recommendation No. R (87) 3 on the European Prison Rules and Recommendation No. R (81) 17 on adult education policy,

Recommends the governments of member states to implement policies which recognise the following:

1. All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities;
2. Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age-groups in the outside world, and the range of learning opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible;
3. Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context;
4. All those involved in the administration of the prison system and the management of prisons should facilitate and support education as much as possible;
5. Education should have no less a status than work within the prison regime and prisoners should not lose out financially or otherwise by taking part in education;
6. Every effort should be made to encourage the prisoner to participate actively in all aspects of education ;
7. Development programmes should be provided to ensure that prison educators adopt appropriate adult education methods;
8. Special attention should be given to those prisoners with particular difficulties and especially those with reading or writing problems;
9. Vocational education should aim at the wider development of the individual, as well as being sensitive to trends in the labour-market;
10. Prisoners should have direct access to a well-stocked library at least once a week;
11. Physical education and sports for prisoners should be emphasised and encouraged;

12. Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role because these activities have particular potential to enable prisoners to develop and express themselves;
13. Social education should include practical elements that enable the prisoner to manage daily life within the prison, with a view to facilitating his return to society;
14. Wherever possible, prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside prison;
15. Where education has to take place within the prison, the outside community should be involved as fully as possible;
16. Measures should be taken to enable prisoners to continue their education after release;
17. The funds, equipment and teaching staff needed to enable prisoners to receive appropriate education should be made available.

## REPORT ON EDUCATION IN PRISON

### Preliminary note

The Select Committee of Experts on Education in Prison was required to produce, not just a "recommendation", but also an "explanatory memorandum". This is provided in the chapters which follow. Often, Council of Europe reports are presented in a form whereby each recommendation is commented or elaborated upon separately. The committee did not feel such a rigid schema was appropriate to this study, given the diverse nature of the subject. However, there is a broad correspondence between the above recommendations and the chapters that follow. Recommendations 1 to 3 reflect, in particular, discussion in Chapter II, "Aims of education in prisons". Recommendations 4 and 5 relate to Chapter III, "The place of education in the prison regime". Recommendation 6 deals with motivation and participation, an issue which is addressed in Chapter IV. Recommendation 7, emphasising the appropriateness of an adult education methodology, corresponds to Chapter V. Then, each of the next six recommendations (8 to 13) relates to particular areas of prison education and each is explored separately in Chapters VI to XI. Recommendations 14 to 16 deal with aspects of "The relationship between education outside and inside the prison", which is the title of Chapter XII. The last recommendation (17), dealing with the resources required for prison education, relates to the final chapter, Chapter XIII, although the arguments justifying substantial resources are put earlier in paragraph 1.8 of the introductory chapter.

## Chapter I: Introduction

### *Terms of reference*

1.1. This report of the Select Committee of Experts on Education in Prison, consisting of recommendations and an "explanatory memorandum", derives from a decision (CDPC/74/060484) of the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) in 1984 to establish the select committee. The terms of reference were as follows:

- a. Study of the system of education in prison in the member states of the Council of Europe, including:
  - i. education inside the prison establishment, including education by correspondence; library; vocational training (workshop, farming, etc.); cultural activities and sports;

- ii. education outside the prison establishment (secondary, university, vocational, etc.) ;
  - iii. arrangements for encouraging prisoners to educate themselves in prison and to continue their education after release;
- b. Preparation of a recommendation accompanied by an explanatory memorandum, concerning education within the regimes of penal instructions.

### *Participants*

1.2. The select committee held seven meetings in Strasbourg between October 1984 and October 1988. The members of the select committee were as follows:

Austria: Mr Peter Ziebart (all meetings),

Denmark: Mr Henning Jørgensen (all meetings),

France: Mr Jean-Francois Monereau (meeting 1) and Mr Alain Blanc (meetings 2 to 7),

Ireland: Mr Kevin Warner (Chairman of the committee) (all meetings),

Italy: Mr Luigi Daga (who also represented the Permanent European Conference on Probation and Aftercare) (meetings 1 to 4 and meeting 6),

Luxembourg: Mr Mil Jung (meeting 1) and Mr Alain Wagner (all meetings),

Netherlands: Mr Robert Suvaal (all meetings),

Turkey: Mr Mustafa Yurdakul Altay (meetings 1 and 2), Mr Huseyin Turret (meeting 1) and Mr Mustafa Yucel (meetings 3 to 7),

United Kingdom: Mr Arthur Pearson (meetings 2 and 3) and Mr Ian Benson (meetings 4 to 7).

Other experts invited to present papers at particular meetings were Ms Marianne Hakansson (Sweden), Mr Ettore Gelpi (UNESCO) and Mrs R. Mirandela da Costa (Portugal).

The committee was assisted by Council of Europe staff, Mr Ekkehart Muller-Rappard, Miss Aglaia Tsitsoura and Miss Marguerite-Sophie Eckert, secretary of the committee, of the Division of Crime Problems, and Mr George Walker of the Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport.

1.3. In the course of the committee's work, a large number of papers were prepared by members on various aspects of prison education. During the deliberations, it was decided to seek contributions from Council of Europe states not represented on the select

committee. These countries were invited, in 1987, to outline the main features of their prison education systems and to inform the committee of any projects that might be of special interest. The committee was pleased to be able to benefit from responses from Belgium, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. In addition, papers and reports from two international conferences on prison education, held in the summer of 1984, in Cyprus and in England, were available to the committee and helped considerably to set its agenda in the early stages. Wider consultation was also carried out in 1988 when a draft of this report was circulated to heads of delegations in all Council of Europe states, seeking comments prior to the seventh and last meeting. Observations were received at that stage from Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Norway and Switzerland, and these helped the committee considerably to clarify and refine its report.

### *A wide concept of education*

1.4. There are wide differences in culture and in educational systems between the countries of the Council of Europe. Prison systems also vary greatly, as does the definition of what constitutes prison education within the administration of prisons. However, despite all these differences, a number of generalisations can be made in relation to prison education. This report, in accordance with its terms of reference, takes prison education in its wide sense to include library services, vocational education, cultural activities, social education, physical education (PE) and sports, as well as the academic subjects which are included in narrower concepts of education. The terms "educator" and "teacher" are used in the report to indicate staff engaged in facilitating any of the activities just mentioned. Broadly speaking, the term "teacher" refers to those engaged in more conventional, usually classroom-based education, while the committee speaks of "educators" when referring to persons engaged in the provision of adult education in its wider sense. The term "education sector" is used frequently in the report and means, not just the area within a prison where the main educational activity takes place, but any location or people involved in the education of prisoners in its wider sense, that is, including gymnasia, vocational education workshops, theatres, libraries, etc..

### *Predominant themes of the report*

1.5. Given the wide interpretation of what is meant by "education" in the committee's brief, it is to be expected that the range of discussion and suggestions in the following report will be equally wide and varied. But two overall complementary themes predominate: firstly, the education of prisoners must, in its philosophy, methods and content, be brought as close as possible to the best adult education in the society outside; secondly, education should be constantly seeking ways to link prisoners with the outside

community and to enable both groups to interact with each other as fully and as constructively as possible.

1.6. While this report attempts to clarify important principles in relation to the education of prisoners, it was also the intention of the select committee to be as practical as possible. So, there are numerous illustrations from the experience of particular countries and what are, hopefully, realistic suggestions. While these practical examples are often just briefly mentioned, it envisages that further information may be obtained from the administrations concerned or from papers referred to. It was also felt that it was important to acknowledge problems that commonly exist in the hope that ways forward might be found. The committee's belief that its report would be more useful if it was practical and provided tangible examples, as well as addressing issues of principle, partly explains its discursive nature.

1.7. The committee felt stonily that every country has scope for improvement, at least in some aspects of its educational provision for prisoners. The importance of diversity in the range and levels of education offered to prisoners, because the needs and circumstances of different prisoners vary greatly, is emphasised in Chapter VI. Many countries will find that attention is also required with regard to aspects such as the status of education within the regimes, the teaching methods employed, the support structures for educators, the facilities available, etc.. It is noticeable that, in many countries, education is marginal to the prison system, limited in scope and poorly resourced. Such criticism is applicable where education is mainly confined to evening classes, or to literacy provision supplemented by correspondence courses in other subjects, or where industrial work predominates so that the personal development or more general educational elements are missing. The "creative activities" described in Chapter X need to be expanded in many prisons and prison systems. The reasonable standards suggested in the chapters on libraries and physical education is very inadequately met in many places. And, in particular, the crucial qualitative differences between the education of prisoners within prisons and the education of prisoners outside prisons, as suggested in Chapter XII, raise serious issues for prison educators and prison administrators alike.

### *Justifying resources for prison education*

1.8. About one-third of a million people are held in prisons in the member states of the Council of Europe. To argue for substantial, comprehensive and good quality education for these men and women, as this report does, immediately begs the question of justifying the finance and other resources needed to make this possible. The committee felt that the provision of substantial resources for the education of prisoners - if necessary, beyond what might be available to people outside prison - was appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, prison is of its very nature abnormal, and destructive of the personality in a

number of ways. Education has, among other elements in the prison system, the capacity to render this situation less abnormal, to limit somewhat the damage done to men and women through imprisonment. Secondly, there is an argument based on justice: a high proportion of prisoners have had very limited and negative past educational experience, so that, on the basis of equality of opportunity, they are now entitled to special support to allow their educational disadvantage to be redressed. A third argument that may be put forward is the rehabilitative one: education has the capacity to encourage and help those who try to turn away from crime. Given such a variety of factors, cost-benefit analysis in relation to allocating resources to the education of prisoners is exceedingly complex, but one point is striking: education costs tend to be very low relative to the overall costs of running prisons (and, indeed, relative to the general costs of crime in society). In particular, the costs of most educational activities in prison (in terms of space, finance required, etc.) compare well with alternative activities such as work projects.

1.9. It was the committee's view that education for prisoners should give priority to those who are the most educationally disadvantaged; the dimensions of the disadvantages facing many prisoners are outlined in Chapter IV. Not all prisoners are in that position, of course. In some countries, an increasing number of educated people are being imprisoned, because of drug-related offences and other reasons. However, while those who have received least in terms of past education should now be given priority, education has something to offer all prisoners. All of them need to counteract the damaging effects of imprisonment on themselves, and the concept of *education permanente* implies that people have scope for learning and developing at all stages of their lives.

### *Common ground between prison educators*

1.10. As already indicated, the committee had to come to terms with considerable differences in culture, educational systems and prison systems between the various countries. Despite this, however, the committee noted, as others have done elsewhere, that those working in the special field of prison education have a great deal in common with each other across the national boundaries. Indeed, prison educators from different countries can often share more with each other than with educators in other fields from their own countries. Such sharing can apply as much to identifying and addressing common problems as to sharing more positive experiences. Because of this common ground, the committee felt that vehicles for the exchange of ideas and information between prison educators from different countries, for both administrators and practitioners, were very important. The committee noted with approval the willingness of the Prison Department for England and Wales to extend invitations to prison teachers from other countries to attend an annual summer school. It also noted that several international gatherings of librarians involved in prisons have taken place. However,

more exchanges of this nature are required, spearheaded perhaps by a European standing committee on prison education, possibly similar to the Permanent European Conference on Probation and Aftercare or to the Correctional Education Association in North America. An international journal of prison education is a further possibility. But, at this stage, priority should be given to a European conference which would be a follow-up to this report and which would focus on the issues raised in it.

1.11. Conscious of the many unique features that are particular to the education of prisoners - features which can be noticed across wide national and cultural divides - the committee believed that its report might usefully be given wide circulation among those engaged "on the ground" in the education of prisoners, and not simply considered by administrators. This request is not to imply that the report is in any sense a "last word" or a complete guide to prison education; it springs rather from a deep awareness of the special nature of prison education and from the hope that the report can contribute in some ways to further thought and discussion in the field.

