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The Transformational Potential of Prison Education

Transformative dialogues:

(Re)privileging the informal in prison education

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Prime Minister David Cameron noted in his speech about prison reform[1] that education in prison should be something that it is given priority in terms of penal and rehabilitative practice. Whether or not this welcome rhetoric results in effective change in practice remains to be seen. Nevertheless, in order for education in prison to be effective there are a number of issues that need to be acknowledged and addressed. As such this paper will argue that the delivery of education in prison, beyond the basic provision of Numeracy and Literacy levels 1 and 2, is desirable, essential and necessary. However, I will also argue that in order for prison education to work efficiently and to serve the interests of the prisoners, the institution and the wider public we need to move away from the current disciplinary practices and ideologies that exist within prison education and instead re-privilege those skills that arise when learning occurs for learning's sake. These benefits, or so called 'soft skills' — this assumption shall also be challenged in this article, are often perceived as being secondary outcomes to the more formal and instrumental aspects of learning and teaching — the formal qualification. The paper will conclude that is only when we move beyond these destructive ideologies and simple binary outcomes that we will acquire a prison education system that truly delivers pedagogically informed transformations.

This paper is split into four separate but inter-related sections. The first section of this paper will discuss the importance of prison education. The next will discuss the various problems that beset contemporary prison education. These problems consist of the various, and often competing, disciplinary discourses that haunt any penal activity, positivistic imaginings that constrain the way or the manner in which prisoners are perceived and, finally, the entrenched new public management practices and the curse of key performance targets which limits and prevents both educational services and hampers innovation in terms of education delivery. The third section of this paper will look back upon the experiences that I have had with prison education and argue how that it is the informal discursive pedagogical practices that enabled me to develop both critical reasoning, reading and analytical skills that have aided me in forging a new and productive life outside of the prison. Finally, this paper will look in summation of how privileging the informal in prison education can lead to transformative circumstances for the prisoner.

Education, and in deed embedded learning, learning in traditionally non-educational activities,[2] in prison is essential for a number of reasons: firstly, there are the obvious and evident formal benefits which can include: knowledge acquisition, literacy, numeracy, IT skills, qualifications and pragmatic and practical employment skills. However, there are also a wealth of informal benefits that attach to education, and more widely learning, in prisons.[3] These informal benefits are often considered erroneously as 'soft skills' and as such are rarely if ever considered or counted when prison education is considered at a policy level.[4] These informal benefits or skills can include such diverse factors as the development of greater wellbeing as well as critical reasoning skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, empowerment, changed perspectives and, in specific circumstances, narrative change (which we know from the work of researchers such as Maruna,[5] McNeil,[6] Healey[7] and Weaver[8] can aid the desistance process). There are also wider pedagogical influences such as the understanding of the interaction between the individual and educational processes, the development of metacognition (understanding one's own thought processes), developing specific or specified learning styles and preferences, developing and, more

1. http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2016/02/08/cameron-prison-reform-speech-in-full
2. Eraut, M (2004), 'Informal Learning in the Workplace', *Studies in Continuing Education,* Vol. 26(2), pps. 247-273.
3. Bayliss, P and Hughes, S (2008), 'Teachers and Instructors in Prisons', in J Bennett, B Crewe and A Wahidin (eds), *Understanding Prison Staff*, Willan Publishing.
4. Hughes, E (2012), *Education in Prison: Studying Through Distance Learning,* Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
5. Maruna, S (2001), *Making Good: How Ex-Convicts Reform and Rebuild their Lives,* American Psychological Association.
6. McNeil, F (2006), 'A Desistance Paradigm for Offender Management', *Criminology & Criminal Justice: An International Journal*, Vol. 6(1), pps. 39-62.
7. Healy, D (2013), 'Changing Fate? Agency and the Desistance Process', *Theoretical Criminology,* Vol. 17(4), pps. 557-574.
8. Weaver, B (2015), 'Being Imprisoned: Punishment, Adaptation and Desistance', *European Journal of Probation,* Vol. 7(3), pps. 263-264.

importantly, cementing critical thinking skills and the development of emotional intelligence.[9]

