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Learning to Fail?

Prisoners with special educational needs

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Introduction

Young people and adults with special educational needs (SEN) constitute a significant group in the prison estate, in terms of their numbers and the various challenges they face. In recent years a body of academic literature and official reports has emerged which has drawn some attention to this vulnerable group. The academic material has been written predominantly from medical, psychological or psychiatric perspectives and, similar to official reports, is concerned largely with strategies that might help prisoners with SEN manage their sentences and/or assist prisons in dealing with such prisoners.¹

Given this recent attention, one might not consider SEN prisoners to be an *invisible* group in the prison estate. However, from a critical perspective, apart from a small number of notable exceptions, what is absent is a sociological examination which not only addresses the serious challenges that people with special educational needs encounter *in* prison, but which considers these in the light of structural and individual trajectories to prison.² One crucial area where the problems of prisoners with SENs may be exacerbated, and which can bring into sharp relief wider inequalities, is prison education. Recent official policy places education at the heart of prisoner rehabilitation but current practice in prison education is notoriously poor, for young people in particular, and largely mirrors the narrow, traditional approaches found in state schooling. Such approaches to prison education are fundamentally reactive and endorse a pragmatic logic of a 'technical fix' to problems which are rooted at a deep level of structural inequality. Further, they are premised on an unproblematised conceptualisation (perhaps even

fetishization) of 'education' as a curative strategy for those whose previous experiences of education have been unhappy, inhibiting and disrupted, as is often the case for those with special educational needs.

This article represents a thought piece reflecting on the interplay between schooling, social exclusion and prison for those with special educational needs and its aims are two-fold. First, to outline some of the concerns around incarcerated young people and adults who fall into this category. We will provide some definitional parameters and, whilst acknowledging the often obfuscatory effects of official classifications, draw on these to outline the proportion of the prison population who are affected by these challenges. Second, we will examine the role of education (or perhaps 'schooling' is a more apt term in some contexts) both within the prison *and* in schools, arguing that for young people with SENs the school can represent the start of a 'pipeline' to prison. 'Schooling', that is to say, is a part of the problem. Consequently, the presentation of current forms of prison education as a panacea to problems that, for many, *began with education* is, at best, unrealistic.

To be clear we do not intend to argue against the benefits of learning or education in prison *per se*. On the contrary, as educators ourselves we acknowledge the life-enhancing potential of learning, and this obviously includes that which takes place in secure environments. And there clearly exist some excellent projects in various prisons that provide pedagogically innovative, rewarding and life-enriching experiences for those who undertake them (and, indeed those who teach / facilitate them).³ However, these do not exist in every prison (or even in most) and, where they do exist, they are generally to be found in the adult estate. We will therefore argue, by focusing on young people with

1. See for example Young, S., Moss, D., Sedgwick, O., Fridman, M. and Hodgkins, P (2015) 'A meta-analysis of the prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in incarcerated populations', *Psychological Medicine*, 45, pp. 247–258; Gudjonsson, G. H., Wells, J., & Young, S. (2011). Motivation for offending among prisoners and the relationship with Axis I and Axis II disorders and ADHD symptoms, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 50, pp. 64–68.
2. See for example Graham, K. (2014) 'Does school prepare men for prison?', *City*, 18 (6), pp. 824–836; Ellis, K. and France, A. (2012) 'Being Judged, Being Assessed: Young people's perspective of assessment in youth justice and education', *Children and Society*, 26, pp. 112–123.
3. For a discussion of such projects see the special edition of the *Prison Service Journal*, vol 225, May 2016, specifically the following articles: Armstrong, R. and Ludlow, A. 'Educational Partnerships Between Universities and Prisons: How Learning Together can be Individually, Socially and Institutionally Transformative'; Darke, S. and Aresti, A. 'Connecting Prisons and Universities through Higher Education'; Szifris, K. 'Philosophy in Prisons: Opening Minds and Broadening Perspectives through philosophical dialogue'.