1.12. The members of the committee wished to record their appreciation of the Cap's decision to set this study in motion and for the opportunity afforded to members by the Council of Europe to engage in an international dialogue relevant to their own work.

## **Chapter II: Aims of education in prisons**

### *The right to learn*

2.1. Education in prisons should have purposes no less important than those of education in the community outside. In particular, the aims of prison education should be essentially the same as those in adult education. (The characteristics of adult education are described throughout this report, but particularly in paragraph 5.2 below.) The primary aims of prison education services must be to facilitate the right to learn which all men and women have and which is a key to their human development.

2.2. The right to learn is defined in the declaration adopted by the 4th International UNESCO Conference on Adult Education. It is: - the right to read and write;  
- the right to question and analyse ;  
- the right to imagine and create;  
- the right to read about one's own world and to write history ; - the right to have access to educational resources ; - the right to develop individual and collective skills.

### *Council of Europe adult education policy*

2.3. In 1981, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, recommended a policy on adult education, which took a similarly broad and dynamic approach to adult education, identifying it as, among other things, a "fundamental factor of equality of educational opportunity and cultural democracy". The appendix to this recommendation states that: "*it is important, concerning the objectives of adult education policy*":

1. to regard adult education as one of the factors for economic and social development;
2. to take into consideration in adult education the whole person in the totality of his or her social, economic and cultural context and for that purpose further reduce any existing contrast between general education and vocational training;
3. to integrate progressively adult education in a comprehensive system of permanent education by developing at all levels of education approaches and methods that can be used by adults in order to meet the diverse educational needs which arise throughout their lives;
4. to promote, by means of adult education, the development of the active role and critical attitudes of women and men, as parents, producers, consumers, users of the mass media, citizens and members of their community;
5. to relate, as far as possible and according to national circumstances, the development of adult education to the lifestyles, responsibilities and problems of the adults concerned;
6. to stimulate industrial and commercial firms as well as administrations and public services to promote adult education by taking into account, in addition to their technical requirements, training needs connected with industrial democracy and socio-cultural development;
7. to encourage, in fields such as health, quality of life and the environment, housing, work and employment, family, culture and leisure, co-operation between public, voluntary and private adult education agencies (including the universities) and other educational and social welfare agencies;
8. to support adult education experiments aiming at the creation of activities and job opportunities, particularly those responding to social needs not covered by free enterprise or by the public sector."<sup>1</sup>

2.4. One set of experiments sponsored by the Council for Cultural Cooperation was Project No. 9, "Adult education and community development". In the report on this project, adult education is seen to be about participating and experiencing rather than about the passive absorption of knowledge or skills; it is a means by which people explore and discover personal and group identity. The declaration adopted by the final conference

---

<sup>1</sup> Recommendation No. R (81) 17 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on adult education policy (Council of Europe, 1981).

of Project No. 9 recommended that "adult and continuing education be regarded as a human right and as an essential prerequisite not only for the adaptation of men and women to rapid changes in society, but also for them to be able to take full advantage of their ability to shape their own existence and to play an active part in development".

Development, in this context, was seen in the wide sense of social, economic and cultural progress.<sup>2</sup>

### *Adult education in a prison context*

2.5. The key task of educators working with prisoners is to strive to make education within prisons resemble this kind of adult education outside prison. In other words, education in prison is of value in itself, whatever the purposes of the prison system. This approach is appropriate to every prison system in the Council of Europe.

2.6. However, recognition must also be given to the prison context in which this adult education has to take place. Deprivation of freedom causes suffering and a deterioration of personality, and education can play an important part in limiting this damage. In fact, the harmful effects of imprisonment - depersonalisation, institutionalisation, desocialisation - are such as to justify extra resources and efforts being made to provide education within prisons, compared to society outside prison. Genuine adult education can help to normalise, in some measure, the abnormal situation of imprisonment.

2.7. Education in prison is sometimes also seen as a means towards socialisation or resocialisation. This can be a valid objective, provided it is not taken to mean imposing behaviour on people. Genuine education must respect the integrity and freedom of choice of the student. However, education can awaken positive potential in students and make them aware of new possibilities and, to that extent, can facilitate their choosing for themselves to turn away from crime.

2.8. While it is appropriate that educators must take their primary objectives from within their own profession, as set out above, it is important to recognise that there need be no fundamental contradiction between educational objectives and those of the prison system as a whole. They should, in fact, be complementary, as are the treatment objectives of regimes adopted in the revised European Prison Rules:

"64. Imprisonment is by the deprivation of liberty a punishment in itself. The conditions of imprisonment and the prison regimes, shall not, therefore, except as incidental to justifiable segregation or the maintenance of discipline, aggravate the suffering inherent in this.

---

<sup>2</sup> Adult education and community development (Council of Europe, 1987).

65. Every effort shall be made to ensure that the regimes of the institutions are designed and managed so as:

- a. to ensure that the conditions of life are compatible with human dignity and acceptable standards in the community;
- b. to minimise the detrimental effects of imprisonment and the differences between prison life and life at liberty which tends to diminish the self-respect or sense of personal responsibility of prisoners ;
- c. to sustain and strengthen those links with relatives and the outside community that will promote the best interests of prisoners and their families;
- d. to provide opportunities for prisoners to develop skills and aptitudes that will improve their prospects of successful resettlement after release."<sup>3</sup>

2.9. Adult educators in any situation must come to terms with the context in which they are working and pay attention to special needs therein, and this adaptation has particular significance in the prison setting. Much of this report will illustrate and explore matters particular to prison education. However, professional integrity requires teachers and other educators working in prisons, like those in other professions, to take their primary aims, their underlying orientation, from within their own professional field. Hence the emphasis throughout this report on accepted adult education goals and approaches. Drawing a rationale from their own field of adult education, prison educators seek to afford opportunities to prisoners to increase self-improvement, self-esteem and self-reliance, in the manner set out in the Unesco definition of the right to learn, described above.

2.10. The Select Committee of Experts on Education in Prison emphasised an orientation or outlook for prison education that is drawn from the world of education outside and that may be distinct from penal perspectives, but it also asserted that such an approach is perhaps the greatest contribution education can make to the overall well-being of prisoners and prison regimes. Where prisoners see that the education offered is of high quality, that it respects them and allows them choice and scope and is not seeking to manipulate them, then their participation will be wholehearted and they are likely to grow as people.

### **Chapter III: The place of education in the prison regime**

#### *Possible tension between education and regimes*

3.1. The kind of adult education described above is the only meaningful and effective form of education to be pursued. It is, however, necessary to recognise that there may be some

---

<sup>3</sup> European Prison Rules (Council of Europe, 1987).

tension between the pursuit of education and prison regimes, since education focuses more on the potential in people and encourages their participation and choice. In contrast, security systems often dwell to a greater extent on what is negative in people and seek to control behaviour. Such contradictions are not irreconcilable, however, and an education service can reveal constructive options for prison regimes.

3.2. The committee felt that tensions of this nature had to be addressed so that they might then be resolved. Prison is often characterised as a total institution. The prisoner can be deprived of nearly all responsibility for the management of his or her own life. In certain areas, the education sector and the prison may have conflicting views on methods of dealing with prisoners. A Norwegian study documents the fact that, when there is a conflict of interests between education and the prison, it is the educational interests which are forfeited.<sup>4</sup> Some of the problems experienced by teachers in this study are

- the transfer of a prisoner from one prison to another can be implemented without any special consideration for continuity of education ;
- disciplinary measures taken by the prison administration can result in a student being taken out of classes for a period of time;
- activities outside the prison which may be an integral part of the instruction (excursions etc..) can be difficult to accomplish ;
- crowded and sometimes unsuitable locations can affect the teaching;
- the use of medicinal drugs.

### *The contribution of education*

3.3. Although there may be legitimate differences between the primary aims of education and those of prisons, in practice, the provision of education contributes to good order and security in prisons. This happens because educational activities help men and women who are imprisoned to relax, to release tension, to express themselves and to develop mental and physical abilities. Good education reflects back to the students their positive qualities and potential; it makes them feel more human; it links them with society outside the prison. In consequence, prison is made more bearable, its damaging effects on personality are limited, and the prisoner's health and safety are fostered because he or she has more mental and physical stimulation. All this helps the management of prisons, but it also calls for a response, a quid pro quo, from the regime. To flourish, prison education requires that its students be given a certain degree of freedom - physical space and scope for movement and interaction; psychological space, in which they can feel autonomous and make choices; and scope to express their thoughts and feelings.

---

<sup>4</sup> 1. School Behind Bars, Skaalvik/Stenby, (1981).

### *Equal status and payment for education*

3.4. Adult education can only have a meaningful role if participation is voluntary. Efforts need to be made to allow prisoners to choose between taking part in education and taking part in work activities. Within the prison regime, education must have at least the same status, and should be given just as much practical support, as work. Prisoners should not lose out financially by taking part in education, either on a full-time or part-time basis and, therefore, the same range of payments should apply to the two activities. This, for example, is the situation in Ireland and Denmark. Likewise, prisoners should not suffer disadvantages in terms of release programmes because they have opted for education. The Select Committee of Experts on Education in Prison was pleased to note similar thinking behind the new European Prison Rules, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1987. Rule 78 states: "Education should be regarded as a regime activity that attracts the same status and basic remuneration within the regime as work, provided that it takes place in normal working hours and is part of an authorised individual treatment programme."<sup>5</sup>

3.5. Regrettably, in too many prisons, education still has a marginal role, confined largely to "evening classes". The committee saw education as a normal daytime activity for prisoners, being given as much scope and support as workshops. This may cause tension of another kind, as education and work activities may compete with each other. However, it will be a healthy tension if it puts pressure on both work and education to become updated and made satisfying. Staff attitudes to education are also important; prison officers can be opposed to education which they may see as a device by which prisoners merely avoid work. Full official recognition of education as an equally valid activity as work can help overcome these problems. Finding ways in which prison officers can help run some of the education activities can also help, as can giving attention to the benefits of education in staff training courses. There needs to be general recognition that work and education are complementary activities, each of which offers in different ways scope to the individual for growth and fulfilment.

3.6. If education is to be given equal status with work activities in official policy and within regimes, then it follows that the administration of sentences should also be sensitive to the study needs and activities of prisoners. Efforts should be made, for example, to allocate prisoners who have an interest in education to prisons where they can obtain good education. Where possible, transfers to other prisons should try to avoid disrupting participation in courses, cultural activities, etc. While the role of education during the normal workday is emphasised here, it has an important contribution to make at other times also, especially as a constructive outlet during recreation time and in stimulating study activity by prisoners during lock-up periods.

---

<sup>5</sup> European Prison Rules (Council of Europe, 1987).

### *Prison officers' attitudes to education*

3.7. The fact that some prison officers have reservations about education, for whatever reason, is serious and widespread enough to require careful consideration. They may find it difficult to accept that education should have equal standing with work ; they may not realise that the beneficial side-effects of education on security and safety can outweigh the flexibility in procedures that education requires. Even where their own experience of, or perspective on, education is positive, they may find it difficult to relate to the different style and content of education that are appropriate to adults. And, apart from all these considerations, the introduction of new educational activity into prisons may be difficult for prison officers to accept, simply because it is novel and they need time to adjust to change.