Education and Emotional Geography

Before moving on to discuss the wider issues of prison education it is important to recognise the role that emotional geography[10] can play in terms of prison education. Emotional geography can be thought of as the resulting emotional contours evinced when people space and environments interact. Many environments are designed with specific interactions in mind, it is that artifice, conjoined with the people who inhabit those spaces, which invokes specific types of emotional experience. If you think in terms of the prison: different penal environments, or spaces within the prison, are designed to have very different and specific functions and, correspondingly, are designed to evoke and provoke specific types of reaction and emotion. If one considers segregation units, residential wings, healthcare units, the library, the chapel and even the gym all are designed as very specific interactional arenas which produce quite distinct social spaces[11] and, in which, interactions impact and reflect the emotional timbre evoked therein.

In all prison spaces, regardless of the designed interactivity, there is an inherent power ladenness, informed by the varying disciplinary discourses that permeate the prison.[12] As argued elsewhere[13] education departments, like the gym and chaplaincy, are quite rare emotional spaces within the prison. These spaces whilst still heavily permeated by discourses of discipline and power (security for instance) can also be thought of as nexuses of welfare — spaces in which the central concern is one of care not control, where interactions are predicated upon learning, mutual respect, creativity and personal development rather than surveillance and constraint (I shall return to this point later). In these terms prison education departments, as with the other spaces mentioned, *can* also operate as power-mitigating, and thus emotionally safe, spaces where these humane and normalised interactions can produce very different emotional contours to that possible elsewhere in the prison; which can aid the production of outcomes for individuals that go beyond the purely penal-centric.

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Problems in Contemporary Prison Education

I shall now move on to discuss some of the problems that beset contemporary prison education. The first problem revolves around the issue of disciplinary discourses and ideations of control. Echoing and reflecting wider societal concerns highlighted by Beck[14] the contemporary prison has become increasingly formulated, concerned and perhaps obsessed with negative conceptions of risk — where future prisoner orientated outcomes are no longer of neutral value but are instead considered future dangers which determine specific notions of, and demand particular practices of, risk management. Conjoined to this backdrop of risk obsession is the 'what works' ideology[15] which has influenced, and continues to influence, the very fabric of contemporary penal policy and practice.

We have also seen an increasing medicalisation of wider society whereby societal ills, such as criminality, began to be reconceptualised and pathologised.[16] Here crime and deviance became reframed in positivistic terms with the inherent belief in, and subsequent development of, mechanisms of intervention designed to cure these ills (i.e. the entrenchment of Cognitive

9. Burton, D (2007), 'Psycho-pedagogy and personalised learning', *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy,* Vol. 33(1) pps 5-17.
10. Crewe, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P. and Smith, A. (2014), 'The Emotional Geography of Prison Life', *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 18:1 (pps. 56-74).
11. Lefebvre, H (1991), *The Production of Space*, Blackwell Publishing.
12. Follis, L (2015), 'Power in Motion: Tracking Time, Space and Movement in the British Penal Estate', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space,* Vol. 33(5), pps. 945-962.
13. See 9.
14. Beck, U (1992), *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity,* Sage Publications.
15. Cullen, F T (2013), 'Rehabilitation: Beyond Nothing Works', *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 42(1), pps. 299-376.
16. Conrad, P (2007), *The Medicalisation of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders*, John Hopkins University Press.

Behavioural Therapy practices/interventions).[17] Here we see the perceived malignant behaviours of prisoners being tackled in an episodic and programme focused manner in order to instil reasoned and rational (i.e. non-criminal) forms of thinking. This positivistic encroachment gave rise in the 1990s to what can be thought of as the treatment paradigms, or pejoratively — 'programme fetishism',[18] which became extant within the prisons of England and Wales in this period and was anchored by the development of the Offending Behaviour Units.[19] As argued elsewhere[20] the rehabilitative ideals that prisoners are expected to adhere to are more often designed, as with the assorted abasements and mortifications[21] to which they are subject, to reformulate the prisoner's identity into a more compliant institutional one. It is here that we see notions of rehabilitation being both conflated with and consumed by interests of penal control[22] and, as a consequence, of becoming a disciplinary discourse in and of itself — no longer with the interests of the individual at its heart but rather with those of the institution and the criminal justice system. In such systems benefits for the prisoner, though given rhetorical primacy, are unfortunately relegated to collateral outcomes.

