AN EVALUATION OF A LEARNING TOGETHER PARTNERSHIP

Open Book, Goldsmiths University of London
and
HMP&YOI Isis

(supported by Prisoners' Education Trust)

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Introduction

This report presents an evaluation of a Learning Together partnership between Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP&YOI Isis (and supported by the Prisoners' Education Trust [PET]). Learning Together seeks to bring people in prison and university students together to co-learn at a higher education level where students not only study together but they also learn with and from each other through discussions and the sharing of experiences and knowledge (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016). Learning Together presents an opportunity to meet some of the distinct and complex needs in young adults where the core values of equality, distribution of power, a belief in potential, connection, and togetherness may be particularly relevant to young people in prison and their transition to adulthood and desistance pathways. Since the initial conception, Learning Together partnerships have particularly flourished across the UK, however, there are few examples within a younger prison population, despite the potential relevancy to this group. This report presents one of the few partnerships which focuses on young adults, where this evaluation aims to explore the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of Learning Together.

'Unlocked': a Learning Together course

This Learning Together partnership aims to introduce learners to the discipline of sociology through an active research methodology. The course, 'social science research methods', therefore encouraged learners to explore the discipline and conduct research in their situation. The learners chose 'Unlocked' as the course name to symbolise the course as unlocking learners' potential. A total of 20 learners initially enrolled on the course; 10 from HMP&YOI Isis and 10 Goldsmiths students. The course was developed and delivered by a paid tutor from Open Book with support from another Open Book tutor and various other guest lectures from different institutions. The main tutor and guest lecturers had personal experience within the prison context having been previously detained within a prison institution and were currently studying and/or researching prisons within academic institutions. The course consisted of 10 weekly sessions, each lasting for approximately three hours. Additional study groups were also arranged between Isis learners alone and with prison-based education. A final presentation day followed after the course and

learners were eligible for an external qualification (the 'Extended Project Qualification' [EPQ]).

Evaluation methodology

This evaluation utilises a mixed-methods design to gather insights into the strengths and barriers to developing the Learning Together partnership. Given the exploratory nature of this evaluation, a qualitative approach was chosen for the principal research, in which learners took part in individual, semi-structured interviews at the end of the course. In addition to semi-structured interviews, specific issues around learners understanding and engagement with the course content were also examined through a short survey delivered after each session. Systematic observations from tutors were also obtained to capture course administrative data (e.g. attendance, topics, learning methods used) as well as document their general reflections on each session. Qualitative interviews were subjected to a thematic analysis and content and descriptive analysis of observations and surveys were triangulated with the themes gathered from interviews.

Key findings

The findings reveal both the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of the Unlocked Learning Together partnership. The strengths included the shaping and exploration of a multifaceted '***learner identity***' though the provision of person-centred support for Isis learners needs, the use of peers as role models, and the potential of through-the-gate support from Open Book. The course allowed for time and trust to form between the learners (**'*connectedness*'**), where the gender-mix and similarities in age fused the group into a unity where respectful 'banter' and positive social norms were part of a positive learning environment. Transcending the themes was the dialogical approach to learning where learner's reported a collective experience of raising **'*critical consciousness*'** where Isis learners particularly thrived within the learning environment where critical discussions relating to power and society were highly relevant to their lives both within and outside the prison. However, challenges were reported in '***bounding friendships***' which developed as a way to manage the potential risks where Isis learners felt infantilised by the rules and Goldsmith students felt over-burdened by the responsibility placed on them to manage the boundaries. Furthermore, tutors reflected on the challenges of delivering a course with a diverse

set of learners within a prison context, where some difficulties were faced in progressing through the '***artefacts of learning'*** (i.e. external qualification and the research project). Learners were also frustrated at what they saw as the lack of commitment and progress in raising Learner Voice with little action in their suggestions for reforms to prison education (***'precarity of trust'***). The findings point to the complexities of developing Learning Together and Learner Voice within these challenging contexts, where the extent and speed of which reform is possible can be sources of frustrations for those who reside in them.

Discussion and conclusions

The findings support the evidence on the potential role of Learning Together in the desistance pathway, through providing education in a holistic, person-centred approach. The findings highlight the particular value of Learning Together for young adults where peer influence and social interactions are important aspects of young adulthood. Here, 'young adulthood' should be viewed as an asset to be utilised and supported as part of developing positive learner identities, which contrast with the current approach which perceives young adults as unreliable, untruthful and hard to engage. However, Learning Together initiatives need to be mindful of raising false hopes and ensure that the course is delivered with sensitivity in building trust with people in prison where tasks and activities undertaken as part of the course are grounded as artefacts of their own learning rather than products for the prison. Furthermore, the desire for change and progress may be difficult or impossible within the timeframe of the learners, which can lead to frustration and discontent. Both learners and stakeholders should directly and collectively engage in these wider tensions, particularly relating to the challenges of exerting individual agency within structural constraints. There have been a number of developments since this evaluation which are highlighted as well as 20 recommendations for policy, course development, and further research:

1. A specific education policy for young adults
2. Commitment to skills for the future: critical thinking and active learning
3. Commitment to Learner Voice
4. Further development of prison-university partnerships
5. Widening access to higher education
6. Development of a national prison-university network

7. Establish key stakeholder roles

8. Refine objectives and outcomes

9. Increase access into the course

10. Embed additional support for learning

11. Dynamic management of boundaries and risks

12. Emphasise participation and collaboration

13. Early planning and commitment to the final presentation day

14. Increase multi-disciplinary and cross-department working

15. Commitment to robust evaluations

16. Inclusion of learners in planning future developments and design of evaluations

17. Exploration of education and higher education within desistance theories

18. Focus on impact on other outcomes

19. Examination of peer influence and social contexts for learning

20. Exploration of the impact of challenges and tensions

Overall, the findings point to the complexities of developing Learning Together and Learner Voice within these challenging contexts, where the limited possibilities for speedy change can be sources of frustration for those who reside in them. Future Learning Together partnerships should continue to build on the strengths in building learning spaces in prison and promoting higher education learning, but should consider the limitations and barriers which exist in the prison context.

Introduction

This report presents an evaluation of a Learning Together partnership between Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP&YOI Isis (and supported by the Prisoners' Education Trust [PET]). Learning Together seeks to bring people in prison and university students together to co-learn at a higher education level where students not only study together but they also learn with and from each other through discussions and the sharing of experiences and knowledge. Learning can therefore be individually and socially transformative (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016). There has been a growth of Learning Together initiatives across England and Wales, however, few formal evaluations describing the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of Learning Together in prisons. This evaluation examines a partnership which was formed through the shared goals of the prison, university and PET to promote greater engagement and participation in higher education with young men in prison. The partnership includes three key stakeholders:

HMP&YOI Isis

HMP&YOI Isis is a modern category C training prison in south east London, built within the wall line of the high security Belmarsh prison. The prison holds just over 600 convicted men where nearly all of prisoners are under the age of 30 and a significant number under 21. Of these about two-thirds are serving sentences of over two years with just under 40% of the total population serving between four and 10 years (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2016). Recent inspections of the prison highlight the challenges and need for improvements at HMP&YOI Isis; staff shortages have meant prisoners' spend long periods of time locked away in their cells, many felt unsafe, and levels of violence were high with the prison identified as being in the top ten most violent prisons in England. The last inspection in May 2016 concluded that as a training prison, HMP&YOI Isis was
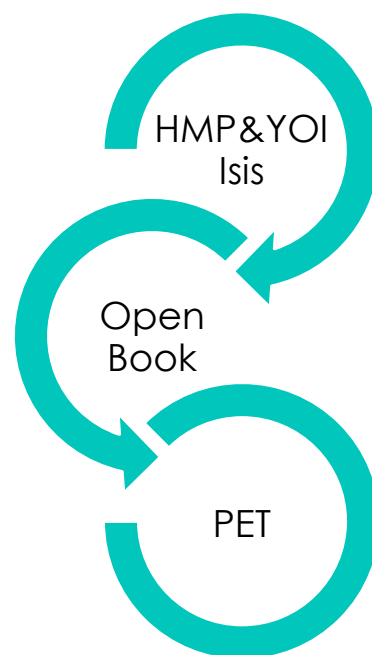
"completely failing in its central purpose" (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2016:p.5). However, since this inspection, a new Governor has been appointed and has introduced a new vision for HMP&YOI Isis which included supporting Learning Together, as well as other initiatives, which seek to place education at the heart of the establishment.

Open Book, Goldsmiths University of London

Open Book[1], based at Goldsmiths, University of London[2], aims to break down the barriers that discourage people from entering higher education. They work closely with a network of agencies to support people from a wide range of non-traditional backgrounds including offending, addiction and mental health, as well as those who have never considered further and higher education as a route to enhancing their future career choices and personal development. Open Book offers a wide range of taster classes (delivered by experienced staff and volunteers) including, Anthropology, Art, Creative Writing, Philosophy, and Music and Performance. The project also offers an Extended Project programme, teaching the basics of academia, which will offer both a qualification and practical experience, allowing students to make genuine applications to foundation and bachelor degrees. Open Book is run by Joe Baden OBE (a former prisoner).

Prisoners' Education Trust (PET)

Prisoners' Education Trust (PET)[3] is a charity that provides funding for a wide-range of distance learning courses and arts and hobby materials for prisoners in England and Wales. Over the past few years, PET have also developed work to champion the case for prisoner learning and advocates the importance of prisoner learner voices and work to influence and change policy and practice in prison education for the better. This Learning Together partnership was initiated by PET as part of a three year programme (supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation) to carry out policy, research and media work to improve the quality of prison education for young people and young adults in custody. PET chose to focus on raising aspirations and access to higher levels of education as this was a gap they identified during the first year of the project, resulting in a report called 'Great

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[1] Further information about Open Book is available on their website: http://www.gold.ac.uk/open-book/
[2] Further information about Goldsmiths is available on their website: www.gold.ac.uk
[3] Further information about PET is available on their website: www.prisonerseducation.org.uk

Expectations: Towards better learning outcomes for young people and young adults in custody' (Taylor, 2016a). Learning Together at HMP&YOI Isis and with Open Book was therefore initiated and supported by PET. Furthermore, PET have recently launched a new network called PUPiL (Prison University Partnerships in Learning) to support and encourage these wider collaborations.

The evaluation

This report presents an evaluation which aims to explore the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of this Learning Together partnership which focused on young adults. The report first presents a review of the literature relating to the theory and development of Learning Together which is followed by an outline of the methods used in this evaluation. The findings are presented with the report concluding with a discussion of the findings and implications and recommendations for practice and research.

Literature review

There are a record number of people residing within prison establishments worldwide (Ministry of Justice, 2014; Walmsley, 2011) with just under 85,000 prisoners detained across the 118 prisons in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2017a). As is the case with prisons internationally, men make up the vast majority of the prison population at approximately 96% with ten percent being young adult men, defined as aged 18 to 20 by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) although now more commonly extended to aged 25 years. This literature review therefore examines the role of education and learning in prison and the development of Learning Together as related to the needs of young adults.

Education and learning in prison

Education one of the seven pathways to resettlement back in society identified by the National Offender Management System (NOMS)[4] in England and Wales and is widely advocated as one of the key elements in the process of change and transformation (Wright, 2006). Much of the focus on education lies in the association with reducing reoffending and the role in the process of desistance. Indeed, a large survey in England and Wales found that many people enter prison having struggled to achieve basic levels of literacy and numeracy skills where 47% reported having no qualifications on entry to prison compared with 15% in the general population. However, those with a qualification were 15% less likely to be reconvicted (Hopkins, 2012). Furthermore, analyses of prisoners who access higher-level courses through funding from PET were 25% less likely to reoffend compared with a matched control group (Clark, 2016). Another report from the RAND Corporation[5], also highlights that prisoners who receive general education and vocational training are significantly less likely to return to prison after release and are more likely to find employment than peers who do not receive such opportunities (Davis et al., 2013). This meta-analysis of studies conducted in the USA, concluded that prisoners who participate in correctional education programs have 43 percent lower odds of returning to prison than those who do not. Education in prison is now well regarded as having a statistically significant impact on reducing re-offending,

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[4] Replaced by Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as of 1 April 2017.
[5] The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. See https://www.rand.org

however, the challenge is now to tease out what types and aspects of education are leading to these outcomes and more broadly, examine the aims of prison education and whether this should be concerned with producing effective workers or on personal growth (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016).