3.8. It is suggested that the tension between the provision of activities and the maintenance of control is based on a misunderstanding. In a United Kingdom publication, the author (who is himself an experienced Governor and is currently a Regional Director) argues that "care" enhances "control". He defines "dynamic security" whereby all the efforts of all who work in prisons are focused on three principles - "individualism", "relationships" and "activities". If the purposes and processes of all who work in prisons could be focused in this way, the provision of education in prisons would be seen as congruent with the wider ethos of the prison. Furthermore, such an approach to "dynamic security" would enlarge the role of all staff. The restricted role of prison officers, combined with the limited opportunities they may have for continuing education themselves, often gives them a negative view of education sectors. Many prisoners and prison officers need access to "second chance" opportunities, but resentment is bound to occur if the officers see these being made available only to prisoners. A wider role for prison officers, combined with increased opportunities for training, would enhance their self-image and reduce their resentment.<sup>6</sup>

3.9. The scope for development in this area can be seen along a continuum. At one end there is an informal and unofficial arrangement whereby prison education staff, through their contact with educational provision in the community, advise discipline staff on educational opportunities for themselves or their families. At the other end would be a formal position whereby education sectors had an acknowledged brief to be the educational and training resource for the entire prison. To effectively discharge this function, the sector would need strong links with providers and validators of education and training in the community, to ensure that the training and qualifications achieved had national currency. Other areas of work that fall within the continuum include assisting

---

<sup>6</sup> 1. Ian Dunbar, *A Sense of Direction* (Home Office, 1985).

prison officers who are taking promotion exams, ensuring that they have opportunities to learn and keep abreast of developments in new technology and training them for an educational role so that, in a formal or informal sense, they are better able to prepare inmates for release.

3.10. However, while the provision of education for prisoners can, as a welcome by-product, contribute to good order or to a more positive atmosphere within a prison, it must, ultimately, be provided to prisoners for its own sake, drawing its meaning and direction from a philosophy of education.

## **Chapter IV: The participants and motivation**

### *Students in prison*

4.1. It is essential that all people engaged in providing education in prisons should be encouraged to see those in their classes as adults involved in normal adult education activities. The students should be approached as responsible people who have choices available to them. In other words, the prison context should be minimised and the past criminal behaviour of the students should be kept in the background, so that the normal atmosphere, interactions and processes of adult education can flourish as they would in the outside community. What is fundamental to such an approach is that the educational programme should be based on the individual needs of those taking part.

4.2. In exploring the educational needs of those who are in prison, some generalisations are possible. A high percentage of prisoners are severely disadvantaged people, with multiple experience of failure. These prisoners have had little or no work or vocational training in their lives. They have low self-images and they lack participatory skills. They see themselves as having failed at school. Initially, they will be convinced that education has nothing to offer them. Many will have severe literacy problems and an associated sense of stigma.

4.3. Such people offer a considerable challenge to educators, not least in persuading them to participate at all in the first instance. Motivating such men and women to take part and then to develop in education requires a great deal of resourcefulness and encouragement from teachers. The key issue is to rebuild the student's confidence in his or her potential. This requires educators to move even further away from traditional prison approaches and attitudes - and, indeed, away from many of the traditional aspects of schools.

### *A dynamic concept of motivation*

4.4. This issue of motivation requires further exploration. The committee's terms of reference highlighted the question, requiring it to study "arrangements for encouraging prisoners to educate themselves in prison and to continue their education after release". The committee felt that the special needs of the larger part of the prison population, just described, and, in particular, their negative experience of education in childhood, had to be firmly borne in mind. Thus, an onus is placed on teachers to undo some of that past damage and overcome the low expectations of their potential students. Motivation must, therefore, be seen as a dynamic concept, with what appears as low motivation among prisoners understood as a result of past experience (in school and elsewhere). For prison teachers to adopt a static concept of motivation (where the low responsiveness is attributed to inadequacy in the personality of the individual) would be both an injustice to their clients and a tactical error.

4.5. Fortunately, experience shows that, where imaginative approaches are adopted and education is given sufficient scope within regimes, there will be high levels of involvement and achievement by prisoners. What follows is an exploration of some of the factors which affect prisoners' participation in education.

### *Wages*

4.6. As already mentioned, European Prison Rule No. 78 advocates the same status and the same basic remuneration for work and education. If prisoners receive less financially by opting for education, then, clearly, many potential participants will be lost. It is not valid to apply differentials in income that parallel those that attach to work and education in the community; it is rather a question of assessing the relative usefulness of education and work for prisoners. The committee believes that matters more important than productivity are involved here and that prisoners involved in education should not be unfairly penalised by loss of pay.

### *Physical and social environment*

4.7. The physical and social environment in which education takes place can either strengthen or weaken the prisoner's motivation. It is important that, as far as possible, educational activities take place together in a distinct location where an attractive atmosphere can be established, such that the education centre becomes something of an oasis for the prisoner within the prison, but also a location that is different from school education in many ways - in its atmosphere, organisation, methods, subjects and activities offered - as befits a place of adult education.

### *Status of education within the prison*

4.8. A Danish study on the motivation of prisoners towards education identified the relatively low wages obtained when taking part in education and negative attitudes towards education among staff and fellow prisoners as the chief demotivating factors. These two factors are interconnected, for low wages are a signal to both prisoner and staff that education is given a low priority compared with productive work. The standing of education is also reduced within the prison when it is given a marginal temporal position within the prison day, if, for example, it takes place during spare time after productive work, or if work has a priority claim on certain times. Likewise, where the physical location and facilities allotted to education are inferior relative to work, then the status of education is once more eroded. The recognition given to education in European Prison Rule No. 78 is an important step forward in policy, but it needs to be followed through with practical action to dispel the reservations of many prison officers, at both basic grade and senior level, towards education for prisoners.

### *A degree of autonomy for the education sector*

4.9. One of the most difficult and complex matters that educators must work out is how they stand in relation to the prison system as a whole and in relation to prisoners. Clearly, educational work must be carried out within the constraints set by prison authorities on the basis of security and other overall objectives of the prison system. However, many prisoners are likely to be suspicious of education, to see it as a device to manipulate them, if it is identified too closely with the overall prison system. If they feel that taking part in education requires them to capitulate psychologically to the prison system, then they are likely to reject it. Some degree of autonomy for the education sector is therefore appropriate. Moreover, the adult education orientation the committee recommended also requires that some leeway or discretion be given to those involved in prison education in the way they approach their work. Obviously, crime cannot be condoned and the futility of a criminal life may well be raised as an issue in class, but there are aspects of the prisoner's culture which the adult educator must respect, or at least accept. These aspects may include a critical view of authority, anger at social injustice, solidarity with one another in the face of adversity, etc. As in any field of adult education, respect and acceptance of the students and potential students are crucial to motivation and participation. The high degree of professionalism required of the adult educator working in prison is indicated by the requirement that he or she should give such respect and acceptance (an acceptance of the person but not of the crime) to the students while, at the same time, working within the boundaries set by the prison authorities and avoiding being manipulated by prisoners. Where this respect and acceptance are given, any prisoner can feel able to take part in education.

### *Qualifications*

4.10. It is very important to many prisoners to obtain qualifications that are the same as those available in the world outside. Such qualifications are desirable because of their usefulness in later life, and also because the status of such achievements will be far greater than qualifications established specially for prison education. Enabling prisoners to obtain qualifications of good standing, however, should not mean the exclusion of courses and activities which aim more directly at achieving personal development, increased self-confidence, etc. and which are formulated specially for individual needs.

### *Recruitment and "education markets"*

4.11. Specific efforts will be required to reach some prisoners who could benefit from education and encourage them to take part, and these measures will vary with the size of the prison, the degree of movement allowed within or outside it, whether most prisoners are long- or short term, etc. As a minimum, a leaflet describing educational provision that is attractive and easy to read should be made available to all prisoners soon after they enter a prison. But face-to-face contact between educators and potential students is preferable and special efforts should be made to encourage those whose confidence in their educational ability is low. Sometimes it is possible for a teacher to meet each new arrival individually, or at least to meet every long-termer in this way. A good means of attracting attention for educational activities in Dutch prisons is the "education market", which is a meeting between an educational team and a group of inmates, usually about twenty to thirty at a time. At this meeting, the education team presents information on the various courses and activities available and shows the kind of methods used through video or other materials. The atmosphere is informal, as at an adult education centre's open day, and coffee or tea is served to make the inmates feel at ease. Details of a forthcoming education market are circulated within the prison, including announcements via television or radio circuits.

### *Teaching methods*

4.12. The quality of education itself will be the most important factor affecting the extent to which prisoners become involved in it. The more choice and respect the prisoner is given, and the more relevant the courses and activities are to his or her life, the greater will be the numbers seeking to join in. The teaching methods adopted are crucial to stimulating the prisoners, all the more so when high unemployment means that better work prospects are less of an incentive. Teaching methods are discussed more fully in the next chapter, but some of the important features required for encouraging prisoners to take part and succeed may be noted

- a. an adult orientation ;
- b. b. a connection with the student's daily experience;
- c. voluntary and active participation by the student;
- d. small groups which allow scope for individualised programmes;
- e. the integration of education and training;
- f. the use of modular courses.

4.13. A final point needs to be emphasised, one which relates to the dynamic nature of motivation. Given the unpromising background of so many prisoners, it is not surprising that some initially come to education with, at best, "mixed motives". Prisoners may first join classes, for example, simply out of curiosity, or because (for men) it offers an opportunity to meet women, or there is a relaxed atmosphere there, or they can talk more freely, or they feel they are treated more as normal people, or they can cook "home-made" food, etc. These are normal human concerns and should be accepted, at least in the beginning. They enable teachers to make contact with prisoners and a good teacher will take advantage of these "openings", helping the students to see new possibilities and uncover talents they themselves had not recognised before, so that in time they will have more serious goals. Such an approach is not unusual, for many people attend adult education classes in the community for "mixed" motives also (and especially for social reasons), and those with limited previous education may be quite vague initially about what they want or can gain from joining a class.

## **Chapter V: Adult education methods**

### *Educational disadvantage*

5.1. The essentials of the way an adult educator approaches his or her work in a prison setting are the same as they would be in the outside community. The objectives and type of courses and activities provided are similar, as are the teaching methods. Some of the problems encountered may be different and the disadvantaged nature of the prison population - arising, firstly, from the background factors described in the previous chapter and, secondly, from the fact of their incarceration - will, of course, be reflected in many aspects of education. But, fundamentally, the methods by which the adult educator plans, conducts and modifies courses and activities are the same as if the work was being done outside. In fact, the style, content and problems of teaching in a prison may be very like work with similar groups outside who are socially and educationally disadvantaged. This chapter explores adult education teaching methods as they apply in the prison setting.

### *Features of adult education*

5.2. Adult education has some special features. In particular, it involves a high degree of participation by the student in deciding the content and ways of studying and in assessing the learning being achieved. Often, it is possible for prisoners to take over the entire organisation of events and this particularly applies to sports activities and cultural events. Adult education also connects much more than school education with the life experiences of the students concerned. As one group of prison teachers stated, "the adult learner has infinitely more knowledge of the world than even the most advantaged child".<sup>7</sup> Side by side with the stress on participation is an emphasis on active ways of learning which are more appropriate than traditional, more passive, ways of learning. The committee sensed that the style of education it envisaged for prisoners is very close to the community education described in a report of the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Co-operation "Learning is (...) based on motivation, goal-orientated and linked to solving problems. It is not fostered by the traditional teacher-student relationship nor does it fit into the traditional classroom learning. Community education is about taking part and experiencing, rather than listening in a passive way to the voice of the teacher."<sup>8</sup>

5.3. Because of these features, teaching approaches have to be very flexible, so as to adapt to the wishes and preferences of the participants. There must be as much choice as possible between different activities and areas of study, and also within courses. As far as possible, the curriculum is worked out jointly between students and teachers. In a number of institutions in the Netherlands, there is a convention whereby students and teacher informally enter into a "contract" to cover a particular area of study, thus introducing responsibility as well as participation for the student.

### *High "turnover" of students*

5.4. The circumstances of prisons require further flexibility in teaching methods. Often, there will be a high turnover of students, as they are released or transferred; they need to join courses at irregular intervals; many will have only short sentences. In addition, there are the special circumstances of those remanded in custody. In the light of this, short modular courses have considerable advantages. They enable the students to complete something worthwhile in a short period of time - which is particularly important for those who have rarely completed tasks in the past. Moreover, they can make it possible for the student to continue studying the same course after release. Allied to the question of modular courses is the development of topic courses, usually short courses on issues of interest to the students but outside conventional subjects. Health education issues are an example of this.