Resulting from this combination of factors, along with the system wide adoption of New Public Management ideals in the mid-1990s,[23] prisoners have become to be seen as transformative risk subjects[24] whereby there is a conflation of the needs and risks of prisoners at the same time as structural needs, such as poverty or inequality, are divorced from notions of their riskiness. What this complex morass of policy, practice and social trends have resulted in is generalised discourses that are concerned with control, discipline and management which influence and permeate most, if not all, aspects of the contemporary prison. As such most contemporary penal practice, including rehabilitation and education,[25] have evolved as processes of control which serve the interests of the institution and the wider public over that of the prisoner. In fact in much criminal justice procedure the prisoner comes very low on the hierarchy of stakeholders.

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The second problem derives from issues highlighted by Carlen[26] and Sim[27] who argue that in contemporary penal systems prisoners become imagined entities (or simulacra) perceived as a combination of their offender label, the imposed risk identity and their administrative/bureaucratic representations. Crewe[28] highlighted the manner in which the bureaucratic representation of a prisoner can have both powerful and long-term impacts on the carceral life course of a prisoner. This imagined conception of the prisoner, when coupled with the positivistic notions and practices mentioned above, results in prisoners being perceived as having criminogenic deficits and, as Sim[29] argues, rehabilitation in this sense

17. Adler, J. R. (2004), 'Forensic Psychology: Concepts, Debates and Practice', in J. R. Adler (ed.), *Forensic Psychology: Concepts, Debates and Practice*, Willan Publishing.
18. Crighton, D A and Towl, G (2008), *Psychology in Prisons 2nd Edn*, BPS Blackwell (pp. 98).
19. Towl, G. J. (2004), 'Applied psychological services in prisons and probation', in J. Adler (ed.), *Forensic Psychology: Concepts, Debates and Practice*, Cullompton: Willan.
20. Warr, J (forthcoming), 'The Prisoner: Inside and Out', in Y Jewkes, B Crewe and J Bennett (eds), *The Handbook on Prisons* (2nd Edn), London: Routledge.
21. Goffman, E. (1961) Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates, London: Penguin Books Ltd.
22. Mathiesen, T (2006), *Prison on Trial*, (3rd Edn), Waterside Press.
23. Liebling, A. (2004), *Prisons and Their Moral Performance*, Oxford University Press.
24. Hannah-Moffatt, K. (2005) 'Criminogenic Needs and the Transformative Risk Subject: Hybridizations of Risk/Need in Penality', *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 7(1), pps. 29–51.
25. Collins, M (1988), 'Prison Education: A substantial metaphor for adult educational practice', *Adult Education Quarterly*, Vol. 38(2), pp. 103.
26. Carlen, P (2008) 'Imaginary Penalities and Risk-Crazed Governance', in P. Carlen (ed), *Imaginary Penalities*, Willan Publishing, (pps. 1-25).
27. Sim, J (2008), 'Pain and Punishment: the real and the imaginary in penal institutions' in P. Carlen (ed), *Imaginary Penalities*, Willan Publishing, (pps. 135-156).
28. Crewe, B. (2009) The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison, Clarendon Studies in Criminology, Oxford University Press.
29. See 27.

is predicated on correcting these deficits and normalising the prisoner. This is a problem in the modern penal context as poor educational attainment is perceived in the same positivistic light and therefore it becomes necessary for this to be treated or excised. Given this understanding prison education is re-formulated as an intervention concerned with correcting a prisoner's offending behaviour rather the imparting of skills and knowledge aimed at personal growth, future development and successful reintegration.