Most commonly, education has been most understood in relation to an individual's employability whereby an individuals' lack of education attainment is linked to criminality and reoffending. Through this deficit framework, education is seen to increases an individual's employability, which in turn diminishes the economic appeal of crime (Blomberg *et al.*, 2011; Lockwood *et al.*, 2012). In contrast, those with low educational achievement may experience difficulty obtaining viable jobs post-release with no legitimate prospects for economic success which ultimately increases their likelihood of reoffending (Reiss & Rhodes, 1963; Vacca, 2004). Although the association between education and employability holds some value, this presents an overly simplistic view of why and how people move away from crime and the motivations for why some engage with education which is not always related to operational and employment gains. A model of rehabilitation that has gained increasing influence is that of desistance theory which sheds light on the more personally transformative effects of education and offending. This section examines desistance theory and prison education further.

Desistance theory and education

Desistance from crime refers to the long-term abstinence from criminal behaviour. Although reducing or ending offending is a key goal for criminal justice practice and policy, the process by which an individual ceases to commit crime is still relatively little understood. However, exploring desistance helps to understand the processes by which people desist and can help to refine criminal justice efforts to help people stop offending. As a summary, the factors related to desistance include:

- Age and maturity: evidence suggests that most people eventually desist during the life-course, where offending behaviour peaks in teenage years, and then starts to decline (the 'age crime curve', (Kazemian, 2007)). Early research suggested that desistance was therefore a natural or biological process akin to puberty ('maturational reform' (Goring, 1913)). Some argue that desistance also involves processes of volition where individuals also make

the 'decision' to give up crime during this ageing process (i.e. by reassessing what is important in life) (Clarke & Cornish, 1985; Cromwell, Olson & Avary, 1991; Lebrich, 1993). Although age remains among the best predictors of desistance, more recent evidence suggests that ageing involves a range of different variables, including biological changes, social transitions, and life experiences which are more relevant to our understanding of desistance (Sampson & Laub, 1992).

- Relationship between the individual and society: here, offending is more likely when an individual's attachment to society is weakened or broken (Sampson, 1995). If individuals believe the goals of society are worthy and an individual has emotional attachment to them, they are then more committed to achieving societal goals through legitimate means. The bonds between the individual and society are formed through formal and informal social institutions and relationships such as school, family and friends, employment, marriage, and parenthood. In this sense, key events in life can trigger changes in an individual's bond to society, where relationships and social connectedness can aid desistance.

- Self-identity: As a recent development, evidence is now emerging about the importance of self-identity in the desistance process (Maruna, 2001). This suggests that the development of a 'pro-social identity' is an important process in desistance. Maruna, (2001) interviewed individuals who had desisted from crime and identified a common psychosocial structure where they saw themselves in control of their futures and had a clear purpose and meaning in their lives. The desisting individuals had found ways to make sense of their past lives and turn them into positives through helping others and creating new identities.

- Cognitive transformations: another model of desistance combines individual agency and social structures (Farrall & Calverley, 2005; Farrall, 2002; Maruna, 2001). Giordano, Cernkovich & Rudolph, (2002) notably outlined a four-part 'theory of cognitive transformation' where they argue that the desistance process involves:
    1. A 'general cognitive openness to change'

2. Exposure and reaction to 'hooks for change' or turning points
3. The envisioning of an appealing and conventional 'replacement self'
4. A transformation in the way the actor views deviant behaviour

This process first involves a period of reflection and reassessment to build an awareness and willingness that change is both desirable and needed. This alone will not lead to desistance without the exposure to an opportunity for change and the individual viewing this as an opportunity to act upon. The third stage then involves the individual's ability to imagine themselves in this new desisting role where previous offending behaviours are no longer desirable or relevant.

The desistance literature therefore forces a move from understanding people as 'offenders' or 'criminals' towards understanding identities, where:

"…VALUING PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY ARE AND FOR WHAT THEY COULD BECOME, RATHER THAN JUDGING, REJECTING OR CONTAINING THEM FOR WHAT THEY HAVE DONE" (McNeill *et al.*, 2012:p.4)

Many advocate that criminal justice practice should become desistance focused therefore emphasising the need for holistic, flexible and person-centred approaches to supporting people who have offended (McNeill *et al.*, 2012). Moving away from crime is viewed as a difficult and complex process which is likely to involve lapses and relapses. Therefore, criminal justice needs to be realistic about these difficulties and provide continued supervision and support throughout this process (Farrall & Calverley, 2005; McNeill & Weaver, 2010). As desistance is an individualised and subjective process, a 'one-size-fits all' approach will also not work (Weaver & McNeill, 2010). Desistance must also be understood within the context of human relationships with a focus on individuals' assets and strengths (rather than deficits) which should be developed and supported to form new identities. This raises the possibility that criminal justice policies can be organised to aid desistance through a more personal transformative approach.

In understanding the role of education within this desistance framework, the association with reoffending may not be focused solely on the deficits in academic attainment and acquiring employment but rather learning can be something more transformative which effect individual's self-identity, agency, and social capital.

Indeed, many who experience positive prison education, report increases in self-confidence and tend to possess the wider skills to use in their lives (Allred, Harrison & O'Connell, 2013; Meyer & Randel, 2013). Learning as something more personally transformation has been most notably argued by Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paolo Freire, who was a leading advocate of critical pedagogy. In 'pedagogy of oppressed', he criticised the traditional process of teaching and learning which relies on memorization, repetition and the acquisition of reading and writing (Freire, 1972). Freire referred to this as the 'banking' concept of education where the student is viewed as an empty account to be filled by the teacher. He argued that education delivered in this banking approach is exclusive, exclusionary and didactic which is oppressive and turns students into receiving objects which aim to control thinking and actions. Banking education focuses on producing effective and compliant workers and neglects their creative power and potential. In contrast to the banking approach to education, Freire argued that in order to foster transformative knowledge that would be liberating instead of oppressing, learners need to connect with their own personal, cognitive, and emotional experiences and to engage with others through critical dialogue. This capacity to connect with one's situated position in society and to engage in dialogue about inequities was described by Freire as developing 'critical consciousness', whereby people develop critical thinking skills which they apply to the world to understand their own individual factors within broader structural realities. In this sense, learning and education practice should be situated in the context of understanding power and the struggle between different groups in society. The focus becomes less on producing effective workers for society but towards engaging learners in the dialectical tensions of a stratified society.

Freire's work is still relevant when considering prison education where a 'banking' or deficit approach has been largely adopted across the prison estate. Indeed, his ideas to move towards more personally transformative learning approaches is consistent with theories of desistance with the adoption of new attitudes and activities (Allred, Harrison & O'Connell, 2013; McNeill & Weaver, 2010). Prisoners report many benefits from education such as increases sense of agency, resilience, thinking skills, and improved mental health and wellbeing (Clark, 2016). They can experience a constructive forward looking ethos and the prospect of continuing in educational settings on release has the potential for drawing

individuals into positive and away from negative settings associated with criminal activity. The relationships with educators and fellow students has the potential for building positive ties to support an individual constructively; education can also support prisoners in maintaining links with families and children with studying as a shared bond and help develop an individual's empathy and understanding of relationships and how to maintain them. Furthermore, the broadening of experience, empathy and thinking skills associated with education can support a genuine development and maturing of outlook. Learning offers a prisoner a positive identity as a student with hope for the future (McNeill & Weaver, 2010).

Furthermore, education interventions are most likely to be effective where they encourage self-determination and working with and alongside prisoners for personal and social transformation (McCulloch, 2005; McNeill & Weaver, 2010). Engaging people in prison is all the more relevant since many report a largely negative experience of school prior to prison with 42% having been permanently excluded (Hopkins, 2012). 'Learner Voice' has been used to describe a more learner-focused and learner-centred model of education which describes how individuals should have an input into defining what, where, when, and how they learn (Rudd, Colligan & Naik, 2006). Central to Learner Voice is empowerment where:

…**EMPOWERING LEARNERS BY PROVIDING APPROPRIATE WAYS OF LISTENING TO THEIR CONCERNS, INTERESTS AND NEEDS IN ORDER TO DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES BETTER SUITED TO THOSE INDIVIDUALS** (Rudd, Colligan & Naik, 2006:p.8)

In England and Wales, PET encourage prisons to develop 'Learner Voice' activities at the highest levels of participation by having staff from different department's co-design activities with prisoners (Auty *et al.*, 2016). Hargreaves & Hopkins, (2004) identifies Learner Voice as a powerful gateway for personalising learning where the benefits include a deeper engagement with learning, better relationships between learners and staff, and greater responsibility. Recent research into PET's 'Learner Voice' activities suggest that prisons with a good level of staff and prisoner involvement and meaningful engagement at higher levels of participation can lead to an improved learning culture (Auty *et al.*, 2016). Although largely positive, the research also highlighted that 'sharing of power' can be controversial where efforts to engage prisoners have also been met with frustrations and scepticism where

some prisoners highlighted their frustration towards the lack of action through Learner Voice activities. As one respondent in the research reflected:

"THEY DO SURVEYS WITH PRISONERS BUT NEVER TAKE BOARD ANYTHING THAT IS SAID, THEY JUST RUN THE SAME COURSES YEAR AFTER YEAR, IT IS TIME TO CHANGE" (Auty *et al.*, 2016:p.16)

Overall, benefits to prisoner learners included feeling more respected, raised self-esteem, personal development and confidence, and greater wellbeing all reflecting the alignment of education with factors associated with desistance. This increasing recognition of education within a desistance framework has led to a new broader definition established by the Ministry of Justice (2017)[6], where:

"EDUCATION IN PRISONS IS CONSIDERED TO BE ACTIVITIES THAT GIVE INDIVIDUALS THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO UNLOCK THEIR POTENTIAL, GAIN EMPLOYMENT AND BECOME ASSETS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES. IT SHOULD ALSO BUILD SOCIAL CAPITAL AND IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF PRISONERS DURING THEIR SENTENCES"

This new definition of prison education resonates closely with the Theory of Change[7] for prison education developed by New Philanthropy Capital in partnership with PET's Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA) in 2016, which highlights five essential elements to life-long learning (see Figure 1).

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[6] As presented at the Prisoner Learning Alliance conference 2017. See http://prisonerseducation.org.uk/news/moj-on-education-balancing-autonomy-with-consistency

[7] See http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/resources/what-is-prison-education-for-a-theory-of-change-exploring-the-value-of-learning-in-prison-

Figure 1: Five essential elements to life-long learning

This Ministry of Justice definition should therefore act as an important guide for governors and policy-makers to refocus efforts towards unlocking potential and social capital, rather than just focusing on employability.