---

<sup>7</sup> Adult basic education in prison establishments in Northern Ireland: a report by a working party (Northern Ireland Office, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Adult education and community development (Council of Europe, 1987).

### *Small groups and individualised programmes*

5.5. Both the needs of the students and the circumstances of the prison point to other features in teaching approaches. Small groups, in which some attention can be given to individualised programmes and which can cope with an irregular intake, are generally appropriate. Teachers will often be required to produce their own materials, as children's texts will not be relevant and the particular interests and experiences of the adult students concerned should be drawn upon. For example, in literacy work, the use of the student's own words and story (dictated or tape-recorded if necessary) as a text is a very important method.

### *Distance learning*

5.6. The committee was specifically asked, in its terms of reference, to study correspondence courses. These courses usually involve an external institute sending study material and assignments to a student, who sends back the completed assignments to the institute which, in turn, responds in writing, with corrections, comments, etc. With other "distance education" forms there may be even less direct feedback, as when audio or video cassettes are used. There, the student is assumed to be working independently and to be monitoring his/her own progress. Often audiovisual and written materials are combined, and sometimes (as with British and Dutch Open Universities) these are complemented by face-to-face tutorial sessions.

5.7. Courses of this type must be considered in the light of the points made about adult education methods. The committee concluded that the disadvantages of correspondence courses and other distance education forms, when used in a prison context, are such that only very limited use of them is advisable. They often allow little scope for the student to relate the course to his or her own experience and environment. The content of the course is static and therefore non-negotiable, so that the essential element of participation by the students in shaping the study is largely lacking. Most importantly, there is often little or no face-to-face tuition or contact with other students involved in distant education methods; immediate interaction, supervision, assistance, advice or approvals are not possible. Motivation is, therefore, very difficult to maintain and courses like these are characterised by very high drop-out rates, unless pre-course and ongoing counselling and selection procedures are very good indeed. Further disadvantages are that such courses, while applicable to cognitive skills, are much less appropriate for learning which involves practical skills or attitude development.

5.8. The committee felt, however, that for a small number of prisoners distance learning is suitable. This is usually the case for university-level or other advanced study, where the student's prior knowledge, skills and motivation are sufficient to maintain a programme

of self-study. Even at this level, however, the student's prospects are greatly enhanced if some face-to-face counselling and tuition can be given, and if those studying the same or similar courses can come together regularly to give each other support and assistance.

5.9. Institutions such as the Open Universities do have the enormous advantage of allowing a very wide range of courses to be made available in areas which could not otherwise be covered, either because so few students would be interested in those topics or because qualified teachers would not otherwise be available. Where such a facility exists, it is important that the full benefit of the wide choice be allowed, as far as possible, to the prisoners. Another advantage of distance education, of course, for prisoners is that it is much more feasible for them to continue courses after they are transferred from one prison to another or if they leave prison.

### *Personal computers*

5.10. Many of the same points relate to the use of personal computers (PCs) for teaching. While these have important advantages in specific situations, educators need to be clear on how they can best be used. Certainly, it is important that they be demystified, that students should gain a certain familiarity with them. For a small number, computer programming will be an important area of study and will offer employment opportunities also. But, more importantly, the PC is useful as a tool in many learning situations, including the teaching of literacy. It must, however, be stressed that it represents simply one type of tool that is useful in supplementing the work of the teacher and is not necessarily more useful than other tools that should also be available, such as the blackboard, typewriter or cassette-recorder.

5.11. Personal computers can be most effectively used where their limitations are recognised - they can be found by some to be impersonal, it can be difficult to bring the student's experience into the learning situation and they are not very appropriate for teaching affective skills. However, seen as one pedagogic tool among others to assist the teacher, the PC can be very useful in introducing a new and exciting dimension to learning for many, and one that is likely to be particularly attractive to younger students. One very important strength it has is that it gives the user a degree of control over his or her study and an independence from the teacher. And that experience of mastering a tool and controlling one's own learning can bring wider benefits to the student's self-image and confidence.

### *Combining education and work*

5.12. Many of the features of the teaching methods recommended above - participation by the student, active rather than passive learning, individualised programmes, etc. - are often associated with a "liberal" style of adult education. It is sometimes felt that such approaches are not so applicable to other kinds of education of adults, such as vocational education. But, on the contrary, the committee saw such methodology as being just as important in vocational education. The need for flexible and innovative teaching in the preparation of people for work is emphasised when the group to be taught is composed of marginalised young people with little work prospects (which is the case of many of those in prisons).

5.13. The Danish experience of teaching through "project work" illustrates such an approach. Combined education/production projects take a methodology developed in universities in Denmark and apply it to unemployed young people, who a. have left school early, frequently before the end of compulsory education, b. have not completed any vocational training at all, and c. have never worked in a trade. It was found that, for such youths, traditional training workshops did not succeed, but, over the past ten years, considerable success has been achieved through "project work", both within and outside prisons.

5.14. Project work is task- or problem-orientated, the task itself being similar to many undertaken by more traditional means of vocational instruction, for example, building a wall, making a chair or a boat, refurbishing a living room, etc. But the way in which these are now done is different. There is greater emphasis on learning than on production, the main goal being to help these youths to learn how to work and/or to learn how to learn. The tasks must be geared to the ability of the trainees and must contain training possibilities, and the learning to be done for these tasks usually crosses subject boundaries. It is also essential that the results of the work be usable, either by the institution itself or the students, or be available for sale.

5.15. In these projects, the process is more important than the product. The students gain knowledge through the tasks but, more importantly, they become interested in learning and work, and develop their sense of responsibility. The projects are trainee-controlled, right from the introductory phase where students discuss their needs and interests and the task to be undertaken, through planning the forms of work, methods, necessary learning, etc. to the production and evaluation phases.

5.16. Denmark aims to involve one-quarter of all inmates in such project work, which has proved very successful so far. However, it does involve a challenge for both teachers and vocational instructors, who are called upon to think and act in a completely different way.

They must now conduct a process far more complex than the imparting of their "expert" knowledge to those without the knowledge. Many of the features of this Danish approach were also evident in a pilot project in pre-vocational education at Everthorpe Youth Custody Centre, in England.<sup>9</sup> Swedish prisons also report efforts to integrate learning in a dynamic way with production, and there too early projects have given mainly positive results.

### *Evaluation*

5.17. All teachers should continuously reassess their aims, content and methodology in the light of experience. With adults, the students themselves should contribute to this assessment, and being a prisoner should not deny anyone the opportunity and responsibility to participate in making judgments about the learning they are achieving. There is also a need for educational institutions to ensure that their aims, programmes, methods, learning resources and outcomes are evaluated. The committee continuously stressed the need for education "inside" to be comparable with and measured against education "outside". This implies that it should be evaluated by those who have this responsibility in the community. Independent inspectorates, particularly those employed by educational ministries and authorities, should be empowered to make assessments which are similar to those they make on educational provision in the community. In addition, prison education sectors themselves should evaluate their endeavours in a systematic and objective way, and adjust their strategy in the light of such examination. Governors and other personnel in the prison community should also be involved. Not only are their views significant, but the process should do much to break down barriers between the educators and the rest of the prison regime. The committee noted how a document published by the Inner London Education Authority, *Keeping the Institute Under Review*, designed as a suggested framework for self-assessment by adult education institutes in the Community, is being adopted for possible use by education staff in prisons in England and Wales.<sup>10</sup>

## **Chapter VI: Learning opportunities**

### *Deciding the content of education*

6.1. In deciding the content of prison education, two factors are of importance. Firstly, what do the prisoners need and want? Secondly, what does the best adult education practice in society offer? Good adult education attunes itself to the wishes of its clients and this principle should also be applied to prisoners. Initially, their limited awareness of

---

<sup>9</sup> Pre-vocational education: an inside story (Further Education Unit, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> *Keeping the Institute Under Review* (Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), 1985).

what is possible may, in turn, limit their choices, and so education must seek to identify and stimulate their latent wants and respond flexibly as interests emerge. Courses should not be limited to conventional subjects; it is the potential student's right to learn what is paramount, and some learning needs may not be met by traditional academic classification.

### *Interaction with the community*

6.2. The policy of seeking to apply to prison education the best standards and practices that apply outside clearly makes education more successful, but it also introduces a degree of "normalisation" into the life of the prison. Where inmates are not allowed out of prison to attend education, this normalisation can be maximised by close links between educational activities within and the providing agencies outside. For example, the library in the prison can be part of the public library service ; in sports, teams from outside should play teams within prisons; cultural activities should involve interaction between artists within and without; debates can involve exchanges between prisoners and people from the community; vocational education in prison should relate to outside industry. Such interaction can be justified not only on educational grounds, but also in terms of reducing the isolation of the prison and prisoners and introducing a "town atmosphere" into the prison.

### *Diversity of provision*

6.3. Subsequent chapters of this report will explore in more detail how particular elements of education (vocational education, library services, physical education, creative activities and social education) can be used to meet the prisoner's needs and also provide a link with the outside community. Each of these areas represents learning opportunities which, in different ways and in different combinations, can be of help to different prisoners. The diversity of provision is important, for the individual needs and circumstances of prisoners vary greatly. And there should be diversity not only in the range of courses and activities but also in the levels at which provision is made. Often, one finds in prisons a well developed curriculum for basic education and higher education. There is, however, a need to develop curricula for the majority of prisoners whose needs lie between these extremes. The need for this development is often as great in the adult community outside as it is in prison and requires a move away from examinations that have been devised for children in schools. Some groups will require special attention and particular variations in the programme offered and the methods employed, for example, young adults, women prisoners and foreign prisoners.

### *Basic education*

6.4. Throughout Europe, the proportion of people with serious literacy problems is far higher in prisons than in the community. The number of prisoners who cannot read or write at all is high enough, but when those who have a partial literacy problem (that is, an ability to read or write a little, but who still feel they have a serious difficulty with reading or writing) are included, then prison populations where one-third or more have such problems are common. It is not easy to be precise in this field because identification and measurement are problematic. The line between literacy and non-literacy is quite arbitrary - there is, in fact, a spectrum ranging from complete inability to read or write, through partial literacy, to those who can read or write reasonably well but who have significant spelling problems. Many authorities now define those with literacy problems as people who themselves feel they have a reading or writing problem.<sup>11</sup> Generally, these people have had some schooling and have average or near-average intelligence. It is important to note that the literacy problems being discussed here should be distinguished from the language difficulties of foreigners or those belonging to minority cultures, and also be seen separately from the learning difficulties of those with low intelligence.

6.5. Such adult literacy problems are not confined to prisons. However, the higher scale of the problem among prisoners is possibly caused by criminality and literacy difficulty both having origins in deprivation. A French study, using a fairly narrow definition of the problem, found that, whereas the proportion of non-literates is about 4% of the national population, the figure for prisoners is 12%. The discrepancy is on a similar scale in other countries.

6.6. Those who have literacy problems deserve special attention from educators in European prisons. This priority is justified not only on the grounds of the large numbers who have such problems, but also because those who have difficulties with reading and writing suffer acutely. Their prospects of work are severely limited, their self-respect and self-confidence can be very impaired, their social life can be curtailed. In prison, they can feel additionally vulnerable, both in relation to prison staff and fellow prisoners, and some will take great pains to hide their problems. The inability to write or read letters or to occupy themselves by reading during lock-up time can add greatly to the burden of their sentences. The importance of the problem and the difficulty of identifying many who suffer place a responsibility on all prison staff to tactfully watch out for those prisoners with literacy problems and encourage them to learn.