SEN in particular, that the commonly found emphasis on traditional, formalised and depoliticised approaches to education in prison represents, what Welch termed, an 'irony' of imprisonment, whereby the 'solution' may actually be re-creating the 'problem'.⁴

Some definitional parameters

The term special educational needs covers a wide range of conditions, symptoms and requirements. It includes those with graduated 'learning difficulties' (specific, moderate, severe and profound, and multiple); Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESN); Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), including ADHD; autism spectrum disorder (ASD); physical disability and 'other' difficulties/disabilities.⁵ Diagnoses and behaviours associated with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) are particularly significant. Often demonstrating behaviours such as inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, this group are more likely to encounter cumulative problems in education. Concomitantly, those whose offending behaviours prevail into adulthood are more likely to have additional learning and language difficulties associated with ADHD, and are disproportionately represented in criminal justice settings.

Within the broad 'umbrella' classification outlined here there is limited definitional clarity. Terms such as 'learning difficulties', for example, can encompass a multiplicity of meanings. Further, the wide variety of measurement techniques used, which vary depending on their purpose, along with shifts in forms of classification, add further complications. However, the most (and consistently) common types of primary needs for pupils with SEN in state funded schools are those who fall within BESD, SLCN and moderate learning difficulty categories. These are also the groups who appear in prison statistics more frequently and hence, for the purposes of this article, when we refer to special educational needs, we are generally referring to these categories.

School to prison pipeline

'He who opens a school door closes a prison'
(Victor Hugo).

An important body of work has emerged from the USA which has highlighted that, in direct contrast to Hugo's famous statement, for particular groups of children and young people, the school door can act as a gateway, or 'pipeline' to custody.⁶ Whilst this phenomenon encompasses poorer children generally, it has been found that those from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs and learning difficulties are disproportionately affected.

There has been far less discussion of this phenomenon from a UK perspective but the work that does exist confirms that for children with SEN, their schooling experiences can contribute directly to a similar trajectory.⁷ The negative impacts of mainstream schooling on children and adolescents with SEN are multi-faceted. Rather than education helping them to mature and develop, academic functioning within the classroom can become a site of contestation exacerbated through conflictual interactions with teachers and peer groups.⁸ Consequently, misunderstanding and increased frustrations prevail for those

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children and young people unable to access the curriculum due to SEN and associated difficulties.⁹ Graham argues that the advent of mass schooling has created cultural expectations that make the behaviours associated with SEN *unacceptable* in the 'disciplined' classroom, rather than them being *inherently* problematic. Traditional approaches to teaching — which require prolonged periods of attention and impulse control — naturally disadvantage students with some SEN who might otherwise be very capable of learning (ADHD being the obvious, but not the only, example). Neoliberal education policies, which have led to increased class sizes, heavily routinized structure, standardised curriculum and

4. Welch, M. (2005) *Ironies of Imprisonment*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

5. Department for Education. (2014) *Statistical Release SFR 31/2014 Children with special educational needs: An Analysis*. London: DfE. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/350129/SFR31_2014.pdf

6. See for example Kim, C., Losen, D. and Hewitt, D. (2010) *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Structuring Legal Reform* New York: New York University Press; Mallett, C. (2016) *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Comprehensive Assessment*, New York: Springer; Annamma, S., Morrison, D. and Jackson, D. (2014) 'Disproportionality fills in the gaps: Connections between achievement, discipline and education in the school to prison pipeline', *Berkeley Review of Education*, Vol 5, No 1, pp.53–87.

7. Graham, K. (2014) 'Does school prepare men for prison?' *City* 18 (6) pp. 824–836.

8. Barkley, R. (2006) *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment*. 3rd Ed. New York: Guilford.

9. Redmond, S. and Rice, M. (2002) 'Stability of behavioural ratings of children with specific language impairment' *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research*. 45, pp. 190–201.

constant assessment, driven by the introduction of performance league tables, can intensify a sense of frustration and despair for those who are struggling to cope in class. It has been well documented that children can quickly develop a sense of alienation in such settings, sometimes becoming defensive or oppositional.¹⁰ Constant testing and academic assessment 'incentivize and encourage 'low-performing' students to drop out'.¹¹ And in a neoliberal education system where 'failure' is blamed on personal shortcomings the 'unruly', 'disordered', non-conforming child — whose behaviour is the converse of that which is required for an 'orderly' school — is singled out as the problem.¹²