Prison education thus becomes reformulated as a process of rehabilitation and thus is perceived as an intervention in the same way as a cognitive skills programme would be. Education therefore is no longer utilised as a long term strategy for personal development and narrative change, enabling the prisoner to perceive themselves beyond their offender status — a status which the prison is designed to entrench. Rather, education is now utilised as a short term intervention to fix a particular criminogenic problem — poor numeracy or literacy skills. We see this perpetuated in the limited teaching hours that can be provided under OLASS 4 contracts even for remedial learning. It is in this shift that we see the real malignancy of rehabilitative ideologies as they currently exist in, and influence, the penal settings of England and Wales — including in prison education.

As with any policy the entrenchment of new public management ideals had both good and bad consequences: for instance it resulted in improved financial regulation and bought a degree of equilibrium to penal governance; however, on the other hand staff and prisoner interactions and relationships became increasingly characterised by bureaucratised mechanisms which resulted in a breakdown of the lubricating interactions of everyday life.[30] This bureaucratisation resulted in three core issues which has negatively impacted on education and learning within prisons: the first was a wholesale adoption of a contractual model of education delivery in the mid to late 1990s which devolved, to a degree, responsibility for education away from the prison governor to education providers. This led to prison education becoming a for profit enterprise which shifted education from general learning with localised, establishment specific, curricula to a more standardised and profitable one-size-fits-all model which became based upon the delivery of discrete (and cheap) remedial education or basic skills courses.[31] A consequence of this was that significant proportions of the prisoner population were no longer being catered for in terms of educational provision as courses were no longer offered at varying levels.[32] A second issue was the implementation of prison education key performance targets which resulted in the prioritising of formal accredited basic skills courses that could be easily audited and evidenced which, unfortunately, led in some quarters to practices which prioritised quantity of courses delivered over the quality of prisoner educational experience. The final issue here was with the development of OLASS 4 and the constrained and austere prison whereby educational, and other, budgets were both reduced and constricted in such ways as to almost guarantee that educational provision became limited, generalised and insufficient to meet the needs of many prisons or prisoners. This has hampered the innovation of educational staff as it has reduced their freedom to deliver quality learning experiences — learning which could go beyond the instrumental aims of remedial certificate attainment. Interestingly, David Cameron in his speech on prison reform[33] highlighted this very situation as a failing of contemporary practice and has indicated a move back to giving prison governors more direct control of the education provision in their prisons so that they can match need to supply.

Much of the rhetoric around prison education and the justification for the current status quo is that education needs to be tied to employability — hence numeracy, literacy and IT.

A further problem attaches to the actual utility of the education provision currently being offered within the modern prison. Much of the rhetoric around prison education and the justification for the current status quo is that education needs to be tied to employability

30. Warr, J (2008), 'Personal reflections on prison staff', in J Bennett, B Crewe and A Wahidin (eds), *Understanding Prison Staff*, Willan Publishing, 17-29.
31. Clements, P (2004), 'The Rehabilitative Role of Arts Education in Prison: Accommodation or Enlightenment?', *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, Vol. 23(2), pps. 169-178.
32. Prisoners Education Trust (2013), *Brain Cells: Listening to Prisoner Learners*, (3rd Edn), London: PET.
33. See 1.

— hence numeracy, literacy and IT. However, much of the education provided, being remedial in nature, has little utility beyond the walls of the prison. Whilst there are benefits of staying occupied and of achievement for prisoners who have previously no educational attainment there is a danger that this can set those prisoners up to fail when they realise that, beyond that attainment and beyond the wall, those basic certificates are largely meaningless. Discrimination against those with criminal records in the job market is rife — it is incredibly difficult to convince employers to even interview a person with a criminal record and most job applications require that you do in fact declare. Furthermore, in a strained employment market (such as we currently have) where having a degree is no guarantee of success, having qualifications that are not equitable with even a high GCSE is insufficient to make a former prisoner's CV attractive let alone to mitigate the stigmata of their incarceration.