Young adults in prison

As stated, ten percent of the male prison population in England are young adult men, defined as aged 18 to 20 by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) although now more commonly extended to aged 25 years. Young adult men face an increased risk of exposure to the criminal justice system compared to adults and are recognised as a highly vulnerable and challenging group with a range of complex needs (Harris, 2015; Bradley, 2009). Many have experienced disrupted childhoods, poor parenting, and low educational achievement and often have behavioural problems and misuse alcohol and/or drugs. The complexity and multiplicity of the needs of young adults in prisons might suggest they have histories of extensive contact with agencies prior to custody. Yet for many, this is not the case. The contact they have had is often negative (for example, contact with the police) which have failed to provide the support for their needs (Bradley, 2009; Harris, 2015). Although the number of young adult men in custody has decreased by around 40% since 2010, those serving custodial sentences are now serving longer sentences for more serious offences and represent more vulnerable young adults (Harris, 2015;

Taylor, 2016b; House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016) with continued high reoffending rates (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Therefore, by virtue of their age:

"…ALL YOUNG ADULTS IN CUSTODY ARE VULNERABLE" (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016:p.11)

Not only do young adults enter custody with a range of complex needs, there have been numerous concerns regarding the treatment of young adults whilst in prison and the negative and lasting impact of imprisonment on their development. Indeed, the negative effects of custody are demonstrated by the high number of self-inflicted deaths and extremely high reoffending rates (Harris, 2015). Between 2006 and 2016, there were 164 deaths of 18 – 24 year old with 136 of those self-inflicted (Ministry of Justice, 2017b). Young adults also have one of the highest reoffending rates where 75% are reconvicted within two years of release (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016). A recent annual review from the Inspectorate of Prisons also highlighted that too many people in prison were spending too long locked up in their cells and not engaged in purposeful or meaningful activity (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2017). They conclude that not a single establishment inspected in 2016-2017 was safe to hold young people

In understanding the negative and lasting impact of imprisonment on young adults, it is important to acknowledge what characterises 'young adulthood'. Young adulthood is regarded as a distinct phase of development between childhood and adulthood where a substantial and growing evidence base suggests that young adults continue to develop and mature until aged 25 years. Much of the supporting evidence cites criminological, neurological and psychological research which suggests that the front lobes of the brain continues to develop until around 25 years old. The frontal lobes is this part of the brain which helps to regulate decision-making and the control of impulses, indicating that criminality is in part related to developmental maturity (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006; T2A, 2012). Susceptibility to peer pressure also continues until at least the mid-twenties (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2015) presenting a compelling case for understanding young adulthood as a process which occurs during the ages of late teens to mid-twenties. During this stage of development, maturity is developed through life experiences such as the completion of full-time education, gaining stable employment, leaving home, having stable partnerships, and becoming responsible for oneself. These are

important indicators of reaching well-adjusted and positive adulthood (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2006). Reaching adulthood is therefore viewed as a process rather than an event which occurs at a particular age where the Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance[8] suggests that developmental maturity is a better guide than chronological age when deciding on the best response to offending in young adults. In understanding young adulthood in this way, many young adults in prison are clearly are still struggling to reach the baselines of what would be expected for healthy adulthood where imprisonment can either support or impede developmental maturity.

Supporting the transition to adulthood has important implications for desistance and reducing reoffending. Although ageing continues whilst in prison, the environment tends to put an individual's life on hold rather than encouraging a process of maturation and healthy development into adulthood. Choosing an appropriate intervention at this time can mean young offenders are more likely to stop offending and less likely to prolong the time spent in the criminal justice system. As highlighted in a recent review:

"**DEALING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUNG ADULTS WHILE THE BRAIN IS STILL DEVELOPING IS CRUCIAL FOR THEM IN MAKING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS TO A CRIME-FREE ADULTHOOD**" (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016:p.13)

In contrast, interventions which do not recognise and support young adults' maturity can slow desistance and extend the period of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Despite this recognition, there are no set principles and approach to working with young people in prison (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016) and although there has been an emphasis on reducing reoffending there are few signs of a specific approach to meet the needs of young adults, including their specific educational needs. Prison staff also report finding young adults hard to engage where there is no distinct element of prison officer training for working with young adults (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016). The Coates Review into prison

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[8] T2A is a broad coalition of 16 leading criminal justice, health and youth charities working to evidence and promote the need for a distinct and effective approach to young adults (18-25 year olds) in the transition to adulthood, throughout the criminal justice process. T2A is convened and funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust. The Trust is an independent, charitable foundation, committed to bringing about socially just change. See https://www.t2a.org.uk

education further highlighted that young adults can be one of the most challenging group to engage in education where one education provider explained:

"IN OUR EXPERIENCE, LEARNERS IN THIS AGE GROUP MAKE THE LEAST GOOD PROGRESS...WE PARTLY ATTRIBUTE THIS TO PEER AND GANG-RELATED PRESSURE, WHICH CREATES ADDITIONAL BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT. THOSE ACCESSING LEARNING ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE WITHDRAWN DUE TO SECURITY REASONS" (Coates, 2016:p.33)

Furthermore, young people's voices are rarely heard (Holt & Pamment, 2011; King & Wincup, 2008) where their status as both 'offenders' and 'young' subject them to a double punishment where they are often viewed as unreliable, untruthful and hard to engage (Ashby, 2011; James, 2013; Wilson, 2006). These narratives of young people reinforce a prisoner's criminal identity rather than promoting any pro-social alternatives.

However, experiences in prison can lead to positive outcomes in relation to transitions to adulthood and desistance from crime. A probation inspection examined the approach to managing young adults in custody and identified that having consistent and trusting working relationship, developing meaningful personal relationships to family, having emotional and practical support, changing peer and friendship groups, interventions which provided real-life problem solving solutions, and relevant restorative justice interventions led to more positive outcomes on release (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2016). In contrast, factors which did not help included a lack of identification and tailoring of programmes to individual needs, poor relationships and changes with staff, and an overall lack of genuine involvement. The report recommend a greater focus on desistance theory including implementing measures to promote genuine collaborative working with young people within key personal, social, and community networks. Education, including higher education, can therefore support the transition to adulthood and pathway to desistance.

Challenges to prison education

While the evidence presented suggests that education can have a transformative effect on individuals' potential, personal growth, and desistance, there are significant challenges to enacting these ambitions. The overall assessment of the quality of prison education from Ofsted is consistently poor (Clark, 2016) and the Coates Review into prison education highlights that:

"RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN PRISONS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN LOST. THERE ARE POCKETS OF GOOD PRACTICE, WITH EXAMPLES OF 'OUTSTANDING' EDUCATION PROVISION, BUT THESE ARE ISOLATED" (Coates, 2016)

Many prisoners experience significant barriers when attempting to study inside prison. Education in prison tend to focus on promoting lower level skills courses (even if prisoners may already possess them) and access to and availability of higher education level courses are limited (Darke & Aresti, 2016). IT facilities, internet access and other resources are also severely restricted which also limits prisoners' ability to access online courses, study materials and undertaking research for assignments. This also prevents prisoners from gaining valuable IT skills in an increasingly digital focused world. Many also face a number of structural barriers where they are restricted to what kind of courses they are allowed to study, what resources they can take back to their cells for study, as well as if they are able to continue their studies if transferred throughout the prison estate.

More broadly, these barriers point to the problems of prisons as institutions which are designed to restrict and control through various values, rules, and rituals; these are at odds with the notion that prisoners can be encouraged to learn through participation and transformative ways. For many prisoners, education in prison is an adjunct to the overall apparatus of surveillance, control, and punishment (Collins, 1988) which serves the interests of the institution rather than the individual needs of the prisoner. Prisoners often feel the 'pains of imprisonment' where the increasing number of assessments of their risks strip them of their identity where they are subjected to constant surveillance and judgement towards their behaviours, actions, and attitudes. To advance through the prison system, prisoners have to take on a new persona to 'jump through the hoops' of these assessments (Crewe, 2011). Prison education is similarly conceptualised through a risk and deficit framework where poor educational attainment needs to be 'treated' through interventions, rather than through a long-term strategy for personal development and transformation. Indeed, since prison education has been devolved to education providers, 'output based' key performance indicators have become driving forces for development and indicators of success, which has meant a prioritisation of basic skills courses which are easily audited and evidenced. In some cases, the quantity of education courses has taken priority over the quality of education and its delivery. Furthermore, education within this current framework continues to be tied to

employability, but there is a danger that this can set prisoners up to fail when faced with difficulties in the workplace (Warr, 2016). Discrimination against those with criminal records is rife where having a qualification is no guarantee for increasing job prospects and may not mitigate the stigma of incarceration.

Despite these challenges, the Coates (2016) review sets out the aspirations to make education and learning the 'heart of the regime' where individuals should be provided with more choices about education from entry level up to degree level support. Furthermore, this support should continue 'through the gate' where individuals should be supported to progress through education, training, and employment. As this report is published, significant changes to prison education commissioning and funding are being planned which will give prisons greater freedom to fund a range of learning opportunities, particularly focusing on engagement and progression. Learning Together has also been a recent development which seeks to promote transformative growth, desistance from crime and progression to higher education. This development is examined further.

Development of Learning Together

Armstrong & Ludlow, (2016) highlight that through bringing together the education, sociological, and desistance literature some key commonalities evolve relating to identify, social connections, and people's mind-sets; learning Together has therefore borne out of this evidence base into the potential transformative effect of education for people in prison. At its core, Learning Together seeks to bring together people in prison and students in higher education institutions to study alongside each other in inclusive and transformative learning communities (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016). Learning is therefore a means to connect people who otherwise are unlikely to meet to share experiences and knowledge where positive equal value is given to all. The focus is not to change people but to learn from each other which leads to change more widely. Learning Together follows a long tradition of prison and university partnerships both in the England and Wales and internationally. Prison University Partnerships in Learning network (PUPiL)[9] has been set up by PET in 2017 to map and bring together students, practitioners and academics across a wide range of initiatives. One objective of these prison-university

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[9] See http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/pupil

partnerships are to raise aspirations amongst prisoner learners to attend university. However, the role of university in supporting desistance is underdeveloped compared to employment, although a recent report by the Social Mobility Advisory Group, (2016) Social Mobility Advisory Group (2016) concluded that:

"UNIVERSITIES TRANSFORM LIVES. GOING TO UNIVERSITY LEADS TO NEW WAYS OF SEEING THE WORLD, TO NEW HORIZONS AND NETWORKS, AND TO SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED JOB OPPORTUNITIES. BUT NOT EVERYONE BENEFITS IN THE SAME WAY. FEWER STUDENTS FROM SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS GO TO UNIVERSITY, AND WHEN THEY DO THEY TEND NOT TO DO AS WELL AS THEIR MORE PRIVILEGED PEERS" (Social Mobility Advisory Group, 2016:p.1)

There has been a long history of prison university partnerships in the USA. In a 2015 report by Stanford law School and Berkeley School of Law they highlight that:

"COLLEGE HAS THE POWER TO CHANGE LIVES ... COLLEGE CAN BREAK THE CYCLE OF RECIDIVISM AND TRANSFORM FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS INTO COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ROLE MODELS; IT CAN ALLEVIATE ECONOMIC BARRIERS FACED BY THE FORMERLY INCARCERATED AND ENABLE FAMILIES TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF ECONOMIC MOBILITY" (Mukamal, Silbert & Taylor, 2015:p.1)

As one of the most notable examples of prison university partnerships, the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program in the US is explained further.

Prison-university partnerships: The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program®

Prior to Learning Together, early prison-university partnerships had been established as learning opportunities for universities students where they were able to observe and converse with people in prison, taking a somewhat anthropological approach to studying prisoners rather than studying *with* them. Opportunities for learning between prisons and universities have since increased but have shifted to take on a pedagogical approach which recognises that both prisons and universities seek to invest in people for individual growth and that equal partnerships can bring out benefits for both sets of students.

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program®[10] in the US has led some of these developments. This was developed in 1997 by Lori Pompa with the aim to bring

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[10] See http://www.insideoutcenter.org

together college students and incarcerated students to learn in a semester-long course held in a prison, jail or other correctional setting. The core ethos is to increase access to higher education for all and to break down social barriers which exist between the social groups to allow for more equal encounters. In practice, Inside-Out brings together incarcerated ('inside') and college students ('outside') to engage in informed dialogue which allows for transformative learning experiences which address key issues around crime, justice, and social concern. Indeed, the Inside-Out are keen to highlight the importance of the equal value between the inside and outside students where the opportunity is not for students to be observed or researched by the outside in a somewhat exploitative relationship (in recognition of the realistic concern incarcerated people have about being treated as 'guinea pigs'). Furthermore, they are keen to also highlight that Inside-Out is not about 'helping' the incarcerated as this also assumes a power differential. The programme focuses on true collaboration in which everyone has something to offer and gain from each other.