In an environment where behaviour is heavily monitored, infractions in mainstream schools increasingly lead to suspensions or exclusions. Two thirds of children permanently excluded from school have SEN whilst pupils with BESD were significantly more likely to receive a fixed period of exclusion.¹³ School exclusion reduces job and other post-school opportunities and in an era of welfare 'roll back', such deprivations can increase the likelihood of engagement in the illicit economy or other criminal activity.¹⁴

For 'disorderly' young people recognised as delinquent (or who have offended), an external alternative to mainstream schooling is provided in pupil referral units (PRU) however this can be counterproductive given the 'abnormal environment' of segregated learning and low rates of academic attainment, training and employment.¹⁵ Moreover, being consigned to external units, labelled as underachieving and disruptive, amplifies social exclusion and increases offending risks.¹⁶ Thus, as

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Graham has argued, just as early educational experience can 'mould aspirations and inculcate the personal, cultural and social dispositions' that are necessary for *successful* transition into adulthood, so too can it create the conditions that may lead to, and the characters and attitudes required for, incarceration. Or, to put it another way, those who end up in prison are 'prepared for their adult role by the years of experiencing school on the margins'.¹⁷ It is not our intention to pathologise this group or imply causation of criminogenic risk. Rather, we simply wish to identify the complex interrelationships between interrupted education, school exclusion and conflict with the law.

Recent data highlights the disproportionate numbers of young people in YOIs with fractured education experiences noting that around 40 per cent have not attended school since the age of 14 years and just under nine out of ten have been excluded at some point in their schooling.¹⁸ Moreover, previous studies demonstrate a corollary of ADHD characteristics and an increased risk of 'anti-social' behaviours intersecting with adverse school and social settings.¹⁹

The following example highlights the key challenges we describe.²⁰ 'Joe' exhibited many of the behaviours associated with ADHD, and was eventually diagnosed and prescribed Ritalin for his symptoms. He was referred to the children's mental health service CAMHS but had continued difficulties in formal education, which culminated in him being permanently excluded (for 'hurling abuse') and sent to special education provision. Joe said that he tended to 'act first and think about the consequences afterwards'. By the age of 16, despite no

10. Redmond and Rice (2002); Barkley (2006).

11. Ossei-Owusu, S. (2012: 301) 'Decoding youth and neoliberalism: pupils, precarity, and punishment', *Journal of Poverty* 16 pp. 296–307.

12. Stephenson, M., Giller, H. & Brown, S. (2011) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

13. Cole (2015:7) *Mental Health Difficulties and Children at Risk of Exclusion from Schools in England*. Oxford: University of Oxford; DfE (2014: 22).

14. Graham, 2014.

15. Stephenson, M. *et al* (2011) .

16. *Ibid*.

17. Graham, K. (2014: 825). NB. Graham's research focused on adult male prisoners.

18. MoJ (2016) 'Review of the Youth Justice System. An interim report of emerging findings'. London: Ministry of Justice. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-the-youth-justice-system>

19. Hughes, N. (2015a) Neurodisability in the youth justice system: recognising and responding to the criminalisation of neurodevelopmental impairment. *Howard League What is Justice? Working papers 17/25*. London: The Howard League for Penal Reform; Gordon, J., Diehl, R. and Anderson, L. (2012) 'Does ADHD matter? Examining attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder on the likelihood of recidivism among detained youth' *Journal of Offender Rehabilitations*. 51, pp. 497–518.

20. This example is taken from Berelowitz, S. (2011) 'I think I must have been born bad': Emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people in the youth justice system'. *The Office of the Children's Commissioner*, (2011:33). www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

significant previous criminal record, he found himself in trouble with the law, having committed a 'serious offence' and received a custodial sentence.

Once in the criminal / youth justice system, progress may be accelerated for those who have difficulty understanding and responding to the process. Many of those who work with youth offenders for example, have indicated that children and young people with SEN have difficulties understanding what they need to do to successfully complete an intervention and the consequences of failing to comply with court orders. Accordingly, they are more likely than those without such impairments to receive a custodial sentence.²¹