6.7. Although there are some similarities between adult literacy teaching and the elementary education of children, it is essential that an adult education methodology be fully applied to this area of work. For the problem is far more than simply a technical one

---

<sup>11</sup> 1. A. H. Chamley and H. A. Jones, *The Concept of Success in Adult Literacy* (ALBSU, London,

of acquiring reading and writing skills. With adults, the technical difficulties may well be secondary to a severe sense of stigma and a generalised sense of failure or lack of confidence. This is because of the key role literacy has in the workings of society and the way non-literacy is often assumed (wrongly) to be synonymous with ignorance.

6.8. Thus, the adult education methods described in the previous chapter are also relevant for literacy teaching. Initial and ongoing participation by the student in dialogue with the teacher, in assessing his or her situation and in planning the study (that is, what is known and not known, what objectives need to be set, what methods of learning suit him/her best, what interests should be incorporated into the teaching) are essential. Formal tests of reading ability, particularly those designed for children, are therefore unnecessary as a means of assessment and, indeed, may be counterproductive. While the support of a learning group is important for the student in overcoming stigma and isolation, teachers must also give individual attention to each student. A detailed description of the application of adult education methods to basic education in prisons is contained in the report of a working group of teachers in Northern Ireland prisons.<sup>12</sup>

6.9. Adults with literacy problems come to terms with them and overcome them in different ways. So, imagination and effort is required to provide a variety of learning aids that can help them, both within the literacy class and throughout the educational programme. Computers, typewriters, cassette-recorders, newspapers and books are all tools which can work in different ways with different students. The development of prisoner-edited newspapers and magazines and the use of adult literacy students' writing as texts in literacy classes can powerfully boost the confidence of the learners. Such material is used extensively in prisons in Ireland and some "readers" written by prisoners have been published for use by adult students outside prison. Other outlets of expression such as debates, drama, art, craftwork, music, photography and physical education can also develop confidence. It is important that the other educational activities organised for prisoners, such as those just mentioned, are made as accessible as possible to those with literacy problems. Libraries, in particular, should find ways of attracting those who are not familiar with books. Highly illustrated books and books with large print and simplified, though adult, texts should be available.

6.10. The committee intended that an awareness of the need to include and encourage those prisoners with literacy problems in a wide range of educational activities should permeate the discussion of different "learning opportunities" which form the next five chapters of this report.

---

<sup>12</sup> 1. Adult Basic Education in Prison Establishments in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office,

### *Those with different first languages*

6.11. Increased mobility between the European states and immigration into Europe from the wider world have meant that all states hold in prison people with different first languages, some of whom are foreigners but many of whom are citizens of the country in which they are held. Such people have special educational needs, and if they are to be released back into the host country they need to learn to communicate in the second language. Even when they are due to return to other countries on release, they still need immediate help to enable them to survive and communicate during their term of imprisonment. Provision of this sort is best made by teachers with knowledge of these prisoners' mother tongue. Moreover, such diversity of language and race must prompt the educator to examine critically all of the curriculum and the materials used to ensure that they do reflect the needs and aspirations of all individuals. Sometimes, this diversity can bring to the surface prejudice and tension. Education sectors, through their normal work, should regard this diversity as a positive resource and create opportunities for multicultural understanding. The committee noted that its perspective on such needs is in tune with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation No. R (84) 12 concerning foreign prisoners, of 1984.

## **Chapter VII: Vocational education**

7.1. Following the exploration of general principles in earlier chapters, this report now seeks to apply them to specific areas of education. Different segments of education, or "learning opportunities" as they were called above, will be explored in this and subsequent chapters to see how they could contribute to meeting the needs of prisoners. Vocational education is considered first.

### *The learning element in work*

7.2. In some prison systems, vocational education is administered along with work activities. In others, it is administered, in whole or in part, within the prison education service itself. Whatever the organisational arrangements, concern must be given to the pedagogic quality of vocational education and the balance between productivity and learning in work. Too often, the learning element is not emphasised enough. It is important to stress a concept of education which includes vocational education, as has been done in the committee's terms of reference. For vocational education can be an excellent source of more general personal development as well as a vehicle for imparting work skills.

### *Relation to the employment market*

7.3. First and foremost, of course, vocational education should be related to the employment market. Too often, in prisons, the skills taught are traditional ones for which there is very limited demand in the employment market. As the range of employment opportunities changes so frequently, it is vital that vocational education should be flexible enough to adapt to such changes. Moreover, it is essential that the quality of vocational education in prisons be high, both because the employment market is very sensitive to quality and because other factors limiting the work prospects of ex-prisoners need to be counteracted. Vocational education in prisons can perhaps best achieve good standards if it is provided by, or in close liaison with, those agencies in society (local authority, government agencies, professional bodies, etc.) which are providing the highest quality of vocational education. One of the other benefits of close links with external vocational education bodies is that modular training courses pursued within prison can be more easily continued or complemented on the outside.

7.4. Careful consideration needs to be given to the relationship between vocational education and work within prisons. Too often, prisoners move from high-quality training into work in prisons which has a very low skill requirement, a process which is demoralising and may mean that possible further development of new skills does not take place.

### *Education for adaptability*

7.5. But, even when skills are very well developed, it may be equally necessary for prisoners to progress in other aspects of their lives, if such skills are ever to be used purposefully in the world of work. Personal or social education, or simply a general growth in confidence, may be required by the trainee and this is where other elements of education can play a complementary role. For some prisoners who have drive and initiative - energy that has perhaps been misdirected towards crime previously - self-employment in a small business may be a realistic prospect. In such cases, skills development may be complemented by a course in business management or self-employment. Indeed, several prison systems report successful and much sought-after courses in this field. In any event, given the rapid changes in societies which can make skills and trades redundant within short periods of time, it is necessary that people be adaptable, and for this purpose wide-ranging knowledge, less specific skills and general personal and social development are required. So, to some extent, it is appropriate that specialised crafts and trades should give way to more general education - even simply to meet the demands of the employment market. Such a shift, of course, has implications for the kind of instructors employed in vocational education and for the in-service

development required by vocational education staff, for example, where traditional craftsmen are involved.

### *Unemployment*

7.6. However, given widespread unemployment in most Council of Europe countries and the disadvantaged nature of so many of those who make up the prison population, it would be unrealistic to assume that success in placing those in prison in employment on release can be very high. Even with the best efforts of trainer and trainee, unemployment may still be inevitable. For this reason also, the wider educational or personal growth dimension of vocational education is important. As well as aiming at employment, other goals should be kept in mind, such as building general self-confidence through skills, applying skills to the home situation, using computers for personal satisfaction, etc. When these aspects are considered, the necessity for close co-operation between vocational education and other parts of the education sector (whatever the organisational relationship) becomes evident. In this context, the broad educational approach inherent in Denmark's combined education/work projects, described in Chapter V above, is very relevant.

### *Adult education methodology*

7.7. The committee was interested to note that the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Co-operation, in its report on Project No. 9, stressed the appropriateness of an adult or community education response to widespread, long-term unemployment in Europe, linking economic aspects to social and cultural progress. As well as linking vocational objectives with wider educational ones, it also emphasised an adult education methodology similar to that described in Chapter V above : "the more education has been geared to problem-solving instead of the acquisition of pure knowledge for its own sake, the more practical has been its impact (...) Education has become entwined in a dynamic process (...) co-operation and discussion have become new life skills, replacing competition, confrontation and domination. These methods have in turn matured with practice".<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Adult education and community development (Council of Europe, 1987).

## Chapter VIII: Libraries

### *Functions as in the community*

8.1. Libraries in the community are a source of education, information and recreation, as well as centres of cultural development. Library services for prisoners must have the same wide range of functions as progressive libraries for the public, and the same professional standards should apply. Wherever possible, prisoners should have direct access to an outside public library, which they should be able to visit from the prison on a regular basis. Otherwise, efforts must be made to provide a full service within the prison, and this chapter looks at what is required to make that possible.

### *Educational aspects of the prison library*

8.2. The value and the possibilities of libraries are often underestimated. Their educational function for prisoners has two dimensions to it. Libraries support and extend the learning that takes place in classes by providing books and other materials, and by serving as locations for organised activities. But libraries are also an important source of informal education in their own right and are often used by those who do not join other educational activities or courses. A book is something from the outside world to which the library user can relate and can scan or make a thorough perusal of its contents whenever he or she wishes. A book is a cultural tool, but it is also something personal, providing access to a private world. In a prison environment, it is a means of preserving privacy. In choosing books or other materials in an adequate library, prisoners have real scope to exercise their own autonomy. Close cooperation between library and teaching staff is essential so that both of these aspects are promoted. For example, classes may take place at times in the library so that resources relevant to their study can be shown to the students ; and the way a library operates should also be explained in classes and its use encouraged. The library can also be used for exhibitions relevant to what is being studied in other parts of the educational sector.

### *Cultural pluralism*

8.3. Any library must base its services on the interests and wishes of the population it serves. For prisoners this will often entail providing a good deal of popular books, magazines and even comics, as well as other media such as cassettes. But a good library will also seek to develop and widen tastes and interests, and thus be a vehicle for cultural pluralism. It is generally found that prisoners have reading interests just as wide as the general public and, so, the same range and quality of books and other media to be found in public libraries should, without exception, be available in prison libraries. Moreover, this stock should be regularly renewed. There are, however, two groups within prisons

who ought to be specially considered when stock is being selected. Firstly, the relatively high numbers in prisons who have reading problems or who have little reading experience should be catered for and encouraged through a good provision of simplified books, attractive "coffee table" books (that is, with a high pictorial content), "talking books", etc. Secondly, stock should reflect the multicultural nature of the prison population where this is relevant, as, for example, the inclusion of Afro Caribbean material in many British prisons.

### *Professional standards*

8.4. To work properly, the prison library must be managed in conjunction with a professional librarian who will seek to achieve the same standards as in good libraries in society at large. It will depend on the number of prisons and prisoners to be served whether this person is involved in the prison library on a day-to-day basis; what matters is that there should be sufficient professional input and supervision in the running of prison libraries. Such a person can ensure that proper library procedures are followed, but will also stimulate outreach projects (magazines, readings, exhibitions, etc.), extend the concept of the library beyond books to other media, and promote greater use of these facilities. Generally, the choice of books and other media should be left to the professional judgment of the librarian, as would be the case in outside libraries, but a good librarian will include a large amount of stock requested by the library customers. Prisoners should, therefore, have at least the same access to books, etc. and the same access to catalogues and request systems as they would in a public library. Whenever possible, technology such as computers should be used to link the prison library to the public library service, and this should make it easier for prisoners to request books from libraries outside. To ensure that adequate standards are achieved, it may be helpful to have guidelines set by senior professional librarians, as has been done by the Library Association for prisons in the United Kingdom. These guidelines set minimum standards in relation to stock, renewal of stock, accommodation, staffing and access.<sup>14</sup>

8.5. Besides involving a professional qualified librarian in the overall management of the library, it is also advisable that this person be either an employee of the public library service or has very close links with that service, so that the prison library is integrated as far as possible with the public library service. While this person should be closely involved in the prison library, it is usually necessary to have prison officers or other library assistants engaged in library work too. It is vital that these officers or assistants encourage the use of the library by prisoners and that they have appropriate training to carry out their functions. Prisoners too can help in running the library, and they also require training.

---

<sup>14</sup> 1. Prison Libraries (The Library Association, 1981).

## Access

8.6. Ensuring that prisoners have sufficient and regular access to the library can often be a problem. But it must be stressed that, however good a library's stock may be, its value will be greatly reduced unless all prisoners can go to the library on a regular basis and at least once a week. In addition, the prisoner must have sufficient time to look at and choose material. Attending the library is an activity requiring its own place in the prison programme - too often; the library has a lowly or marginal status. Moreover, given their disadvantaged backgrounds, many prisoners will be unfamiliar with books and hesitate to use the facility. It is important that special efforts be made to attract such prisoners to the library and to make them feel at ease within it. Concern about damage to books should not be allowed to dominate operational practice; even public libraries have to accept a certain level of book damage and loss in order to encourage involvement by people. A fully "secure" library is one which is never used!