Perhaps the most blatant example of this is when it comes to technology and IT systems. Nearly every profession now requires, if not expertise then certainly familiarity with, differing computer based platforms/programmes. However, access to such platforms and systems is entirely hampered throughout the prison estate of England and Wales. What access prisoners do have is limited and remedial and often outdated (as is the technology that prison staff and management are forced to utilise and are plagued by). This has already resulted in a situation where, as Jewkes and Johnston[34] argue, prisoners are rendered caveman-esque in terms of the forms and nature of technology that even primary school children can now, and are expected to, utilise. Even where computer suites are present in prisons they can often lie dormant because of the double constraint of teaching hours under OLASS 4 and the glacial progress in the establishment and adoption of an online campus. In two different prisons that I happened to work in between 2011 and 2014 — the computer suite in one establishment was so unused that it was used by wing staff to store broken furniture and in the other, a prison holding over 600, it was open to a group of 8 students one morning session a week. Such situations render the education of prisoners, in this sense, useless as there is no utility to it when it comes to employability. Instead education becomes a means of keeping prisoners occupied under the guise of preparation for release. What compounds this is the degree of denial which can exist on this issue when it comes to both prison managers and education providers — whereas it can be a constant source of frustration for prisoners and teachers alike.[35]

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Once Upon a Time … Prison Education in the Past

The situation described above was not always the case. The state of prison education has, with interference and artifice, evolved into the enervated entity that we currently see. Once upon a time prison education was different, it wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination but it did involve more pedagogical aims. For instance, in the mid-1990s when I was located in a long-term young offenders institution the Head of Education Department ran a non-accredited General Studies course which was concerned with looking at contemporary news stories, films, articles, music and any interests of prisoners and involved discussing and deconstructing these media in an informal but yet critical way. The purpose of this class was to develop discussion between prisoners and the tutor around issues that went beyond the prison wall. As noted the class was not accredited but was designed to complement other qualification based courses that prisoners as learners would undertake. In many ways the purpose of this class was to supplement, cement, entrench and expand upon the learning that prisoners as students engaged in. For instance, it was the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau so in one class she showed everyone a photograph that was believed to have been taken in the extermination camp. It showed a pit filled with the gaunt and gelid bodies of slain Jews and Romanis. Standing on the rim of the pit is a young SS Blockfuhrer uniformed soldier, smoking, whilst staring into the pit. The image is a famous one. The tutor posed the scenario that one of the people in the pit is still alive and hiding under the bodies of their

34. Jewkes, Y and Johnston, H (2009), 'Cavemen in an Era of Speed-of-Light Technology: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Communication within Prisons', *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice,* Vol. 48(2), pps. 132-143.
35. See 20.

compatriots and then asked the class to discuss how the two figures, the SS soldier and the man in the pit, feel at the time of the photo. The purpose was to empathise, understand and explain the emotion of the two contrasted individuals. The class had no auditable merit in the traditional sense — but as a learning experience it was one of the most powerful I have ever experienced. The evocation of emotion, coupled with the learning of the death camp and the following discussion between prisoner learners which lasted well beyond the class was learning at its best.

In HMP Gartree from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s (and perhaps beyond) there existed a flamboyantly didactic tutor who would enthusiastically engage prisoners in wide-ranging unstructured, critical and evocative discussions on subjects as diverse as military history, classical and contemporary literature, drama and poetry as well as politics and current affairs. Again these discussions were not formal or predicated upon the achievement of qualifications but instead designed to challenge and encourage deeper reading, thinking and discussion of issues beyond the prisoner and their direct circumstance. Though he taught on a range of accredited courses it was the free ranging and discursive lessons that stuck most firmly. One example was in the middle of discussing social norms in a Sociology class, when a prisoner understood a particular point, this tutor made a throw away comment about feeling like Octavius after the battle of Actium. This inevitably led to the questions of who was Octavius and what was the battle of Actium, upon which the teacher launched into a detailed and spontaneous lecture on classical politics in Rome after the fall of Julius Caesar and a detailed explanation of the battle itself. This led to further discussion and informal lessons on famous battles and the role they played in the political landscapes of the nations in which they occurred. On one occasion we arrived in class to discover that the tutor had bought in an exhaustive and minutely accurate model recreation of the battle at Gettysburg which we, as a class, would play in dice determined role-play. All along accompanied by a running commentary on what political importance the battle had for the civil war and the US ever since. Once again this learning was not proscribed by accredited measures and nor did it appear on the curricula but it was nevertheless an engaging, evocative and profound (as well as fun) learning experience that enabled all those there to expand their imaginations and knowledge beyond the stultifying walls of the main lifer centre.