Specific numbers of people in custody with SEN are difficult to determine and estimates vary. However, even if we cannot assume complete accuracy, the available data does provide us with an indication of the high proportion of people affected. For example, 20 per cent of the adult prison population are reported as needing help with reading and writing or numeracy whilst between 20–30 per cent have a learning difficulty which interferes with their ability to fully understand criminal justice processes.²² In terms of young people, the statistics paint a particularly stark picture. Bryan and Mackenzie (2008) indicate that 60 per cent of children who offend have difficulties with speech, language and communication needs (compared with 5–14 per cent in the general population), and half of this group have poor or very poor communication skills.²³ Moreover, Bromley Briefings (2015) report that 25 per cent of those in the youth justice system have identified special needs, with 46 per cent rated as having underachieved in school, and 29 per cent having difficulties with literacy and numeracy.²⁴ Another source reports that 18 per cent of incarcerated children and young people have a special needs statement whilst 21 per cent testified

they had learning difficulties.²⁵ Rates of ADHD are around five times higher (at 30 per cent) for young people under 18 in custody than in the general population and dyslexia is also thought to be around five times higher.²⁶ Additionally, a recent review of the youth justice system reports that half of 15 to 17 year olds entering Youth Offending Institutions (YOI) have literacy or numeracy levels consistent with academic expectations of 7 to 11 year olds.²⁷

Although the above statistics cover a wide range of educational needs and learning difficulties, the issue here is clear. Those children and young people who have difficulty with education and, in particular, whose behaviours are not conducive to formal (neoliberal) schooling practices, find themselves embroiled in the criminal justice and custodial systems at an alarming rate. This trajectory, statistics clearly suggest, can continue into the adult prison population however, in the remainder of this article we focus on the experiences of young people with SEN in custody, specifically in relation to the role of education in the secure estate.

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Special educational needs in the prison environment

There exist no formal procedures for identifying people with SEN on reception to

prison or once they are admitted so, as noted above, it is difficult to know, with certainty, how many people this affects. What is clear, however, is that whilst prison can be immensely traumatic and bewildering for *any* person, youth or adult (and especially so for those who are there for the first time), for those with SEN, the ability to adjust to life inside can be particularly challenging.

Studies indicate that a high rate of prisoners with learning difficulties have problems reading and comprehending standard prison information (around 80 per cent according to the Bromley Briefings, 2016). As a result, many struggle to understand and follow prison

21. Jones, G. and Talbot, J. (2010) 'No One Knows: The bewildering passage of offenders with learning disability and learning difficulty through the criminal justice system', *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 20, pp.1–7.
22. Bromley Briefings (2015: 3) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile Autumn 2015. London: Prison Reform Trust. <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>
23. Bryan, K. and Mackenzie, J. (2008) *Meeting the speech, language and communication needs of vulnerable young children*, London: Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.
24. Bromley Briefings (2015:48).
25. Bromley Briefings (2013:6) *Prison: the facts Bromley Briefings Summer 2013*, London: Prison Reform Trust.
26. Taylor C (2016) *Great Expectations: Towards better learning outcomes for young people and adults in custody*. London: Prisoners' Education Trust.
27. Eme, R. (2008) 'Attention-Deficit /Hyperactivity Disorder and the Juvenile Justice System', *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 8:2, pp. 174–185.

rules and regimes. Difficulties in being able to adapt to regimes and routines can lead to frustration and to some prisoners 'lashing out'.²⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly then, those with learning difficulties are found to be significantly more likely to have broken prison rules, five times as likely to have been subject to control and restraint techniques and three times as likely to have spent time in segregation.²⁹ Difficulties in reading, writing and general communication abilities can have adverse effects on relationships with staff and fellow prisoners. Indeed, as Jones and Talbot (2010) explain, if those with conditions which affect communication skills (ADHD for example) are not identified and responded to appropriately 'there are fertile grounds for misunderstanding and confrontation'.³⁰ This could go some way towards explaining why prisoners with learning difficulties report having experienced victimisation from other prisoners.³¹ The impact of literacy problems is also felt in terms of communicating and maintaining relationships with family, friends and advocates outside of the prison and, as Loucks (2007) found, can mean some prisoners become withdrawn and isolated. For example, Joe (whose case is outlined above) described feeling isolated in custody and manipulated by other prisoners. His distress eventually led him to self-harm which, in turn saw him removed to the health care unit and, in his words, 'drugged'.