8.7. Establishing the library as a lively place, where events such as readings, debates, exhibitions and lectures take place, also supports its role as a source of book borrowing, etc. But more is necessary to achieve high library usage. Opening hours must be long enough to enable every prisoner to have access at least once a week for a reasonable period of time. A central location for the library makes regular access for all much more feasible. The committee considered it appropriate that prison rules grant prisoners the right to at least weekly access to a library, a right which is established in the prison rules of the Netherlands. Moreover, it is important that, whenever sanctions are used against prisoners, deprivation of books should not be among them (except in the case of deliberate and severe damage to library books).

8.8. The committee also wished to emphasise the importance of direct access to a central library. The practice of distributing books to landings or other sub-sections of a prison is wholly unsatisfactory. Direct contact with the full selection of books in the supportive milieu of a good library is vital. Problems arise, of course, for those who are mainly confined to particular sections of a prison, but ways should be found to enable even these prisoners to have full access. The same applies to women where they make up a small part of a predominantly male prison: wherever possible, they should have access to the main library rather than to a satellite.

## Chapter IX: Physical education and sport

### *The importance of physical activities*

9.1. Physical education (PE) and sport have an important place in the range of educational and recreational facilities available in prisons. They are popular because of the attraction inherent in sports themselves; the pleasure derived from doing something "active"; the fact that most people can participate, since no previous experience or training is required (even those who do not speak the local language can take part without too many problems); and the actual physical involvement enables prisoners to forget their surroundings for a while.

9.2. The European Prison Rules advocate that all prisoners be given the opportunity to take part regularly in properly organised sport and physical education, and suggest that some priority should be given to these activities. Special attention was focused on the involvement of prisoners and young delinquents in sport at a seminar held under the auspices of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Development of Sport, at Vimeiro in Portugal, in 1986. The preparations for the seminar and arrangements for holding it were undertaken by a group of experts in the field of sport for prisoners and young delinquents. The report of the seminar (CDDS (86) 25 rev.1) confirms the emphasis on PE and sport in the European Prison Rules and goes a stage further. Particular attention is given to formulating the aims of sport and physical education for prisoners, and the importance of contacts with and support from those outside prison is clearly expressed.

### *Distinguishing between physical education (PE) and sport*

9.3. As far as terminology is concerned, there is a continuing debate within the field about the similarities and differences between sport and physical education. One point which repeatedly emerges is that the aim of physical education is by definition more explicit, that is, it is undertaken with the specific intention of taking exercise, while the aim in playing a sport is implicit, that is, exercise is secondary to the enjoyment of the activity. Another distinction can be suggested on the basis of PE's more conscious educational orientation, as compared to the greater emphasis on practice or recreation in sport. PE involves a structured programme whereby a variety of activities, and the principles underlying them, are introduced and developed under the direction of a qualified specialist. But drawing a hard and fast dividing line between the two areas is difficult and inadvisable. Sport and physical education both deserve an important place within prison regimes. For present purposes, no further distinction is made between the two activities and they are treated as one. However, the important issue of the quality of the PE or sports activity available will be referred to below.

## *Aims*

9.4. Participation in physical education and sport can have three aims:

- a. Specific: the aim being to learn or improve one's performance in a particular sport, for example, swimming, basketball;
- b. Social: in the sense of learning to get along with other people through, for example, being part of a team and working together, learning to accept defeat, exercising self-control and coping with aggression;
- c. Reflective: exposure to values and norms and the whys and wherefores of having rules in sport. Prisoners can learn at first hand that the rules exist for the benefit of all the participants.

Pursuit of these aims may enable the participants to engage in sport after release. The activities available in sports clubs and associations provide significant opportunities to ex-prisoners to fill leisure time in a creative way. In addition, these activities are important because of the positive effect they have on the atmosphere in penal establishments. The committee saw the aims of sport and PE in custodial institutions as being the same as for sport and PE in general. This is in line with the general trend of the report which sets out aims for prison education as a whole, and for particular components of it that are very close to or the same as those that pertain in the community. This view also concurs with the Council of Europe's "Sport for All" concept which envisages sport and recreation as being available to all who want to take part, regardless of their social situation, origins or handicaps.

## *Ways of ensuring quality*

9.5. These aims can only be achieved if a number of conditions are fulfilled. Among these conditions are:

- i. Instructors must be properly qualified, that is, they must have been adequately trained to teach physical education, to coach sports and to work with prisoners. The committee believed that the full benefits of physical activity in prisons are not reaped when insufficient attention is paid to educational aspects and adequate standards are not applied. Moreover, safe and truly educational PE programmes require teachers whose qualifications are at least on a par with teachers of other subjects in prison and with PE teachers in the community outside;
- ii. There must be adequate facilities and equipment (including kit)
- iii. An attractive and varied range of sporting activities must be provided;
- iv. The place given to sports and physical education on the daily prison timetable must be such as to encourage prisoners to take part.

9.6. If the aims are taken seriously, it is vital to ensure that sport is more than putting together a football or volleyball team. Careful planning and organisation are required by well-qualified instructors. Several strategies are suggested for improving the quality of PE and sports activity within prisons, such as

- i. introducing prisoners to sports that are new to them (through, for example, holding short courses);
- ii. involving prisoners in the organisation of sports and physical education, thereby giving them a sense of responsibility;
- iii. encouraging contacts with sports organisations in the community;
- iv. adapting programmes for drug addicts;
- v. actively involving prison officers in these activities once they have been given appropriate training.

9.7. While emphasising the importance of professional standards in relation to physical education, the committee realised that the interest and skills of many prison officers in sports is a valuable resource which should be utilised. It is suggested that PE teachers should give guidance as to what are appropriate and safe games and the physical activities to be conducted by officers in recreation or sports periods. The range of such activities can be extended as proper training is given to these officers.

### *Interaction with the community*

9.8. Like cultural activities, sports can be a very useful means of interaction between the prison and the community. Preferably, prisoners will be given leave to take part in sports activities outside and to join clubs. Where this is not allowed, teams and individuals from outside should be encouraged to engage in sport with prisoners inside the prison. Open prisons can often reap great developmental benefits for prisoners by organising outdoor pursuits such as canoeing, mountain walking, swimming, motorcycling, cycling, etc. Such activities are especially attractive and beneficial to young offenders - they can appeal to their sense of adventure, often in ways that are new to them, and channel their energies into constructive outlets.

### *Special adaptations*

9.9. The committee wished to emphasise some special characteristics of prisoners which call for special responses and adaptations by PE and sports staff. The report of the Vimeiro Conference of the Council of Europe's Committee for the Development of Sport states the following, with which the committee concurred "In institutions, it is the process

of sport and physical education which is the important aim; the product (that is, the mere achievement of 'good scores') is, in most cases, secondary, as inmates have often been 'losers' in the past. The varied status and conditions of prisoners and delinquents - in particular, the length of their sentence; their (usually low) age and level of education; their origins; their (often poor) health - mean that the provision of sports and physical education programmes and the teaching or coaching of them have to be adapted to take account of these varied circumstances and varying motivations, and, often, designed for individual or very small groups. (The activities themselves - which can include all kinds of sport - do not, in principle, need adapting.) The need for adaptation applies with even greater relevance to women prisoners and short-term young delinquents."

## **Chapter X: Creative and cultural activities**

### *Creativity*

10.1. The need or drive to be creative is in every human being. It can be expressed in many different ways - cooking, sport, work, relationships are but a few examples. Often, however, creativity remains latent, undeveloped, in people. Sometimes their potential is even hidden from the individuals themselves. Creativity can sometimes be crushed and, regrettably, the education system, which should help draw out and develop it, can be an instrument by which it is stultified. At times, also, creativity can be misdirected in destructive or anti-social ways and this has been the case for many who are in prison.

### *Cultural activities*

10.2. All true education is, in some way, an outlet for creativity. However, the arts are activities which have a very special role in the process of releasing this impulse, and the learning opportunities presented by the arts are considered in this chapter. Two sets of activity are dealt with in. projects which require active involvement by prisoners, such as artwork, drama, writing, dance, photography and video-production, which are termed by the committee "creative activities"; and ii. more passive events such as films, lectures, concerts and theatre provided for the prisoners, which are termed "cultural activities". Clearly, such terminology is somewhat arbitrary and the passive/active distinction may not always be applicable. It is used here for convenience and to emphasise the important qualitative differences of the more active media. Where the prisoners participate, the educational and rehabilitative potential of the arts is far greater.

10.3. However, to dwell on the more active "creative activities" is in no way to belittle more passive "cultural activities". Indeed, each can be an important support and stimulus for the other. For example, where someone acts in a drama, the insights gained may awaken interest in seeking other plays, which in turn can stimulate that person's acting.

The same can apply to music, video-production, art, etc. Moreover, the involvement of the prisoners in cultural activities can be increased when they themselves take part in organising events, in choosing films, artists and so forth. This complementarily between the two forms should be borne in mind in the discussion below on creative activities.

### *Underdeveloped talent in prisons*

10.4. Educationalists working in a prison context must be acutely aware of the wealth of underdeveloped talent and creativity to be found in those in prison. The special task of the adult educator is primarily to help the prisoner-students to recognise and then to develop these untapped resources within themselves. It is vital that learning opportunities in the arts be offered to all, even if some of them reject the offer initially. However, the committee did feel optimistic about the attractiveness of creative activities for prisoners and recognised the potential therein for development, but much depends on the attitudes and quality of the artists and teachers involved.

10.5. Two factors sharpen the extent of the underdevelopment of creativity within prisons. Firstly, as is recognised in Chapter IV above, many prisoners have had very limited educational opportunities in the past and can be severely disadvantaged in many other ways. Secondly, there are some grounds for seeing much criminal behaviour as creative energy "gone wrong", powerful individuality that has not been able to avail itself of more constructive outlets. Thus, Jimmy Boyle, who had previously been a violent criminal in Scotland, wrote of his discovery of sculpture within prison

"I began to pour all my energies into this new means of expression and was knocked out by the depth of feeling when I completed a piece of sculpture. The only thing I could compare it to was when I won a victory when fighting in the past or beating the system in some way. The difference was that I was using the energy, knowing I was just as aggressive, but creating an object that was a physical symbol, yet perfectly acceptable to society. I worked at a prolific rate with most of the work based on the expressions of my soul with pain/anger/hate/love/despair/and fears embodied in it. This was very important for me as a person because it allowed me to retain all these very deep emotional feelings but to channel them in another way - sculpture."<sup>15</sup>

10.6. The case of Jimmy Boyle is, of course, exceptional in both the extent of his past criminality and the quality of his later art work and writing. But the essentials of the point that he makes can be true for all who are in prison even if in a less dramatic fashion. Although for many the change will be less sudden, it will be none the less significant. Many will take to the arts in the first instance simply as a source of solace, to relieve

---

<sup>15</sup> Jimmy Boyle, *A Sense of Freedom* (Pan, 1977).

boredom or just to do something rather than be passive, but the impulse can in time lead to very positive change. Other benefits can also be identified: creative or artistic activity can greatly help in people's emotional development, allowing a means of expressing and exploring feelings in an acceptable and non-threatening way. They are also a means by which individuals learn self-discipline and how to interact socially, learning to work together in a team.

### *Attractiveness of the arts*

10.7. Because of the informal nature and the element of choice these activities offer participants, they can be acceptable and attractive to many prisoners who would otherwise be alienated from education. There may still be some sense of alienation towards the arts themselves to be addressed, but encouragement from educators and administrators can help overcome this. Generally, it is found that creative activities, like PE and sport, have a low participatory threshold, but prisoners are easily motivated to take part. Furthermore, these activities do not necessarily depend on an ability to speak the indigenous language.