Finally, in HMP Wellingborough there was a philosophy class taught by Alan Smith[36] where both the great philosophical topics and central thinkers were discussed in an open, critical, challenging, exploratory and reinforcing way. Again these classes were not accredited and did not result in any formal outcome, neither were they remedial in nature. The topics of metaphysics, ethics and epistemology went beyond basic skill and challenged the intellectual levels of all concerned. However, the class was also open to all regardless of literacy skill or educational ability. Prisoners engaged in these philosophical debates in ways that were supportive of each other, respectful towards one another, that enabled close examination of one another's perspectives and lines of reasoning and that allowed, in a very safe space, prisoners to be both vulnerable in admitting their ignorance on issues and empowered by challenging and overcoming that ignorance.

The class had no auditable merit in the traditional sense — but as a learning experience it was one of the most powerful I have ever experienced.

Prison Education as Transformative Process

What characterises all three of these examples is not only the complementary pedagogical practices evidenced but also the fact that in these classes learning for learning's sake was privileged, embraced and celebrated. It was the joy of learning, of expanding one's parameters beyond the stultification and psychological decortication that typically marks the prison experience. Though these classes had benefits and purposes beyond this fact the simple reality was that they were based in notions that informal, discursive and critical discussions could have wide-ranging and significant impact on personal, educational, cognitive and emotional development — the so called 'soft skills'. The tutors were also free to develop and innovate in ways that made these classes worthwhile. They could pursue the interests of their class and structure learning around the knowledge and experience of their students. They could return to those very pedagogical aims of personal development or growth that makes the process enjoyable for tutors, worthwhile for prisoner learners and efficacious in achieving long term impact. In fact such learning can go far more towards developing and entrenching positive cognitive skills than any of the best taught

36. Smith, A (2013), *Her Majesty's Philosophers*, Waterside Press.

Thinking Skills Programmes. The sad truth is that such learning and tutoring is proscribed under the current contractual system in prison education and has, as a result, become a rarity, if not a distant memory, in most prison education departments.

A further point to be considered here is concerned with the emotional geographies that was mentioned earlier. We know that even in the most progressive and supportive learning environments historically bad experiences of education can impact on student learning.[37] Impositional and didactic teaching, reminiscent of that which takes place in mainstream school education, can evince negative emotional responses in even University students and is something that lecturing staff are increasingly having to mitigate against in contemporary Higher and Adult Education.[38] One mechanism by which this is being achieved is the encouragement of student as producer — whereby students play an active part in the development of their learning and the classroom moves from an impositional to a collaborative space.[39] This breaks the formal barrier in the class and makes the space one where development and growth is the primary aim — not instrumental outcomes[40] — though of course this still has relevance. This fundamentally changes the interaction in the fixed space and thus changes the emotional timbre evinced therein.

We know that even in the most progressive and supportive learning environments historically bad experiences of education can impact on student learning.

Evidence highlights that poor educational experience, as opposed to attainment, is very high in prisoner populations.[41] As such, in order to mitigate these negative experiences and make student learning in prison different from that previously experienced tutors need to move away from more formal processes of teaching and actually further encourage prisoners to be actively involved in the development of their own learning. This is what informal and discursive learning allows — it provides a means of learning that can be efficacious for the individual (and beyond) in ways that formal, remedial and instrumental education cannot. It also allows for inclusive and critical engagement which enables the student learner to develop the ability to perceive not only their own perspectives and positionality but also that of others. This also builds empathy, in unempathetical circumstances,[42] and teaches prisoners to work collaboratively and respectfully with each other and their tutor in circumstances that is often designed to isolate and singularise the prisoner. When education departments achieve this they can alter the emotional contours of their department in such ways to make the environment a developmental one rather than utility focused one. This in turn can impact on the overall emotional geography of the prison education department, — from a disciplinary and constrained environment to a pedagogical and transformative one — to the benefit of all.