Perhaps one of the most obvious and detrimental outcomes for those managing a prison sentence with a special educational need is the decreased likelihood of successful engagement in various educational, training and other 'rehabilitative' programmes. Although generally considered progressive, from a critical perspective the concept (and practice) of 'rehabilitation' in prison is not unproblematic. As Warr (2016) articulates, the discourse that underpins many rehabilitative

(particularly 'offender behaviour') programmes is rooted in positivistic conceptualisations of 'deviancy'.³² Further, rehabilitative philosophies 'are more often designed...to reformulate the prisoner's identity into a more compliant institutional one' thus conflating the notion of rehabilitation with the priorities of institutional security and penal control.³³ That said, there are still obvious advantages to engaging with such programmes — participation can be a criterion for a successful parole application for example — hence why many prisoners are keen to take part. Prisoners with learning difficulties, who often feel unable or reluctant to participate can become 'simply [...] labelled difficult or unwilling to engage'.³⁴ And for those who do attempt to engage, as Loucks (2007) notes; conditions which are symptomized by poor concentration or attention (such as ADHD) can lead to

insufficient or inappropriate participation and, sometimes, suspension from the programmes. The consequences of this can be an increase in lock-up time and exacerbated feelings of boredom. Perhaps not surprisingly then, depression and anxiety, which are commonly experienced by all groups in prison, are found at a higher rate amongst those with learning difficulties.³⁵ Prisoners with learning difficulties are more than three times as likely as prisoners without impairments to have clinically significant depression or anxiety.³⁶

Official rhetoric has claimed to place education at the core of custodial regimes. In May this year, in her review of adult education in prison, Dame Sally Coates stated that prison education should be the 'engine of prisoner rehabilitation'. The then Prime Minister David Cameron agreed, remarking that education was of central importance for prison rehabilitation.³⁷ He stated that he was depending on education to reduce reoffending rates. This goal has been the particular

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28. Loucks, N. (2007) 'No-one Knows: The prevalence and associated needs of offenders with learning difficulties and learning disabilities', *Prison Reform Trust*, London.
29. Bromley Briefings (2013:6).
30. Jones, G. and Talbot, J. (2010) 'No One Knows: The bewildering passage of offenders with learning disability and learning difficulty through the criminal justice system', *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, 20, p5.
31. Talbot, J. (2007) 'No one knows. Identifying and supporting prisoners with learning difficulties and learning disabilities: the views of prison staff. *Prison Reform Trust*, London.
32. Warr, J. (2016) 'Transformative Dialogues: (Re)privileging the informal in prison education', *Prison Service Journal*, May, Vol 225.
33. Warr (2016) p20.
34. Ministry of Justice (2011:23) *Ensuring Equality* PSI 32/2011. London: NOMS.
35. Jones and Talbot (2010).
36. Talbot, J. (2007).
37. Cameron, D. (2016) 'Prison Reform: Prime Minister's Speech' - <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prison-reform-prime-ministers-speech>. In the same speech he also focused on the use of technology (specifically a GPS tracking systems which will enable prisoners to work outside the prison) as a means of reducing crime.

focus of regimes for young people in custody and since 2010 there have been various policy proposals implemented that aim to achieve it. For example, in 2014, the coalition government proposed the opening of 'secure colleges' as a response to existing poor levels of education for young offenders. These plans were eventually abandoned (after being condemned as offering nothing more than 'modern day borstals')³⁸ but the idea of doubling the number of hours per week that young people would spend in education (from 15 to 30) was introduced in 2015. Last year, Charlie Taylor reiterated that education should be at the heart of the rehabilitation of young offenders and advocated the creation of 'secure schools' as the best way to ensure young people engage with and benefit from their time in custody.³⁹

Taylor's proposals have been met with broad approval and, on one level, emphasising education as a key aspect of incarceration is clearly not a bad thing, representing as it does a departure from the customary regulative and punitive discourse of penal responses. However, the success (and by this we refer to the benefits for the student, not the interests of the institution) of such schemes depends, of course, on the substantive pedagogy implemented. Current educational arrangements for young people in custody leave much to be desired in terms of access, curriculum and pedagogy. In terms of access, the habitual rhythms of youth justice and custodial practices — for example, the imposition of short sentences, staff shortages, the exposure to violence within institutions and the number of young people in segregation — all have a seriously detrimental impact on the education offered to young people.⁴⁰