### *Freedom of expression*

10.8. It is most important that maximum freedom of expression (within accepted artistic conventions) be given to participants. This includes allowing the expression of hostile and negative feelings, such as those referred to by Jimmy Boyle. If this freedom is not granted, then the prisoners may not be able to act with integrity and may suspect that the opportunities offered are manipulative. Moreover, genuine rehabilitation, in the sense of prisoners choosing themselves to redirect their energies and their lives, can only take place in a context of freedom of choice, where they can explore their feelings and experiences, and can define for themselves "where they are at". Real independence of choice is more likely to be ensured where the creative activity is facilitated by artists or educators from outside the prison system. Artists, in particular, often bring with them a hopeful and stimulating spirit. Where possible, activities should take place outside the prison itself, thereby strengthening interaction with the community and links which may be maintained after release.

### *Non-elitist and multicultural*

10.9. It is essential that a non-elitist approach be adopted. Any cultural or artistic policy for prisoners must aim to involve as many as possible and not just cater for the specially gifted. Neither should it just cater for the majority cultural group. If a multicultural approach is adopted, it can do much to enhance understanding and break down racial

and cultural prejudice. It would be appropriate to think in terms of an "arts-for-all" approach within prisons, along the lines of the "sports-for-all" concept.

### *Interaction with the community*

10.10. Some other requirements for a successful policy need to be stressed. High-quality artistic work from a high proportion of prisoners cannot be achieved without serious commitment from the regime in terms of time, space and resources. While recreation time allows some scope, a serious policy must involve the structured prison education sector and must allow at least some of the working day to be given over to artistic activities. It is most important, however, that external cultural and artistic agencies be involved on a significant scale: external writers and musicians to interact with prison writers and musicians; professional drama specialists to join prisoners (having actresses join the prisoners' cast, for example, in a male prison, and vice versa); artists to run workshops, etc. In Ireland, for example, the country's Arts Council provides writers' workshops and artists' workshops in prisons. In these, professional writers and artists interact with prisoner-writers and prisoner-artists.

## **Chapter XI: Social education**

### *The concept of social education*

11.1. Social education was not specifically mentioned in the terms of reference of the committee, but it was seen, nevertheless, as an area of major importance. This term is used to describe any education geared towards helping people live in the community. It is of particular importance for those who are marginalised or powerless in society, as are many prisoners even before committal. Inevitably, their very removal from society and the experience of imprisonment generally will worsen their sense of alienation from, and increase their difficulty in coping with, society at large. As with creativity, it is true of social education that it is present to some degree in all education. However, there is a certain area of education which specifically offers to empower students with attitudes, skills and information which will enable them to live more fully and constructively within the community and this is the concern of this chapter.

11.2. The term "social education" is preferred to alternatives such as "social and life skills" or "social training", because it focuses on the general education or development of the whole person and avoids the image of "behaviour modification" which is hinted at in the other phrases. Some teaching approaches can stress inadequacy too much and not acknowledge enough the positive potential and creativity in the students. The objective of this kind of education should be personal development, enabling the student to take greater control over some aspects of life. Often, when people take greater control or

responsibility over one aspect (for example, diet, sexuality, fitness, understanding of children), this can have a positive spill-over effect on other areas of life, as self-esteem and confidence are boosted. What should be avoided is an over-emphasis on negative issues (such as drink or drug problems, lack of social "skills"), as this may merely reinforce the student's sense of inadequacy - unless there are specific requests from prisoners to deal with these.

### *Involvement of different staff groups*

11.3. Social education issues are not the exclusive concern of educators. They also fall within the domain of social workers, psychologists, therapists and, indeed, prison staff in general. Where the main responsibility for social education lies varies between countries. This picture is further complicated by variations and different emphases and styles between countries in relation to what is meant by prison education. In the Latin countries, in particular, it is interpreted very broadly as covering any activity designed to facilitate the rehabilitation of prisoners on release or give them greater independence. In Luxembourg, there is no prison education sector or department as such, although educational activities are certainly conducted under the auspices of the social services sector. But, however or by whom they are organised, what matters is that social education or socio-educational activities take place. Such activities will be most successful where all sectors working within prisons seek to complement each other in this work. Indeed, identifying and exploiting all opportunities to make prisoners better prepared for release may be an excellent mechanism for pulling different staffs together in a purposeful way.

### *Providing information*

11.4. At its most basic, social education should ensure that information which prisoners might need upon their re-emergence into society is available to those who want it. The information required will vary greatly with individuals, but might include knowledge about employment and unemployment; housing; transport; welfare, health and educational services outside; managing money, etc. Libraries, in particular, should be reservoirs where such information is available in easily accessible form.

### *Emotional and attitudinal issues*

11.5. Even with topics such as those just mentioned, needs will seldom relate solely to obtaining information. Often, prisoners will need to explore the emotional dimension to an issue, to sort out their attitudes on the matter. For example, experiences of employment or unemployment may need to be analysed, the sense of depression often associated with being out of work may require attention. Such emotional dimensions are all the greater in

another set of issues, in which relationships and questions of identity are very much to the fore, although straightforward information may also be required: family, sexuality, child-care, violence and assertiveness, coping with stress, etc. The exact issues to be covered must be a matter for the prisoners themselves to choose, and participation in any course covering these areas must be wholly voluntary. Prisoner-students may often become aware of a need for specific skills as a result of exploring such areas and make requests accordingly, for example, in being able to stand up for themselves and put their point of view without becoming aggressive, in applying for jobs or welfare benefits, or in coping with a drink or drugs problem. Skills of another kind that may be required are ones to do with managing at home - living independently, cooking, home repairs, etc. - but here also attitudinal issues relating to such matters as sex roles or loneliness do arise.

### *Norwegian course*

11.6. The committee learned about a household management course for prisoners in Norway, and similar courses and activities are common in many countries. The Norwegian course seeks to address the problem whereby many emerge from prison with meagre finances, have no permanent residence and go to live in an insecure social environment, so that returning to more settled social conditions will often take time. The course, which is residential and lasts for a hundred and twenty hours, seeks to assist in the process of settling down again outside. It tries to help the individual to manage in everyday life. Through theoretical and practical knowledge, an attempt is made to increase understanding of an acceptable mode of living in areas such as nutrition, hygiene, personal finances and social life. Results have been positive: those who experience the course find it engaging and instructive, with a good balance between theory and practice. Cooking is the most popular part of the course, and men like it once they have overcome initial feelings of insecurity. One of the most difficult parts of the course is giving the students an insight into financial planning: they have to work with tight budgets so as to gain experience and knowledge that will realistically reflect their circumstances on release. There are three to five students in each group, a good basis on which to establish an atmosphere of security and confidence.

### *A pre-release ethos*

11.7. Generally, in relation to the preparation of prisoners for release, two concepts must be advanced: the need for the whole regime to be concerned (a pre-release, outward-looking, forward-looking ethos) and the need for specific courses. Both these components are complementary and vital. If preparation for release consists solely of a course, and none of the expenditure of time by prisoners or resources by the education sector are supported by a regime contributing to this outlook, then such a course may be mere

tokenism and ineffective. The overall culture and climate of prisons have to be orientated towards preparation for release if any courses are going to be effective. Similarly, if a prison tries to develop the preparation for release ethos and does not provide special courses, many prisoners will have problems which will not have been addressed. Both developments are necessary if effectiveness and efficiency are to be achieved. The pre-release needs of long-term and short-term prisoners will, of course, be quite different in many ways. With the long-termer, the task is to help towards a great readjustment. With the short-termer, efforts should be directed towards preserving as many as possible of the supports that are outside for that person. One example of a pre-release course the committee heard about was the Predischarge Programme at Rochester Youth Custody Centre in England. This was a two-week full-time course which followed a "group-development" pattern, but the basic structure consisted of five modules each of which dealt with a different aspect of a "young adult" life: social situations (sexuality, going to a pub, how to handle criticism), jobs and unemployment, home skills, authority, housing and health.

### *Social studies*

11.8. Other means through which prisoners can be helped to integrate with society involve subjects such as social studies and sociology. These can help people to relate to their wider society and are particularly important in view of the multiple alienation from society that often exists among prisoners. Such study can involve anything from informing students about how to vote, to exploration of a social issue such as pollution, to a theoretical analysis or critique of society. But, at whatever level such study takes place, those studying are able to retain their critical perspective on society if they wish. However, they are given a channel through which they can express or explore their attitudes to society in a way that is not self-destructive and not socially destructive. Local history, such as the history, and particularly the recent history, of localities from which the prisoners came, can also help them to relate to society and form a sense of identity. This will especially be so when the lifestyles of ordinary people are studied and if these can be linked to the student's own recollections. What are known in Britain and Ireland as "community publications", containing such local recollections, are useful stimulants to such study. There is particular value in strengthening the sense of identity a prisoner may feel with a locality (or an ethnic group, or group such as Gypsies or Travellers) in this way because, too often, his or her main sense of identity will relate to crime. A prisoner, especially a young prisoner, may see himself primarily as an accomplished thief or, in macho terms, related to violence, so that anything which can support an alternative sense of identity must be constructive.

### *Flexible methodology*

11.9. An emphasis on emotional and attitudinal learning has implications for the methodology used. Curricula must be based on the student's own perceived needs, not on the information that the tutor wishes to impart. The tutor must create situations (through role-play, case study, discussion, etc.) which will facilitate the student's learning in an active way, rather than being the recipient of externally valued information. Group work will often be a valuable tool for a teacher trained in such methods, although the intensity of more advanced or therapeutic group work is not envisaged here, unless a psychologist or some other person skilled in the field is involved. Role-play or video training will have much to contribute to social education as means of enabling students to learn how to deal with difficult inter-personal situations or to work out their attitudes to certain issues or themes. Most courses benefit from having access to people from outside - members of voluntary bodies or people with particular knowledge and skills. Particularly useful in a pre-release course is the practice of inviting ex-prisoners, who have successfully survived on release, to talk to groups. Although such an idea might raise security concerns, there is perhaps no better way for current prisoners to learn how to cope after release than by access to the experience, knowledge and skills of such ex-prisoners.

### *Applications within the prison*

11.10. While the focus of this chapter has been on education for release into society, much that has been suggested can be helpful to prisoners prior to release also. This will obviously be the case where prisoners develop their sense of responsibility or their independence or their desire for self-determination, or where they manage to reduce the stress they feel or otherwise counteract the negative effects of prison life. Of course, the world inside a prison is not totally cut off from that outside and many problems faced outside are present within. For example, issues of racism and sexism are there to be addressed inside the prison just as much as outside.

## **Chapter XII: The relationship between education outside and inside the prison**

12.1. A major theme of this report is that education for prisoners, in all its aspects, should at least be of the quality of good adult education in society. It follows from this that, where there is well-developed adult education in society (for example, in Scandinavian countries), then it is best for prisoners to go out of prison during the day to participate in education. If this is not allowed, then the education within prison should be closely linked with provision outside - education should represent a strong involvement by the outside community. There are several benefits attached to involving education agencies from the

community in work with prisoners, and these are referred to elsewhere in this report, but one of the most important is the fact that, the more educational services for prisoners reflect "outside" agencies, the more they will be acceptable to them.

### *Education outside the prison*

12.2. Countries vary in the extent of "openness" in their prison systems and in the opportunities that are available for day release for education outside. The committee, however, recommended that release for education outside prison should be seen as, generally, the best option. There are several reasons for advocating this approach. Firstly, research in Denmark and elsewhere suggests that, when prisoners are released for outside education, the likelihood of their relapsing into crime is reduced. (More is said about this in paragraph 12.4 below.) Secondly, the study options available are usually increased, and this widening is especially marked in the case of small prisons. Thirdly, the prisoner is more likely to continue with education after final release if study before that has been pursued in the community rather than inside the prison.