This backdrop highlights the conflicts and risks in building initiatives which seek to bring in external students to engage in meaningful learning. Indeed, the Inside-Out program in the US, highlight that although bonds between and among students are inevitably formed during the semester course, these relationships should not exist outside of the parameters of the program where only first names are used and no other identifying information is shared. They evidently state:

PARAMETERS ARE CRITICAL TO THIS PROGRAM, AS IT EXISTS WITHIN A VERY CLEAR-CUT, BLACK AND WHITE ENVIRONMENT. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SHADES OF GREY. ALLOWING SITUATIONS TO MOVE INTO THE GREY AREA CAN POTENTIALLY PLACE THE EXISTENCE OF THE ENTIRE PROGRAM IN JEOPARDY[11]

Since the initial conception of Inside-Out in 1997, the program has grown and comprises of more than 100 correctional and higher education partnerships, including in the UK at HMP Durham and HMP Swaleside. Learning Together partnerships have particularly flourished across the UK[12] where the first partnership emerged in 2015, and is outlined further.

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[11] See http://www.insideoutcenter.org
[12] See http://www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/case-studies/case-studies-about-lecture-practice/institute-criminology-learning-together-being

Launching Learning Together: HMP Grendon and the University of Cambridge

Learning Together was originally developed at the University of Cambridge in 2015 and was somewhat inspired by the developments of Inside-Out. Led by Dr Amy Ludlow and Dr Ruth Armstrong, a short introduction to criminology course was delivered to 12 MPhil students from the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University and 12 students from HMP Grendon (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016). Each session began with a short interactive lecture followed by small group discussion of the lecture and two readings alongside key questions, concluding with group discussions. Prison staff were able to attend and were welcome to participate. To successfully complete the course, all students were asked to submit a short reflective essay on their experiences of Learning Together in light of one of the criminological theories that was covered during the course. A graduation ceremony followed which was open to student's family, friends, managers and supervisors to cement identities as learners and students.

To understand the experiences and impacts of Learning Together, Armstrong & Ludlow, (2016) held focus groups and gained feedback through a questionnaire. The overarching theme that emerged was that of an "enlivening experience" for all involved with initial insights suggesting the course shaped institutional learning cultures beyond the course. Furthermore, through belonging to a Learning Together community, learners reshaped their understandings of self and opened up new routes of personal growth. Learners also developed a commonality between themselves and in developing new perceptions of themselves as well as others. It was seen to provide a space for meaningful exchange through accepting everyone as they are and to grow in themselves and together.

A subsequent second course was developed and adapted. Most notably, the course reduced the number of sessions with a prison focus to reduce the risks of objectification and to support parity and mutuality so that all students could better contribute their experiences. Furthermore, a group project session was introduced where students developed and showcased different skills (e.g. through poems, songs, sketches) to demonstrate how they would put criminological theory into practice. A feedback session was also introduced at week 3 to gain insights into what was working well, and not so well, and what could change so the course could be flexible to this feedback.

A course has since regularly run at HMP Grendon with several incarnations including a focus on literary criticism, development of a two-term course, and inclusions of undergraduate students. Since the University of Cambridge and HMP Grendon partnership, over 20 other Learning Together partnerships have developed with national and regional frameworks emerging to share experience and capacity for best practice[13].

Core values of Learning Together

Learning Together therefore seeks to connect people in prison and students in universities where prison-based and university-based students not only study together but they also learn with and from each other through discussions and the sharing of relevant experiences. All the interactions are underpinned by a belief in everyone's potential which emerges though relationships and connections. Armstrong & Ludlow, (2016) reflect the design of Learning Together as being "theory led and its delivery is value led" (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016:p.11) with five core underpinning values:

1. Equality
2. Diffuse power
3. A belief in potential
4. Connection through shared activities
5. Individually and socially transformative power of togetherness

Here, everyone in the classroom is valued as a student which includes the facilitators, lecturers, and prison based staff; all are learners with something to share and learn from where no-one is excluded and all knowledge and experience valued. Furthermore, rules and practices are co-created within the learning environment where everyone discusses and agrees to rules (which also abide by the rules of the prison in which they are situated). Feedback should also be gained where learners feel empowered to provide this and the course in turn should be responsive changes. Learning Together should also seek to value and cultivate hopes and motivations for life-long learning. Indeed, Armstrong & Ludlow, (2016) suggest that 'intellectual friendships' are supported with continued contact through

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[13] A Learning Network exists to provide mutual support and opportunities for collaboration, with the aim of articulating and developing best practice in the field. Contact justis@crim.cam.ac.uk for more information.

institutional addresses (as consistent with prison rules). Through creating these learning communities, there is "individually, socially and institutionally transformative potential" (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016:p.13). Learning Together should therefore be embedded to promote positive learning cultures rather than viewed as standalone interventions.

These core values have become the cornerstone of many Learning Together partnerships[14] which have developed throughout the UK, which are demonstrating some of the potential transformative effect this approach to learning can have. Indeed, some partnerships are demonstrating ongoing impact with learners enrolling onto longer university courses and taking on educational mentor roles to support others. However, there have been few prison university partnerships focused specifically with young adults in custody.

Young adults and Learning Together

Learning Together presents an opportunity to meet some of the distinct and complex needs in young adults where the core values may be particularly relevant to young people in prison and their transition to adulthood and desistance pathways. However, there are few examples of Learning Together partnerships within a younger prison population, despite the potential relevancy to this group.

One notable example is between HMYOI Feltham and Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL)[15]. This partnership ran between January and March 2017 (at the same time as the Goldsmiths/HMYOI Isis partnership) and was facilitated by Dr Serena Wright and Morwenna Bennallick (both RHUL) and Henry Smithers (Head of Learning and Skills, HMYOI Feltham). Twelve first-year students from RHUL teamed up with eight-ten students

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[14] See https://www.prc.crim.cam.ac.uk/directory/research-themes/learning-together
[15] Adapted from the 'Learning Together Annual Report 2017' with permission from Professor Rosie Meek, Dr Serena Wright, and Morwenna Bennallick.

from HMYOI Feltham for an 8-week course entitled 'Thinking Criminologically'. This was made up of an introductory/'getting to know you' week, six weeks of lectures, and one week dedicated to developing writing skills. Topics covered included: 'Key Critical Perspectives in Criminology'; 'Crime & the Media'; and 'The Changing Role of the Prison'. There was a strong emphasis throughout on a highly critical criminology.

A core challenge was creating interesting and engaging sessions which provided an understanding of key criminological concepts for those students based at Feltham, while not repeating course content for the RHUL students. Owing to best pedagogical practice in working with young learners, convenors ensured each week was highly structured, utilising a blend of group tasks, worksheets, lectures and discussion to frame the learning. Alongside weekly reflections and reading summaries, students worked in small groups on a project to revise new draft 'Expectations' for the young adult estate by HM Inspectorate of Prisons. With the assistance of Professor Nick Hardwick (former Chief Inspector of Prisons), a submission was made, and a response received from HMIP explaining how the group's suggestions had been implemented into a revised version of the new *Expectation 46: 'The specific needs of young adults (aged 18-25)'*. An end of course event followed, which celebrated individual and group achievements in the presence of family members.

Although there were no formal evaluations, the convenors utilised various methods including student reflections during each session where students were asked to reflect on 'one thing I want less of', 'one thing I want more of', and 'one thing I'd keep the same'. The authors note some of the reflections, which included:

"LEARNING TOGETHER HAS BEEN A GREAT EXPERIENCE FOR ME AND A DECIDING FACTOR IN WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO DO WITH MY LIFE POST-RELEASE FROM PRISON […] THE COURSE HAS GIVEN ME A CHANCE TO EXPLORE MY ACADEMIC ABILITIES AND SEE WHAT I AM CAPABLE OF"

"SERENA AND MORWENNA MADE THE ATMOSPHERE SEEM LIKE A SCHOOL LIBRARY RATHER THAN A PRISON SETTING"

"I REALLY ENJOYED THE COURSE AS IT GOT ME BACK INTO THE STUDYING MIND-FRAME AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT […] IT REFRESHED EVERYTHING THAT I WAS DOING BEFORE SO I DIDN'T LOSE ANY OF MY STUDYING SKILLS AND READY FOR UNI WHEN I AM RELEASED"

"Apart from all the educational benefit the main thing for me and my peers is that the course took us out of the prison environment. Whenever I was in class I was not in jail but in a normal classroom"

The course finished in March 2017 where ongoing development continues, most notably, one HMYOI Feltham student was invited to RHUL campus, with a view to funding future studies. Furthermore, a representative from PET spoke to the HMYOI Feltham students about continued higher education opportunities through distance learning. Another Learning Together course is anticipated with ongoing developments to the course based on reflections and feedback.

These partnerships highlight the value of widening the access and promoting the achievements of learners in prison where notably, one US report state:

"Our colleges and criminal justice agencies must break out of their silos and share a commitment to high quality education for all students whether they are learning in prison, jail or the community. Our policymakers must enable partnership and collaboration between the education and criminal justice fields. Realising this vision may not be easy, but doing so will improve the lives of thousands of potential college students, for the benefit of communities now and in future generations" (Mukamal, Silbert & Taylor, 2015:p.1)

Furthermore, this highlights the importance of evaluating the process of establishing these partnerships where universities and prisons have to 'break out of their silos', as the first step to building 'pipelines' for learners from prison to university, with a particular commitment to young adults who make up the large proportion of both prisoners and university students.

Evaluation aims and objectives

Despite the growth of Learning Together, there have been few formal evaluations or published research and analysis, particularly relating to young adults in prison. This evaluation therefore seeks to provide some insights into a Learning Together partnership between Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP&YOI Isis (supported by PET) and contribute to the already growing discussions and reflections. This evaluation aims to explore the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of this Learning Together partnership. The objectives were to:

1. Examine the experiences of both HMP&YOI Isis and Goldsmith learners enrolled on the course
2. Explore the views from key members of staff from Goldsmiths and HMP&YOI Isis on developing and implementing the course

Methodology

This section outlines the evaluation methodology, specifically a full description of the course and the design employed. The section then outlines the research and ethical governance applied to guide this evaluation.

The 'Unlocked' course

This Learning Together partnership aims to introduce learners to the discipline of sociology through an active research methodology. The course, 'social science research methods', therefore encouraged learners to explore the discipline and conduct research in their situation. The topic came from discussions between the prison, PET, and Open Book. Specifically, Open Book had the expertise to teach the topic and PET were keen to promote 'Learner Voice' and as such, were supportive of a course which could harness prisoners' experiences and viewpoints for prison reform i.e. through developing and providing peer research skills for the prison. Therefore, the topic of social science research methods was supported by all in the partnership, with 'Unlocked' chosen to describe the course.

In planning the course, two learners were selected take part in a steering group where they led discussions with other learners to develop a name, motto, and logo to represent the course. The learners chose 'Unlocked' as the group name to symbolise the course as unlocking learners' potential. The name Unlocked was also an acronym and with a motto (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: 'Unlocked' acronym, motto and logo

Understanding
New
Learning
Opportunities and
Chasing
Knowledge through
Education and
Dedication

'KNOWLEDGE IS POWER, RESEARCH IS KEY'

Furthermore, Isis learners also designed a logo with initial plans to feature this on t-shirts and merchandise for the learners[16].

A total of 20 learners initially enrolled on the course; 10 from HMP&YOI Isis and 10 Goldsmiths students. Isis learners were recruited to the course where a member of the education staff approached potential prisoners whilst they were attending other education courses. Interested prisoners were invited to a formal interview with an initial steering group to discuss their suitability and involvement in the course. Goldsmith learners had responded to an email circulation advertising the course with interested students invited to an interview with a member of Open Book staff to assess their suitability and motivations. Of the initial 20 learners enrolled, most were aged between 19 – 25 years old (15 of the 20) with three learners aged between 26 - 30 years old and two aged over 30 years. Nine of the Goldsmith learners were women, with one man. All 10 of the HMP&YOI Isis learners were men.

All learners received a bursary for taking part in the course. Isis learners were not aware of the bursary prior to starting the course and it is not usual for prisoners to receive payment for taking part in Learning Together (where there were subsequent challenges in arranging timely payment for Isis learners). However, a bursary for Goldsmith students was established to ensure the opportunity was open to everyone and to recognise the commitment of time involved. This was particularly important as Goldsmith students were not guaranteed academic credit for taking part. Subsequently, both Goldsmith and Isis learners received an equitable bursary to ensure fairness and parity on the course.