Further, educational needs and plans are assessed as part of a range of 'risks', including re-offending and

access to some courses in young offender institutions is contingent on 'behavioural assessment risk'.⁴¹ In such circumstances, where education is inherently subsumed within a discourse of risk and regulation, there is limited chance of developing an institutional 'culture of learning and aspiration' (as advocated by Taylor) for already marginalised young people. As one young person in Ross Little's (2015) study noted: 'I have a high risk assessment, so there's not much I can do. I can do different stuff but it's all based around education (not practical activities). I don't wanna do education. I kick off a lot and just walk out'.⁴²

Conclusion

In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, education for those in youth custody has (at best) mirrored the most conservative approaches in mainstream schooling. As noted, recent developments have mandated that young people undertake 30 hours of education per week in order that the YOI regime be 'transformed to better reflect a typical school day'.⁴³ This approach has been criticised for its inflexibility, focusing on output measures rather than the needs of young people, and for limiting choice.⁴⁴ Even more worrying, perhaps, is the potential that the goal of achieving the mandatory

number of hours in class becomes an end in itself.

Such traditional approaches to education in prison are premised on a false conviction: that the difficulties and problems which steer young people to prison — problems that are inherently engendered by serious structural inequality — can be redressed by a pedagogical approach that demands conformity and alienates those who don't adapt. Whilst for some people in prison, education might indeed be a positive and 'transformative' experience, according to Little

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38. Mason R (2015) 'Michael Gove scraps £100m 'secure college' plan in U-turn', *The Guardian*, 10 July.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jul/10/michael-gove-scraps-100m-secure-college-plan-uturn>

39. Taylor C (2016) *Great Expectations: Towards better learning outcomes for young people and young adults in custody*, Prisoners' Education Trust.

40. See Taylor (2016) and The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016) *Education in Youth Custody*, Postnote, No 524, May. <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0524/POST-PN-0524.pdf>

41. The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016) *The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016) Education in Youth Custody*, Postnote, No 524, May. <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0524/POST-PN-0524.pdf>

42. Little, R. (2015:36) Putting Education at the heart of custody? The views of children on education in a young offender institution. *British Journal of Community Justice* 13 (2) pp. 27–46.

43. Gov.uk (2014) '30 hours education a week for young offenders', 15 December.

44. See Little (2015) for the views of young offenders regarding limited choice in prison education.

(2015), perceptions of the usefulness of prison education amongst young people in custody are low, especially for those whose previous experiences of schooling has been unhappy and inhibiting, bearing, as they do, 'too much resemblance to the very thing they had responded so badly to before'.⁴⁵ Thus, for young people in custody with SEN who, statistics indicate, generally *have* responded badly to schooling, education might come to represent an 'irony' of imprisonment whereby they are faced with the same disenchantments and exclusions that contributed towards their trajectory to prison in the first instance.

Over the last three decades, neoliberal policies in education, in line with wider social policies, have been reconfigured in order to produce responsibilised and individualised actors. For children and young people who present with non-conformist behaviours, education can become perceived as a 'threat' in that it frequently results in punishment. As McGregor (2009) notes 'behaviour management policies in

schools still tend to focus on individual deficit, casting 'rebellious' students as 'the problem'".⁴⁶ Thus education and punishment can become synonymous, and punishment is generally enforced through exclusion.

In order for education to work — and by this we mean in the best interests of the prisoner as well as the interests of the prison and the public — it has to 'move away from the current disciplinary practices and ideologies that exist within both school and prison education and instead re-privilege those skills that arise when learning occurs for learning's sake'.⁴⁷ However, the prison environment poses specific challenges. As Little (2016) notes, it is unrealistic to expect significant 'success' and rehabilitation in an environment where basic needs (stability, safety, rest, good nutrition) are often not adequately met. Indeed, as he notes, 'if we take a view of education as a form of liberation...then a prison fundamentally fails the basic test of a learning environment'.⁴⁸

45. Little (2015: 40); Statistics indicate that 90% of children in custody had been excluded from school at some point prior to incarceration, whilst 63% boys and 74% girls had been *permanently* excluded prior to imprisonment. See also The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (2016).

46. McGregor, G. (2009:355) 'Educating for (whose) success? Schooling in an age of neo-liberalism' *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 30 (2) pp. 345–358.

47. Warr (2016) p18.

48. Little (2016), p41.