Further to this point Freire[43] notes that formal and formulaic education, such as that which is often found in prisons, which he refers to as 'banking' or depository education, turn people not into productive, thinking learners but rather 'receiving objects' who remain constrained by, and reliant upon, the oppressive apparatuses to which they are subject. The parallels with extant prison education here are obvious — prisoners are not taught to be learners who can escape their offender narratives (as they are required to do) but are rather chained into educational processes that reproduce, reaffirm and reconstitute the prisoner's reified identity in terms of the disciplinary discourses thus far outlined. In order for education to escape its oppressive (and disciplinary) tendencies and for it to produce active learners Freire[44] argues that it needs to be reconstructed as a problem-posing enterprise which demystifies reality and aids the oppressed (prisoners in

37. Zepke, N and Leach L (2010), 'Improving Student Engagement: Ten proposals for action', *Active Learning in Higher Education,* Vol. 11(3), (pps. 167-177).
38. Race P (2014), *Making Learning Happen: A Guide for Post Compulsory Education,* 3rd Edn, London: Sage.
39. Healey, M, Bovill, C and Jenkins, A (2015), 'Students as Partners in Learning', in J Lea (ed), *Enhancing Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Engaging with the Dimensions of Practice*, Open University Press.
40. Neary, M and Thody, A (2009), 'Learning Landscapes: Designing a Classroom of the Future', in L Bell, H Stevenson and M Neary (eds), *The Future of Higher Education: Policy, Pedagogy and the Student Experience*, Continuum International Publishing Group.
41. Graham, K (2014), 'Does School Prepare Men for Prison?', *City: Analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action,* Vol. 18(6), pps. 824-836.
42. See 20.
43. Freire, P (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, The Continuum Publishing Company.
44. See 45.

this sense) in gaining the ability to critically perceive the world, their placement in it at present and in the future. This critical ability enables them to not only take charge of their learning, making it more efficacious, but to also change their placement and narrative by understanding what it means to be human in human society. This is what allows the learner, and by extension education, to become truly transformative. Looking back at the three examples given this is what each of those tutors were engaged in — they were, by encouraging critical, free, non-judgemental discussion on given topics allowing prisoner learners to interact with themselves, the tutors and the formal spaces in ways that mitigated not only the power ladenness of the environment but also negative previous experiences of education whilst at the same time instilling within their classes those pedagogical aims of metacognition, thinking skills and emotional intelligence — elements which could facilitate true transformative narrative change from prisoner to member of society. This is the goal of transformative education — it enables people, including prisoners, to change the way they think about the world and, more importantly, themselves. As Smith notes when discussing the purpose of education in prison: 'What, after all, does education offer to people if not a greater sense of being human?[45]

Conclusion

In conclusion this paper has argued that there are a number of problems that beset prison education today. These problems range from the fact that the prison is formulated around discourses of control and discipline (and this, unfortunately, includes ideation's and practices of rehabilitation), that the contemporary prisoner is reified as a simulacra — a risk laden offender who primarily exists as a bureaucratic entity to be managed; that prison education has been forced to move from general pedagogical aims to ones based in cultures of auditing and intervention which has resulted in a frustrated and constrained prison education that often fails/struggles to reconcile its worthwhile aims with its corporeal practices. This failure/struggle means that education is often frustrating for those staff working within it and largely fails the prisoner learners with whom it is concerned. It is only when prison education is divorced from the disciplinary discourses that haunt the wider prison and when prison education is established in environments that represent nexuses of care and welfare can it be affective. It is also only when prison education is designed around personal, emotional, cognitive and educational development rather than numbers of participants, when prison education is aimed at the individual and their needs rather than some imagined generalised entity and when prison education is designed around learning for learning's sake as opposed to auditable measures will it be effective. Finally, it is only when prison education is designed to instil the necessary critical skills which challenge and demystify the prisoner's reality rather than the gaining of meaningless basic qualifications that have little or no real-world value and when prison education recognises and privileges the benefits of such informal learning processes can it be truly transformative. It is then and only then that education in prison will serve the interests of the prisoner, the prison and the public. Then, and only then will prison education be truly fit for purpose.

45. http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/apr/08/prison-philosophy-classes?CMP=share_btn_tw