The course was developed and delivered by a paid tutor from Open Book with support from another Open Book tutor and various other guest lectures from different institutions. The course consisted of 10 weekly sessions which ran concurrently alongside the Goldsmith University 2017 spring semester (13th January – 24th March 2017 [inclusive of a reading week]). The overall course was designed to meet a number of learning outcomes, including:

- Understanding of key concepts and language used in social science

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[16] The logo however was not approved by prison administration since it contained an image of a lock. As a result of the logo was not used.

- Knowledge of some of the key methods of social science
- Familiarity with the main methodological debates in qualitative research
- A critical understanding of how research is related to the development of theory and policy
- An understanding of how research is related to the development of theory and policy
- Some understanding of innovative methods including visual sociology and participatory research
- Interviewing skills
- Critical reading skills
- Methodological writing skills

The sessions were developed to meet these course learning objectives through various topics[17] (see Figure 3):

Figure 3: Course learning objectives

Pre-course meet-up session	Session 1: Introduction	Session 2: Qualitative Research
Session 3: Ethnography	Session 4: Positioning the researcher	Session 5: Participant observation
Session 6: Qualitative interviewing	Session 7: Reading research	Session 8: Research ethics
Session 9: Visual sociology	Session 10: Writing research	Post-course session: Presentations

Sessions ran weekly, for approximately three hours every Friday and were conducted in a designated classroom in the education department at HMP&YOI Isis. Additional group study was also arranged between Isis learners and prison-based education

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[17] Aims and objectives of each session can be found in Appendix I

staff on Wednesdays and another group study session on Sundays for Isis learners. Prior to the start of the course, an initial pre-launch session was held on the 9th December 2016, for all learners and tutors to meet. This included ice breaker activities and a performance by former prisoner learner who completed a degree in psychology in prison and now runs a youth music charity. Furthermore, a final presentation day was held on 28th April 2017 where learners were expected to reflect and showcase their learning where Isis learners each gave an oral presentation as well as played a recording of a series of interviews conducted as a radio show. The presentation day was attended by learners' family and friends, offender managers and supervisors, and other officials from the university and prison.

As reported anecdotally by the Open Book tutors, most of the learners attended all 10 formal course sessions. However, two Goldsmith learners[18] dropped out of the course early on and another two learners from HMP&YOI Isis left the course towards the final sessions due to being moved to a Category D prison and being released, respectively.

Design

This evaluation utilises a mixed-methods design to gather insights into the strengths and barriers to developing the Learning Together partnership. Mixing methods in this way is pragmatic in that it allows researchers to explore aims using different methods, at different time points, and with key stakeholders to generate data independently and combine this for interpretation and conclusions (see Figure 4).

Given the exploratory nature of this evaluation, a qualitative approach was chosen for the principal research, in which learners took part in individual, semi-structured interviews at the end of the course. Qualitative methods allow conversations to develop during an interview around areas of interest (Robson, 2011) and is effective in collecting in-depth and rich data (Byrne, 2011). Since prisoners are routinely 'silenced', qualitative designs can be powerful forms of interaction where new insights can emerge through a shared process. In this sense, qualitative interviews seek to share control and counter some of the lack of autonomy prisoners

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[18] Incidentally, the two Goldsmith learners who dropped out early on were the only learners aged over 30 years old and the only male Goldsmith learner. Therefore, most of the learners who completed, or near completed, the course were aged 19 – 30 years old with a gender split of all male HMP&YOI Isis learners and all female Goldsmith learners.

suffer. This can provide opportunities to uncover personal perspectives and viewpoints, enabling the researcher to appreciate context, social situations and experiences from the insider perspective (Ritchie, 2003). Further qualitative insights were also gathered from learners' reflective presentations at the end of the course.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, specific issues around learners understanding and engagement with the course content were also examined through a short survey delivered after each session. Systematic tutor observations tutor were also obtained to capture basic course data (e.g. attendance, topics, learning methods used) as well as document their general reflections on each session.

The initial methodology had also included a focus group with learners' mid-way through the course (during reading week), however, this was not conducted as appropriate ethical approval from NOMS had not been obtained in time (despite being in process for over eight weeks).

Figure 4: Multi-methods evaluation design
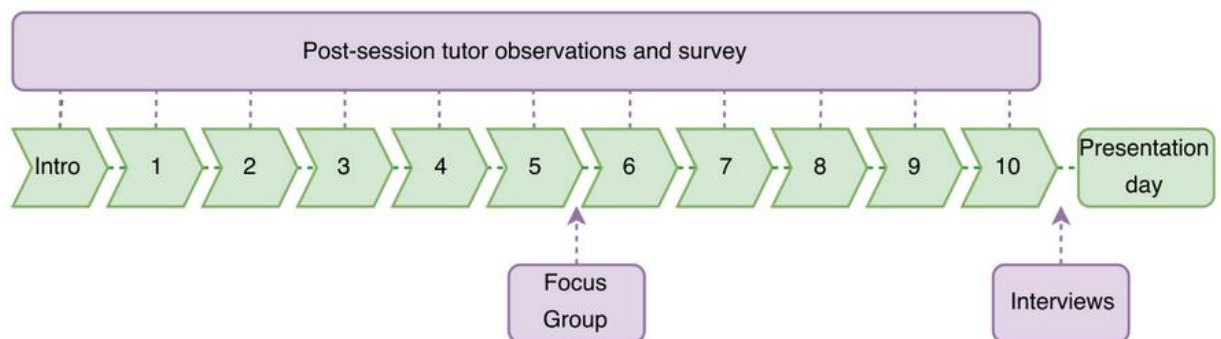
Materials

A short survey was designed to examine learners' levels of understanding and engagement with the content in each session (see Appendix II). The survey consisted of four statements where learners were asked to consider each and rate their level of difficulty on a Likert scale (0 – 10). Items included:

- I understood most of the content of this session
- I gained new knowledge from the session
- The session was interesting and engaging

- I felt I could contribute and ask questions during the session

A free text box was included for learners to provide further short reflections on each session, which included:

- What did you like the most from today's session? (free text)
- What could be improved? (free text)

The survey took around 3 minutes for learners to complete at the end of each session.

The Open Book tutor was asked to complete a short form (see Appendix III). The form was designed for the tutor to self-complete for the purposes of the evaluation as well as to aid development of the course based on learners' feedback. Five completed observation forms were received.

A topic guide was developed to guide semi-structured interviews with learners, Open Book staff, and prison education staff (see Appendix IV). The topic questions for learners included:

- What first got you involved in the course?
- How did you get on with the course?
- What did you like about it?
- What do you think could be improved?
- Where there any practical difficulties you came across?
- Overall, how has the course benefitted you (if at all)?
- Do you have any other comments?

Topic questions for semi-structured interviews with Open Book staff and prison education staff included:

- How did you first get involved in the course?
- What has been your role?
- What do you think worked well?
- What do you think could be improved?
- Overall, how would you say the course benefitted the learners?
- Overall, how has the course benefitted you (if at all)?
- Do you have any other comments?

Both topic guides were designed to be broad enough to allow participants to explore their own meanings and experiences without being guided or led. An information sheet and consent form was provided for learners (see Appendix V) and Open Book staff and prison education staff (see Appendix VI) to consider their involvement in the study.

Participants

All learners attending each session were invited to complete the survey. Response rates were variable ranging from 33% - 94% of learners returning completed surveys, with high levels of missing data (see Table 1).

Table 1: Survey response rate

Session	Number of learners in session	Number of completed surveys		Overall response rate
		Isis learners	Goldsmith learners	
0 (pre-session)	Missing	6	5	-
Session 1	Missing	0	0	-
Session 2	18	0	6	33%
Session 3	18	10	4	78%
Session 4	18	10	7	94%
Session 5	18	0	2	11%
Session 6	18	10	5	83%
Session 7	Missing	10	2	-
Session 8	Missing	9	2	-
Session 9	Missing	0	0	-
Session 10	Missing	0	0	-

Of the 10 Isis learners, eight took part in semi-structured interviews. The two Isis learners who did not take part in interviews had moved from the prison with no contact details available to the researcher. Of the 10 Goldsmith learners who originally enrolled, seven took part in interviews. Those who did not take part mainly cited competing demands as interviews were conducted during exam periods.

Procedures

All learners were asked to complete the survey after each session. Goldsmith learners were asked to complete this survey online via the Goldsmiths Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Isis learners were asked to complete the survey on paper at the end of each session, where the survey was administered and collected by the Open Book tutor and subsequently entered on the same Goldsmith VLE

platform by the tutor. Although there were initial concerns regarding the honesty with which learners may complete the survey knowing it will be returned to the tutor, this approach was adopted since Isis learners had no access to the internet and seeking the appropriate approval to include the VLE to the list of approved sites on the prison intranet 'virtual campus' would be too time consuming with a low chance of success. Furthermore, it was not deemed appropriate for the independent researcher to attend each session to collect this data in place of the tutor, due to time constraints as well as appropriateness for the group learning environment in having an added observer.

Interviews were conducted in the three week interim period between the final course session (session 10) and the final presentation day. Interviews with Isis learners took place at HMP&YOI Isis where the researcher introduced the evaluation to the learners as a group and provided the information sheet and consent form. Isis learners were keen for the evaluation to accurately reflect their views and opinions therefore, agreed to take part in one to one interviews on the condition that they would be consulted on the final themes and report. This was agreed and subsequent interviews took place in a private room in the education department with each lasting between one to two hours. Five of the eight interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and three conducted with comprehensive written notes[19]. Upon analyses of the Isis interviews, the researcher revisited the Isis learners to discuss the themes as a form of double coding.

Goldsmith learners were contacted by the researcher via email with an attached information sheet and consent form for them to consider their involvement in the evaluation. A mutually agreed day and time was subsequently arranged with interested learners with all interviews taking place at Goldsmiths University of London. Seven of the eight interviews were recorded with one conducted with comprehensive written notes.

Two group interviews were conducted; one with the two Open Book staff and another with two prison education staff[20]. These interview lasted between one to

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[19] Permission to use a Dictaphone was granted by HMP&YOI Isis. Some interviews were conducted without its use due to obtaining this approval late and some technical difficulties.
[20] The two prison education staff had been most involved in developing and facilitating the partnership and course. Another member of staff was invited and due to take part in the joint interview but was unable to attend on the day.

two hours and took place at HMP&YOI Isis (prison education staff) and Goldsmiths University of London (Open Book staff).

Analysis

Recorded interviews and written notes were transcribed and analysed in NVivo (version 10). A thematic analysis was conducted which involved first gaining in-depth familiarity with the transcripts followed by a process of coding and indexing. In this process, sets of categories were developed to reflect the themes of the data (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor, 2003). Interview transcripts were revisited where codes were double-checked with the interview data. Relevant quotations were then selected based on their frequency, richness, and ability to reflect the main points within each theme. Pseudonyms are applied to protect the identity of participants.

Data from the observation forms were subjected to a content analysis to triangulate with themes gathered from semi-structured interviews. With the high levels of missing survey data, top-level descriptive analyses was conducted using Excel and is limited to examining overall understanding and engagement across the course (rather than within individual sessions). The data was also triangulated with themes gathered from semi-structured interviews.

Research and ethics governance

HMP&YOI Isis holds prisoners aged 18 years and over where in light of the high levels of vulnerabilities within the prison population, all are regarded as vulnerable. This evaluation is therefore designed and conducted to achieve what is considered to be good practice in social science and prison based research. Specifically the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) framework for research ethics[21], the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (The British Psychological Society, 2010) and the Code of Ethics and Conduct (British Psychological Society, 2009) provides guidance in reducing the risks associated with taking part in the research, ensuring voluntary participation, and safeguarding confidentiality and data protection. As a summary, the content of the interviews and survey were not deemed to be of a sensitive nature and all efforts were made to ensure that the physical, social and psychological wellbeing of individuals participating were not adversely affected. Information about the evaluation study

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[21] See http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics/

was given to all prospective research participants prior to them taking part. Informed consent was gained and participants told that they have the right to withdraw at any time. The anonymity and confidentiality of participants was secured, although it was made clear at the outset that there are limits to this and in some cases, should certain information be shared, confidentiality would need to be overridden and discussed with third parties. All data from the project was stored safely and securely and in a way that maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants. Participants were also informed at the beginning of the research and reminded throughout that the data collected in regards to them would be retained for the duration of the project and for seven years thereafter.