12.3. A crucial factor in external education is the much stronger possibility of destigmatisation. Outside, the prisoner-student is far more likely to improve his or her self-image. When they are simply one or two among many "normal" people engaged in education, those released to education are encouraged to see themselves much more as "students", and far less as "prisoners". In this way, the positive or constructive aspects of their personalities are boosted and this is the basis of successful educational effort, and possibly also of rehabilitation.

12.4. Interesting suggestions derive from a Danish study by Bjorn Holstein, of the University of Copenhagen, into some of the effects of the Skadhauge Plan, which began in 1975 and which, among other things, resulted in an increase in the number of people receiving education during imprisonment and increased use of daily release for educational purposes. Relapse into crime was found, in this study, not to be significantly affected by participation in education inside the prison. However, the study did show a significant link between release for external education and a lower rate of relapse. It was also found that students at ordinary education establishments are not affected negatively by the presence of a few "outsiders".

### *Post-release education*

12.5. Educationalists are also faced with the question of enabling those who take part in education within prison to continue to do so after release. There can be many problems in

ensuring such continuity. Much depends on the availability of education in the society outside and, in particular, in the area where the released prisoner goes to live. A referral network, which can give educational advice and counselling to those being released, is also important. More importantly, experience shows (particularly in some British studies) that those released from prison realistically need a good deal of personal support, if they are to successfully make the jump from education within to education outside.<sup>16</sup> This support is crucial for several reasons: many prisoners have negative experiences and low attainment from past educational attendance and there are often, in any case, many other pressures impinging on the ex-prisoner in the period following release. Differences can arise as to whether it is the responsibility of the prison or education authorities to give this vital support, but the point must be made that, though expensive, structured support to help ex-prisoners integrate into education in the community can be very effective. There is much to suggest that, without structured support, continuity in education upon final release will not be very likely.

12.6. A Norwegian submission to the committee recognised that many who are students in prison fail to make the difficult transfer to ordinary education outside. In order to counteract this situation, follow-up/aftercare classes have been established at several different places in the country. These classes are small, as in prison, consisting of four to six students, and offer a secure, clearly-defined environment and the opportunity to go directly from prison into aftercare education. Other relevant information from Norway on this issue was news of a pilot project in Rogaland, where 260-280 inmates are held in three prisons. The project, started in 1985 and due to report in 1988, sought to follow up prison education with programmes outside which offered an easier transition to education or employment. It also sought to achieve effective routines of co-operation between the various agencies concerned, both within and outside prison, and a preliminary evaluation indicated that this has been achieved. Previously, each service often worked out its own programme, and a prisoner could have several plans to relate to at the same time. This was a waste of resources and made the situation of a client more difficult. The services work together now, exchanging information and employing more systematic and long-range planning than before. The prisoners are included in their own educational plans both inside and outside prison.

12.7. While many of the factors which influence post-release continuity of education may be beyond the scope of prison authorities, there are matters which are within their capacity. As already noted, if education during sentence is pursued outside the penal institution, then continuity is far more likely. This will be so even if, after final release, the prisoner goes to live in some other area. It is easier for the prisoner to bridge the gap

---

<sup>16</sup> Bridging the Gap (National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), 1981). See also Adults Literacy Unit Development Projects 1978-1980 (ALBS', London, 1981).

between one external educational place and another than between education within prison and study outside. However, it will help further if prisoners given leave to attend external education are accommodated in prisons near to their homes so that they can continue studying in a familiar location after their sentences end.

### *Education within the prison*

12.8. While leave to attend external education is considered by the committee to be the best option, it is recognised that the "second-best" option of providing education within the prison is the more common approach in most countries. However, there are factors which can greatly affect the quality of the service provided in that way. Many of these conditions which affect the quality of the prison education service are explored in the next chapter. One important factor is dwelt on here the extent to which education inside the prison reflects the qualities of the best education outside. Mention is also made of some means by which prison education can be given, and can retain, this "outside" quality.

12.9. The quality of outside education can be partly achieved by "importing" courses and activities from external education agencies. When this is done, it also increases the possibility of at least some of the prisoners continuing study after release. However, the Danish research shows that destigmatisation does not take place to anything like the same extent, although there may be some value in those in prison realising that they do the same public examination as those outside, that their art is exhibited alongside that of the public, that they are officially "Open University" students like others outside, etc.

12.10. The process of bringing the best of outside education within can be supported by teachers and other educationalists in prison being employed by ordinary external education authorities. However, it is not just a question of their conditions of service being the same as other teachers in the community. More important is the fact that they should not be isolated professionally, that they should have significant personal contact with the external pedagogic milieu. If teachers receive sustained support from external education bodies, then there is less likelihood of their becoming "institutionalised" or of adopting negative attitudes that others working within the prison may have. Indeed, good "outward looking" education staff can help counteract the general institutionalisation that can take place within a prison.

## **Chapter XIII: Conditions for prison education**

### *Staffing*

13.1. Countries tend to have different arrangements for staffing prison education sectors and different ways of combining expertise - internal and external - with the prison system.

But, whatever the arrangements, it is vital that the knowledge and inspiration available in education services in the community outside should be channelled into the prison system. Normally, educationalists working within prisons should have experience and qualifications at least equal to those in mainstream education services. There are, however, aspects of prison education work which relate particularly to the prison context. In-service training and support are very important in helping prison educators deal with such aspects and must be given a very high priority, including allowing teachers some time off to undertake this training.

13.2. The reservations that prison officers sometimes have about education was addressed in Chapter III. One method that was suggested of counteracting this was to extend to some extent the services of the education sector in a prison to the officers, an approach that might also contribute to a more positive general atmosphere in the prison. But more direct methods may also be necessary. Initial and ongoing in-service training of officers should give a significant place to enabling them to understand the thinking behind prison education provision and encouraging them to be supportive of prison education work in every way possible.

13.3. Sometimes, it is realistic to involve prison officers in actually providing education when they possess the appropriate attitudes and qualifications, and this can do a great deal to break down barriers between different kinds of staff and between prisoners and officers. However, the difficulties inherent in such a situation for the officer concerned, in particular the conflict between the role of officer and that of educator, should not be underestimated. These difficulties are emphasised when consideration is given to the appropriate adult education methods that are to be recommended. For the teacher's role is no longer to give out knowledge with little attention as to how it is being received, but to draw in the active participation of the students, seeing the group members as resources rather than as passive recipients.

### *Volunteers*

13.4. This emphasis on the specialist expertise required for adult education work in prisons is also a useful touchstone with which to begin consideration of the role of volunteers in prison education. Clearly, there are considerable differences in the extent to which different countries use volunteer visitors. For example, they play important roles in the prisons of France and Luxembourg, operating either individually or through organisations such as GENEPI (a French student organisation of eight hundred members, specially geared to visiting and supporting prisoners). While there may be a danger of volunteers being used to provide a poor substitute for professional services, they can be a means of complementing and greatly extending the effectiveness of paid education staff, if

they are used properly. Moreover, they can be an excellent means of increasing interaction and understanding between the community and those in prison, and a means of encouraging active involvement by prisoners.

13.5. Some areas of activity lend themselves particularly well to the use of volunteers. Volunteers may join with prisoners to run cultural activities together - drama, reading groups, music, painting, chess, etc. Often, the "outsider" will demonstrate or teach skills to interested prisoners free of charge. Often, the prisoners themselves will invite specific people to visit them to share skills or knowledge. Sporting events are another popular means of interaction, with outside teams playing those inside. At times, volunteers take on a socio-educational role, giving information on welfare procedures, job hunting, advice on drugs, alcohol, etc. And they can be a support in the field of education per se, for example, by conversing with a prisoner who is learning a language, by helping with course-work, literacy, vocational training, etc. GENEPI groups in France play a supportive role to education by meeting the requirements of small numbers of pupils (one, two or three), or minority interests for which no teaching post could justifiably be allocated.

13.6. In Luxembourg, new projects, including prisoner participation in outside tournaments and public attendance at matches inside prisons, are being planned. Efforts are being made to ensure the participation of prisoners and public alike in arranging and running such events. An experiment of this kind was tried in 1987. This consisted of organising a day-long soccer tournament to which prisoners were free to invite spectators from outside. All preparations were made by a joint committee of prisoners and prison staff, who sent invitations to members of the public. The day of the event was described as a "summer festival" with equal numbers of prisoners and visitors present (approximately 2 x 150). A barbecue team, consisting of prisoners, guards and visiting volunteers, prepared food which they sold on behalf of the prisoners' three associations: the football team, the chess team and the team editing the prisoners' paper.

13.7. Too often, however, this kind of contact is confined mainly to the field of sport. More low-key but longer-term possibilities are often not pursued. Discussion groups organised by prisoners could invite specialists into the prison. Volunteers could supervise prisoners who undertake programmes of study - involving a commitment of considerably more time than in sporting events or group discussions, but offering the prospect of a much better quality of relationship between prisoner and outsider.

13.8. While volunteer visitors offer much potential for reducing feelings of isolation and helping the development of those in prison, some qualifications need to be stated. The danger, already mentioned, of volunteers being used as a cheap and second-best substitute for paid professionals must be borne in mind. Their use must be to complement and extend the education service. Likewise, careful consideration should also be given to

the prospect of prison officers being able to undertake at least some of the activities envisaged for volunteers. Volunteers, like others who work in prisons, need clear guidance as to their role and code of behaviour and need support by way of training and regular consultation. In the Netherlands, the screening of volunteers is very strict and a "contract" is established with each volunteer visitor, clarifying what is expected of them, what help they will receive, etc.

### *Educational planning*

13.9. The often high and irregular "turnover" of prisoners in an institution can pose major organisational demands on an education sector, apart from the implications for teaching referred to in Chapter V above. Sweden reported to the committee how they have tried to address the question of high educational need combined with short prison terms (63% of their inmates in 1985 were sentenced to three months or less). A number of correctional service regions (that is, administrative regions consisting of local institutions, remand prisons and probation districts, each headed by a regional director) have set up a special "study file" for each person who participates in study programmes. In the file, the educational background, the object of studies, a detailed study plan and results obtained during the time in prison are entered ; even if courses are not completed, the parts followed are noted. The study files are opened during the remand period and follow the students to the prisons where they will serve their sentences. If a student is moved to another prison, continuity in studies is maintained. This project is of an experimental nature but, after one and a half years, evidence suggests that it is appreciated by students, educational staff and correctional staff alike.

### *Facilities*

13.10. Where prisoners cannot go out of prison to take part in education, sufficient accommodation and facilities should be provided within the prison. While some locations for education within prisons may be dispersed in separate places (for example, workshops, gymnasium, theatre, library), it is valuable to have at least a core of classrooms clustered together so that an educational atmosphere, distinct from the main part of the prison, can be created. But, likewise, separate elements such as library services, workshops, cultural activities and sports should seek to build inside the prison the positive atmosphere such activities have, at their best, outside. Materials in common use in adult education, such as photocopiers for the reproduction of students' and teachers' material, should be available. Of course, whenever resources are made available for educational opportunities, it is incumbent upon educational administrators to ensure that they are managed efficiently and effectively.

## Access

13.11. Regrettably, experience in many places shows that, whenever appropriate educational facilities are described, it is also necessary to emphasise the importance of prisoners actually having access to them. Too often, it happens that good educational accommodation, libraries, gymnasia, etc. in prisons are underused because of difficulties due to the lack of prison officers or some such problems. The principle of adequate access applies in another way also. It would be invidious if participation in educational courses or activities in prison were to be affected in any significant way by the financial circumstances of the prisoner. Where selections have to be made because of limited resources, they should be made on educational grounds such as the candidate's needs, his or her suitability for the course, genuineness in effort and so forth. Generally, the principles of fairness and equality of educational opportunity should be applied as fully as possible.

- o O o -