The project was conducted and managed by Dr. Anita Mehay as an independent consultant with oversight provided from Sarah Lambert at Goldsmiths, University of London and Nina Champion at PET, who were able to advise throughout on any ethical and research issues that arose. Furthermore, independent oversight was also provided by Dr Bridget Dibb at the University of Surrey as part of general practitioner supervision. All study procedures were reviewed and approved by the Goldsmiths University of London Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix VII) and the NOMS (see Appendix VIII).

Findings

Analyses revealed six themes relating to the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of this Learning Together partnership (see Figure 5). These themes include: a learner identity, connectedness, bounding friendships, artefacts of learning, partnership working and the precarity of trust. Overarching these themes was that of a shared critical consciousness. These themes are described further.

Figure 5: Evaluation themes
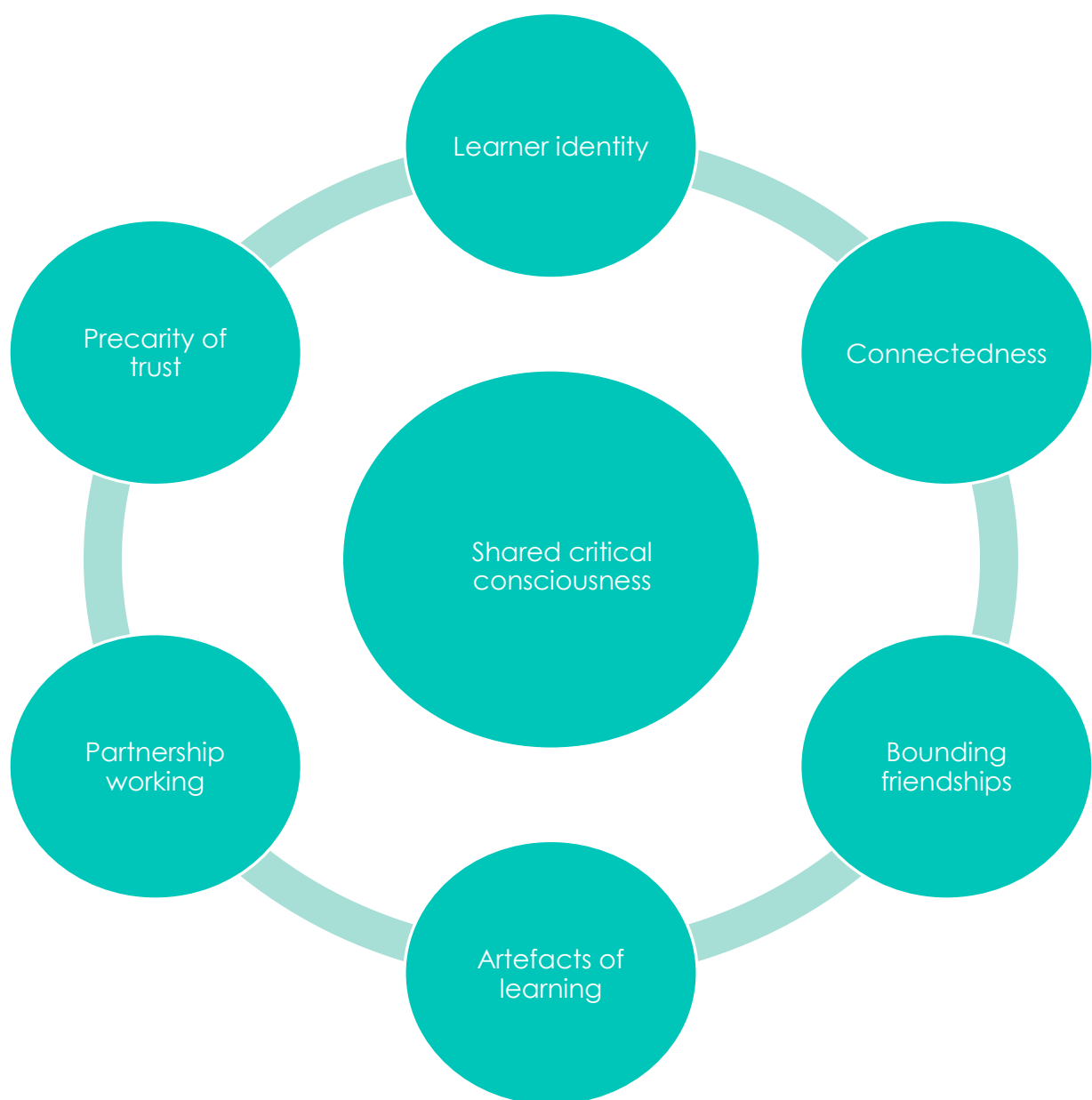
Learner identity

Isis learners described Learning Together as a process which shaped and allowed the exploration of a multifaceted learner identity, in contrast to the reductionist lens of an offender label so frequently ascribed to them. Indeed, the offender label was restrictive and limiting where learners described being coerced into attending education classes which were lengthy, uninspiring, and irrelevant to their lives. Most further described a negative experience with education prior to entering prison where few had gone on to complete secondary or higher education. However, Learning Together created a space where they were able to reflect on their own knowledge, skills, and life experiences and learn in a person-centred, engaging and meaningful approach.

Part of developing a learner identity was through the provision of a highly supportive and needs-centred approach. There had been very few opportunities to access higher education in the prison and although Distance Learning opportunities were available (i.e. through Open University [OU]) these were not seen as within reach for the learners as they were described as too demanding, needing a long-term commitment, and requiring more advanced study skills to take on this independent study. Committing to a longer-term, independent study course seemed too significant a shift whereas Learning Together differed in that higher education seemed achievable with the module format, the significant contact time and support, and the focus on group dialogue and studying together rather than alone. Furthermore, learners found the group format appealing where they were keen to gain support and guidance from a university tutor rather than delve into independent distance learning. Learning Together was therefore an appealing opportunity to explore their own potential as learners.

Furthermore, two additional group study sessions were established alongside the formal course session, to support learner's engagement with the course materials. These study groups were not part of the initial plans for the course, however, Isis learners and prison-education staff reflected that a week between sessions was deemed too long and that Isis learners would benefit from more regular discussions and support from each other to progress though the course. Two study groups were subsequently established early into the course; one was held with a member of the prison education staff, and one was planned to be held with just the

learners, in the prison blocks (there was considerable difficulty with facilitating this latter session, and it was held only sporadically). These sessions aimed to support learners' development through consolidating learning from the main session and to aid preparation for the following session. Learners described the lengths with which they took control of their learning through these self-directed study groups, and the new identities formed which transcended beyond the confines of the prison education department.

Indeed, responses from the post-session survey supports the overall positive engagement with the course content, where all learners rated each session highly in terms of their levels of understanding (8.3 out of 10), the knowledge gained (8.2 out of 10), their interest in the topic (8.5 out of 10), and ability to engage in the session (8.2 out of 10). They each described the challenge but joy and satisfaction in undertaking the readings each week, both individually and as a group. However, they found that some readings were repetitive and lengthy with some text seemingly dense with small font sizes. They questioned whether certain readings were necessary and whether particular sections rather than whole chapters would be more appropriate. Learners also struggled with some of the academic language used and were keen to gain more support early on in understanding terminology. Indeed, the learners valued and often referred to their dictionaries and the list of terms and definitions developed during the course, which could have been utilised earlier. Despite some of these challenges, the group study sessions were greatly appreciated and valued by the Isis learners, where Samuel (Isis learner 3) notes:

"… [PRISON EDUCATION STAFF MEMBER] WAS VERY HELPFUL BECAUSE SHE WOULD GET SOME PIECES OF WORK THAT SHE KNEW WE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND AND BREAK IT DOWN INTO SIMPLER TERMS FOR US AND WE WOULD STAY IN THE CLASSROOM FOR TWO HOURS TO GO OVER WHAT WE NEEDED TO GO OVER SO FOR FRIDAY SO WE ARE PREPARED" (Samuel, Isis learner 3)

Furthermore, Isis learners described identifying as a learners through the support gained from peers and role models. Particularly they reflected on the support they received from another prisoner who had an in-depth knowledge and experience of the study of sociology and research methods. Subsequently, this prisoner was invited to take on an informal facilitative role during the course to support the learners' development. He was able to support the learners during the main course session as well as through the additional study sessions. This was greatly

valued by all the Isis learners who spoke enthusiastically about the learning which took place with a 'peer'. He was able to facilitate their learning and most notably, their critical thinking skills where the study group focused on in-depth analysis of the readings as well as introducing the learners to additional topics and readings of interest. The combination of detailed reading with discussions within a relaxed peer study group was greatly valued. Anthony (Isis learner 1) reflects the importance of these study groups, and more specifically the support of the facilitating prisoner where he states:

"[HE] IS LIKE THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE; HE'S ONE OF US, BUT HE'S EDUCATED ENOUGH TO BE PART OF THEM AND US. IF WE DIDN'T HAVE THE WEDNESDAY SESSIONS WITH [HIM], WE WOULD HAVE STRUGGLED…AND DROPPED IT IN WEEK 2" (Anthony, Isis learner 1)

The development of learner identities were also crystallised through the introduction of guest lecturers who learners valued as examples of positive role models. Guest lecturers were ex-prisoners who had a unique insight into the learners context and perspectives, and Isis learners valued their skills to instil education and learning in a meaningful and digestible approach. Anthony (Isis learner 1) particularly noted the value of guest lecturers where he states:

"THEY [GUEST LECTURERS] CAN MAKE THINGS MORE DIGESTIBLE…IT FELT THEY WERE ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WITH US, THAT THEY HAD BEEN IN OUR SHOES BEFORE AND UNDERSTOOD US MORE" (Anthony, Isis learner 1)

Isis learners saw these guest lecturers as positive role models for them and as examples of what is achievable. The Isis learners described their sense of identity as learners reaffirmed by those around them and found confidence in this role and what they could achieve outside of the 'offender' or 'prisoner' label. These interactions and supportive validation of their role as 'learners' gave the sense that they were not the label so frequently ascribed to them.

A learner identity was further affirmed by how they were treated and viewed by those around them. Most notably, they were not prisoners but were 'Goldsmith students' which raised their aspirations and expectations of who they could be and what they could achieve. In undertaking the course, Isis learners were frequently referred to their role as 'learners' and 'Goldsmith students' where tutors reinforced that no-one was a prisoner within the classroom space. This was reiterated by

Goldsmith learners who reflected that they entered the prison space with open minds and viewed and treated each of the Isis learners as fellow students; for many, they often 'forgot' they were in a prison and with prisoners. Goldsmith learners found that there were more similarities than differences between them where the course challenged their narratives around who a 'prisoner' was compared with the media portrayals they were accustomed to. Most notable, learners supported each other as learners and through this process, helped each other identify as learners rather than prisoners. They reflected on the pride they felt for each other in achieving the standards of the course and managing through the challenges, where they all identified with each other as learners, not just prisoners. Anthony (Isis learner 1) for example, reflects:

"…I'M PROUD OF EVERYONE THAT MANAGED TO GET THROUGH THE COURSE AND YOU KNOW EVERYONE THAT ACTUALLY WANTED TO PARTICIPATE AND TOOK PART. LIKE PROPER TOOK PART AND DIDN'T JUST SIT THERE AND BE QUIET AND THAT. LIKE I'M PROPER PROUD OF EVERYONE" (Cameron, Isis learner 5)

They themselves saw the potential in each other as learners where within interviews, they praised each other for getting through the challenges, staying bonded, and achieving the goals of the course. The learners' aspirations had been actualised where the readings and discussions around wider sociological issues tapped into and 'unlocked' their own knowledge which brought relevance and meaning to their own being. Cameron (Isis learner 5) reflected on this where he states:

"SOME OF THE PRISONER STUDENTS HERE ARE VERY SMART. YOU KNOW, YOU'VE GOT LITTLE BITS OF KNOWLEDGE HIDING INSIDE YOUR BRAIN AND STUFF THAT YOU WOULDN'T REALLY THINK OF AS IMPORTANT BUT IT IS… AND I JUST LOVED IT. I LOVED EVERY SECOND OF IT" (Cameron, Isis learner 5)

Although interviews were conducted in the weeks after the course had finished, learners reflected on the impact of their learner identities where they were keen to continue their development as learners. Some were considering enrolling onto further higher education, others were aspiring for other careers in social work, and some were engaged in the next iteration of Learning Together. For many, being officially enrolled at Goldsmiths, University of London had a profound impact on their identity where they described considering entering higher education, and specifically Goldsmiths, on release. Indeed, higher education was something which

learners previously aspired to but they lacked confidence. As Anthony (Isis learner 1) states:

"I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO UNI BUT IT DIDN'T HAPPEN…I WOULD NOT HAVE EVEN TRIED. I JUST THOUGHT I'M NOT SMART ENOUGH FOR IT AND THE STANDARD AND WORKLOAD MIGHT BE TOO MUCH FOR ME" (Anthony, Isis learner 1)

However, no longer was entering higher education a daunting prospect, but was now considered a logical next step since they were already "on the books" and had some experience with this level of study and meeting other students. Higher education was a space which they felt they could enter and be accepted into. As one learners described in his presentation:

"I ONLY KNEW ABOUT UNIVERSITY FROM WHAT YOU SEE IN FILMS, PARTIES. I EXPECTED THEM TO BE STUCK UP, THAT THEY'D COME TO DO RESEARCH ON US. THEN I UNDERSTOOD THAT WAS NOT WHAT IT WAS ABOUT. UNI OFFERS A BROAD VARIETY OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE. UNI COULD BE A PLACE FOR ME. YOU COULD MEET A LOT OF GOOD PEOPLE"

They were resolute in maintaining their identities and the confidence and determination which came with this, and were resolute to ensure that they were not defined by their offending. The demonstration of this shift towards learner identities was recognised within the friends and families of the learners and by the Governor who noted in response to the presentations:

"I WANTED THERE TO BE OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCESS HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON. I AM OVERWHELMED BY THIS, IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT LEARNING BUT THE IMPACT ON THE WAY YOU THINK AND SEE YOU'RE FUTURES. IT'S MADE ME CONFIDENT IT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO"

Connectedness

Learning Together was viewed as an opportunity for bringing groups of individuals together who may not ordinarily have met, and to challenge and be challenged in the narratives individuals held about each other. Learning was inextricably fused by this connectedness to people and society. All learners reflected on the connectedness, where friendships and bonds were formed both within the Isis and Goldsmith groups respectively, as well as across the whole learner group, where Cameron stated:

"I FEEL LIKE THIS COURSE WAS A REAL GOOD BONDING SESSION FOR EVERYONE AND IF THAT'S WHAT IT'S LIKE IN UNI. I WOULD LOVE TO BE IN UNIVERSITY… IT TAUGHT ME STUFF THAT I NEVER KNEW BEFORE, IT OPENED MY EYES TO PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A MUCH BIGGER AND BROADER SPECTRUM" (Cameron, Isis learner 5)

Subsequently, all described the group of learners as a diverse but socially-connected unity based on mutual respect and parity.

Isis learners had little contact with each other prior to the course yet during interviews, all reflected on the strong social connections and friendships formed by the end of the course. As James (Isis learner 4) expressed:

"…EVERYTHING ON THIS COURSE WAS ABOUT US" (James, Isis leaner 4)

Learners' reflected that week on week, there were never any incidences, trouble or violence between the young men as they respected each other as learners. This was described by the Isis learners as highly unusual within the prison environment which was marred by mistrust and volatility. The Isis learners particularly described the 'banter' between them which was fun but respectful and helped build rapport and friendships between them. As Cameron (Isis learner 5) noted:

"EVERYONE WAS HAVING FUN, HAVING SOME BANTER. NO-ONE REALLY PUSHED CERTAIN THINGS TOO FAR. CERTAIN COMMENTS AND THAT NEVER WENT TOO FAR…IT WAS JUST REALLY REALLY GOOD" (Cameron, Isis learner 5)

Learners themselves described developing a respectful banter, although they also identified the importance of the tutor to manage this where on occasions, learners had to be reminded to focus on the learning. Indeed, the tutor was viewed as possessing the skills to encourage these connections and 'banter' whilst being fair and firm and keeping the learners focused. This banter with learning was an important part of the process to feeling connected with each other, which created relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for learning.

Learners also described connecting with each other outside of the formal course sessions where they continued to create a supportive learning environment through their own study sessions. These group study sessions were described as a learning space where they had some level of control and autonomy and where they led their own development in conducting the readings and engaging in group

dialogue. Creating an autonomous, sharing, and relaxed environment for learning supported connectedness, as Mark (Isis learner 6) explained:

"WE WOULD BRING OUR COFFEE OR OUR TEA WITH US AND OUR SNACKS. WE EVEN BROUGHT TUNA AND NOODLES IN OUR CONTAINER BECAUSE WE WERE THAT COMFORTABLE" (Mark, Isis learner 6)

These group study sessions were introduced to ensure they could each keep on track with the demands of the course. Although learners all had differing levels of educational attainment, knowledge and literacy, they were keen to support each other to progress as a group, not just individually. They were keen that none of the learners were left behind and there was a strong ethos that they had started the course together and wanted to successfully complete this as a group.

Goldsmith learners, although from the same university, also had not known each other prior to Learning Together and had come from a range of courses (including psychology, media studies, and fine art) yet also described the strong friendships which had developed between them. As a varied group of Goldsmith students, they spoke of coming together and being able to share their views, concerns and queries in supportive and meaningful ways. The journey to HMP&YOI Isis most embodied their cohesiveness where they travelled together to and from the prison in a hired mini bus and spoke of sharing their experiences and developing a camaraderie as a group. One learner particularly reflected that she had not realised how much the group of Goldsmith learners had bonded until she had to make her own travel arrangements to the prison on one occasion. She missed the time before and after the session and had realised the importance to debrief, share, and connect as a group in this way. Goldsmith learners described how these friendships and connections continued after the course, through the use of a WhatsApp group and some had developed cross-disciplinary projects and ideas between them as a result of the Learning Together experience.

Collectively, the Isis and Goldsmith learners each reflected on the cohesiveness of the group as a whole where they were all committed to the notions of parity and that all learners, be it from Goldsmiths or HMP&YOI Isis, were valued and respected. Overwhelmingly, all reflected on the social connections formed between them, as Carol (Goldsmith learner 7) noted:

"THE GOLDSMITH STUDENT AND ISIS STUDENTS GOT ON REALLY WELL AND WE HAD A REALLY NICE VIBE IN THE ROOM, THE WHOLE WAY THROUGH. THAT IS PROBABLY THE ONE THING I'LL TAKE AWAY FROM IT, THE BEST THING IS THAT" (Carol, Goldsmith learner 7)

These social connections formed over the course, where indeed, Isis learners had held initial concerns regarding how they may be perceived and judged by 'outside' students. Some had spent long amounts of time in the prison context and had become accustomed to the regime, rules, and culture which promoted mistrust and suspicion of all others. However, Isis learners spoke of lowering their guard and forming more trusting social bonds with the Goldsmith learners, as Raphael (Isis learner 6) reflects:

"…OUR GUARD IS UP BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T BEEN AROUND NORMAL CIVILIANS FOR OVER A YEAR…SO YOU FORGET HOW TO BEHAVE IN A NORMAL WAY IN SOCIETY BECAUSE YOU'RE JUST IN PRISON, THEN ITS PRISON CULTURE, PRISON LIFESTYLE… SO OVER THE WEEKS THEY STARTED TO LOWER THEIR GUARD AND WE STARTED TO LOWER OURS AND BY THE END OF THE COURSE EVERYONE WAS ON A LEVEL CRACKING BANTER" (Raphael, Isis learner 6)

The initial introductory session prior to the start of the course was particularly valued as an opportunity for learners to meet and begin to form connections based on trust and respect. The result was a lowering of boundaries and increased exposure to positive social interactions which created a sense of normality which for Isis learners, was a more productive learning space. Isis learners highlighted the importance of the outside learners where all reflected they helped 'dilute' the mix of prisoners and assert the course as a different space within the oppressive prison environment. Cameron (Isis learner 5) notes how the sessions were more similar to a teaching and school-like environment, rather than prison where:

"…IT WAS JUST A GOOD ATMOSPHERE … IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN PRISON IT FEELS LIKE SCHOOL. AND I THINK THAT WAS ONE OF THE MAIN THINGS THAT HELPED PUSH IT ALONG" (Cameron, Isis learner 5)

Goldsmith learners also described the acceptance and support they gained from the Isis learners, where particularly shy and nervous Goldsmith students spoke of how they found confidence in themselves through the patience and support shown to them from Isis learners. The social interactions created a respectful and trusting space where learners felt able to engage in group discussions and feel supported by

each other. This made learning a more enjoyable and fun experience, which was in contrast to the forced and structured prison regime and experiences in prison education. Samuel (Isis learner 3) reflects on this where he states:

"WE'RE LEARNING AND AT THE SAME TIME HAVING FUN…THIS IS WHY I DON'T DO [PRISON] EDUCATION AND I'M NOT SITTING IN A CLASSROOM FOR A FEW HOURS. I'M DOING SOMETHING THAT IS BENEFITTING ME" (Samuel, Isis leaner 3)

Furthermore, the presence of mainly female Goldsmith learners was a motivating effect where they were able to engage in 'normal' interactions for their age group. Indeed, the male Isis learners reflected on the effect of being around Goldsmith learners who were of a similar age to them, where they wanted to impress the outside learners through demonstrating their commitment and dedication to learning on the course. Ali (Isis learner 7) in particular reflects on this, where he notes:

"…IT GETS THE GUYS MOTIVATED AS TO WANT TO IMPRESS…IN TERMS OF THE YOUNGER LADS, IN THE CLASS, IT WAS MOTIVATING THEM, IN TERMS OF WANTING TO SHOW OFF. BUT BE SMART AND BE ACTUALLY, LIKE, 'LOOK WHAT I CAN DO'" (Ali, Isis learner 7)

For most of the Isis learners, the need to impress was tied up with wanting to be respected and demonstrate their maturity in learning. Goldsmith learners also reflected on the motivating effect in seeing the Isis learners' determination, dedication, and commitment to learning and described how this in turn inspired them to work harder. For a minority of Isis learners, connectedness and the motivation to impress was additionally related to developing a physical and emotional attraction to some of the Goldsmith students. However, these attractions were either never acted upon or sentiments were conveyed through formal Goldsmith and HMP&YOI Isis channels and managed appropriately. In this sense, social connections produced a cohesive and supportive and respectful learning environment which were important mechanisms for learning.

Open Book tutors reflected on the value of this connectedness for learning where the environment was more conducive to group discussions and learning. They described the methods they employed to support creating a relaxed space from arranging tables for small group work to positioning of the tutor in the middle of the room. In this way, discussions could be facilitated between the learners. This was in contrast more traditional set-ups of classrooms where students tend to face forward

towards a teacher at the front where information is disseminated in a didactic interaction. Open Book tutors reflected on the positive group dynamics and impact on ensuing discussions where:

"…BEING A TEACHER AT UNIVERSITY, I'M USED TO WORKING REALLY HARD TO GET STUDENTS TO ENGAGE AND GEL AS A GROUP AND TALK FREELY. THAT'S NOT BEEN NEEDED IN THIS GROUP … THEY ALWAYS WANT TO TALK AND IT'S ALWAYS ON POINT AND RELEVANT AND THEY GO AT IT ALL THE TIME – IT'S AMAZING!" (Open Book tutor 2)

Most notably, a guest lecturer was also compelled to comment on the group bonds, where they sent a response to learners[22]:

IT WAS GREAT TO MEET YOU ALL TODAY AT THE SOCIAL RESEARCH CLASS AT ISIS. I THOUGHT YOU ALL DID BRILLIANTLY WELL IN THE CLASS AND THE THING THAT STRUCK ME THE MOST WAS NOT THE LEVEL OF CRITICAL THINKING IN THE DISCUSSION (WHICH WAS EXTREMELY HIGH) BUT ALSO THE CARE AND THOUGHTFULNESS OF HOW YOU ALL RELATED TO EACH OTHER AND THE OBVIOUS FRIENDSHIPS THAT HAVE BEEN BUILT THROUGH LEARNING TOGETHER. I AM SURE THIS WILL SOUND LIKE AN OLD MAN'S COMMENT BUT I FELT VERY PROUD OF YOU ALL, NOT JUST AS STUDENTS OF GOLDSMITHS BUT ALSO AS AMBASSADORS OF WHAT I THINK OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT ITS VERY BEST LOOKS LIKE.

IT WAS VERY POIGNANT AT THE END WHEN THERE WAS SUCH A BUZZ AND GREAT ENERGY IN THE ROOM THAT A 'GROUP HUG' WAS STILL PROHIBITED. I GUESS IT WAS A REMINDER TO US ALL OF THE GRIM REALITY OF THAT PLACE BUT EVEN WITH THE DOORS LOCKED THAT COLLECTIVE THINKING TOGETHER DIDN'T SEEM CONFINED. […]WELL DONE AND I HOPE THE LAST FEW WEEKS GO WELL. SUCH A FANTASTIC THING YOU HAVE DONE TOGETHER.

The impact of a social and interactive environment was noted in all interviews; discussions were more fruitful and social barriers overcome where all felt they had learned from each other. Goldsmith learners described their realisation that people in prison were not so different to them and they had more commonalities than expected. Isis learners too felt they gained an insight into what university students were like which challenged some of their preconceptions that university students would be 'stuck-up'. Coming together to challenge narratives of each group brought trust, unity and positive norms which was fruitful for learning and personal transformation.

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[22] Provided by Open Book tutors and posted on the Goldsmiths VLE for students

Bounding friendships

Despite the overwhelmingly positive reflections on the social connections formed, learners and Open Book tutors were mindful of the underlying tensions to maintain boundaries and manage any potential risks. In this sense, friendships were formed and even encouraged, but 'bounded'. Open Book tutors spoke of the initial concerns associated with taking a group of largely young female students into a male environment of similarly aged young men. As such, a set of 'rules' were established with learners at the start of the course, which included not sharing personal details (e.g. phone numbers, addresses, and social media details) and for the Goldsmith learners not sharing their surnames. All learners reflected that they understood the need for boundaries, however, some felt that the rules were overly-monitored. Some Isis learners specifically reflected on the conflicts with forming social bonds with Goldsmith learners yet having certain boundaries in place relating to what they could share and how 'freely' they could talk. The younger Isis learners tended to reflect on these restrictions where one learner, Cameron (Isis learner 5), particularly questioned why Isis and Goldsmith learners were not able to develop greater friendships and share aspects of their life. He communicates his frustrations and likens the restrictions of the course with the overall prison experience which was infantilising and dehumanising. He exclaims:

"I'M A HUMAN BEING…DON'T TREAT ME LIKE I'M SOME KID KEPT IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY!"
(Cameron, Isis learner 5)

The rules for some were seen as counterproductive in their personal development and learning progress and were a source of frustration.

Goldsmith learners primary concerns revolved around what they perceived were the inconsistencies in messaging and the implementation of the rules. They described feeling conflicted in forming social bonds and wanting to share details of their life however, there had been rules enforced to prevent this. Furthermore, these boundaries were consistently reaffirmed to them where Goldsmith learners felt their interactions and behaviours were monitored during each session. Carol (Goldsmith learner 7) for example, states:

"…EVERY CONVERSATION WE'RE BEING LISTENED TO" (Carol, Goldsmith learner 7)

Goldsmith students felt that the onus was on them to actually enforce the boundaries and that they were constantly being monitored and judged to make sure they were not sharing too much or more obviously, flirting with the Isis learners. At times, some Goldsmith students felt they were being regularly monitored and surreptitiously singled out for either consistently sitting next to the same Isis learners or being too friendly and convivial. They felt that this was unfair since they were often not in control of who they sat next to although felt the responsibility in managing the balance between forming social bonds within these restrictions and boundaries.

Although the boundaries and rules had been agreed by all learners at the start, learners reflected that they were more complex and nuanced to manage in practice. Goldsmith learners reflected on some of their confusions where for example, Open Book tutors were able to share details (e.g. surnames) and Isis learners were often referred to by the surnames (as is often the case in prison contexts) yet Goldsmith learners were not able to. Furthermore, over the course, boundaries were loosened by some learners leaving some Goldsmith learners confused at what they could start to share and what they should not be sharing. Often, learners did not want to be the only one not sharing details if another learner felt comfortable to do this. This contributed to Goldsmith learners' sense of uncertainty of how they should be interacting with Isis learners and what their responsibility and the risks on themselves were.

Furthermore, Goldsmith learners felt that there was a focus on reinforcing the boundaries rather than actually being supported in how to manage situations and to feel supported if challenging situations occurred. For example, Ava (Goldsmith learner 5) stated:

"I PERSONALLY FELT THAT IF ANYTHING HAPPENED WHICH WAS WRONG, IT WAS ALL GOING TO BE ON ME. LIKE IT WAS NOT GOING TO BE ON THEM ANYWAY. SO I WAS REALLY WARY OF WHAT I SAID …I NEVER FELT SUPPORTED" (Ava, Goldsmith learner 5)

This was most problematic when Goldsmith learners reflected on occasions where they felt Isis learners were not following the rules established in maintaining boundaries. For example, through the process of developing social bonds, Isis learners may ask more questions about them in an inquisitive and friendly manner (e.g. where in London they live). Goldsmith learners described these conversations are largely innocuous but left them feeling concerned with how Open Book tutors

may be monitoring these interactions and what the repercussions might be for them. They felt frustrated in having to both enforce the boundaries whilst taking on the full responsibility for them. They felt that the responsibility for enforcing and maintaining these boundaries which were not adequately shared with the Isis learners, in this apparent equalising environment. As reflected on by Carol (Goldsmith learner 7):

"IT WAS ANNOYING BECAUSE THEY'RE [OPEN BOOK TUTORS] SAYING TREAT THEM AS EQUALS, NOT PRISONERS…SO WE GO IN AND THEY'RE FRIENDLY AND THEN WE'RE TOLD OFF FOR IT, BUT THEY'RE NOT TOLD ANYTHING" (Carol, Goldsmith learner 7)

Indeed, Open Book tutors reflected on the complexities of managing boundaries and risks where although they had considered the issues around boundaries before the course, a more nuanced, honest, and inclusive discussion was needed. They described how in retrospect, issues around taking university students into a prison context and being around prisoners were considered in rather static and top-level manner. In reality, this was likely to be an oversimplification of the issues of boundaries and was one-sided in its focus on protecting and placing boundaries on the university students. Most notably, the Open Book tutor posited:

"IT WOULD BE GOOD TO HAVE A BIT MORE OF AN HONEST DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS AND STAFF ABOUT RISK ASSESSMENT AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN REALITY?" (Open Book tutor 1)

Here, management of risks therefore requires a much broader discussion to understand how the benefits of social bonds can be utilised whilst managing risks in a more dynamic and supportive manner.

Artefacts of learning

Participation in the course involved undertaking various tasks and activities with key products or 'artefacts' to demonstrate progression and learning. Most importantly, Isis learners were keen to gain some validation for taking part in the course, where the possibility to gain an external higher education qualification was a motivating factor for enrolling and progressing in the course. An external qualification from a university was an important artefact of learning which would certify their skills, cement their identity as learners, as well as assist with obtaining work or further education on release. Furthermore, both Goldsmith and Isis learners were keen to undertake a research project as a demonstration and impact of their learning. Learners reflected on their hopes to undertake a research project which

had been initially presented as an opportunity to both learn about social science research but influence prison education at HMYOI Isis.

However, despite the desire for artefacts of learning, the type, use and development towards them in practice were problematic for learners. Isis learners did not believe they were provided with enough details about the qualification nor did they receive enough focus and support to achieving this. They felt they received conflicting reports of the qualification having been told this was 'half an A-level', the 'Extended Project Qualification' or 'EPQ'. Furthermore, they were not clear how to achieve this qualification and sessions did not appear to clearly guide learners to what aspects were related to this. Isis learners expressed that adequate information was only provided mid-way through the course when they explicitly expressed their concerns and dissatisfaction, whereas this should have been provided prior to the course.

Furthermore, the production of a research study and report which would have the potential for impact was highly appealing but learners were disappointed with the progression and production of this artefact of learning. Learners did not feel there were adequately prepared for undertaking the research project where, Ali (Isis learner 7) reflected on his concerns with the lack of skills to conduct the research yet facing some pressure to produce something for the prison:

"…IT FELT LIKE THEY WERE TRAINING US JUST TO DO RESEARCH FOR THE PRISON. AND THEY WERE NOT GIVING US ENOUGH TIME TO LEARN HOW TO RESEARCH, THE RESEARCH DESIGNS, IT ALL JUST FELT WEIRD"
(Ali, Isis learner 7)

As such, Isis learners felt that producing a research report became an output they were expected to deliver for the prison rather than a demonstration and artefact of their own learning (which would then go on to influence changes).

Goldsmith students also reflected on the lack of artefacts of their own learning and progress. Although both Open Book tutors, prison staff, and Isis learners reflected on the valuable role of outside learners, the Goldsmith learners reflected on the continued uncertainty towards their own function and learning journey. Many of the Goldsmith learners were not sure if they were part of the course to assist the Isis learners or whether they were there for their own learning needs, or a combination of both. The Goldsmith learners had initially received information about the course

as an opportunity to also develop their own knowledge and learning in social science and to develop a research project which would inform changes to prison education. However, Goldsmith learners reflected on the ambiguity of the learning objectives and outcomes of the course. Indeed, they enjoyed the discussions and bonding with the Isis learners, but they were not sure of the overall objectives, as reflected by Penny (Goldsmith learner 1):

"…THE DISCUSSIONS WE HAD IN CLASS WERE REALLY GOOD, IT WAS LIKE ABOUT FEMINISM AND MARXISM AND STUFF LIKE THAT. BUT THE ACTUAL OBJECTIVE OF THE COURSE – I STILL COULDN'T TELL YOU" (Penny, Goldsmith learner 1)

They did not think their roles had been fully clarified or explained to them and as such, they felt they were expected to turn up and take part with little direction or focus. As such, they felt that the sessions lacked focus for them and that the course did not have a definite end point or specific outcome they were working towards, as Carol noted:

"IT FELT LIKE WEEK-TO-WEEK, THEY WERE GOING WITH THE FLOW RATHER THAN HAVE A CERTAIN PLAN" (Carol, Goldsmith learner 7)

They were particularly disappointed at the lack of focus and development towards conducting a research project. Indeed, most of the Goldsmith learners had little prior knowledge of research methods and were particularly keen to learn and apply these skills to improving education in the prison. As Kelly (Goldsmith learner 3) described:

"I GUESS WE ALWAYS KEPT THINKING IT'S GOING TO BE COME AND BE EXPLAINED TO US…WE THOUGHT WE'D HAVE A LITTLE MORE PRACTICAL QUESTIONING, INTERVIEWING, PUTTING THAT TOGETHER. YOU JUST FEEL THAT WAS ORIGINALLY BRIEFED AS 'YOU WOULD GAIN THESE SKILLS' BUT I DON'T THINK WE EVER REALLY DID" (Kelly, Goldsmith learner 3)

Open Book tutors noted that their initial expectations were primarily for Goldsmith students to support and facilitate the development of the Isis learners where their own learning would be an additional outcome for them. However, Isis learners embraced the course and took charge of their own learning development (e.g. through setting up study groups) and Open Book tutors noted that the role of the Goldsmith learners became less clear. Furthermore, Open Book tutors described the learning needs of the Goldsmiths learners as a secondary focus. Indeed, although

the Goldsmith learners were motivated to take part for their own learning needs, they did appreciate that the course was a significant opportunity for the Isis learners and reflected that they were primarily committed to their needs and development. However, they felt they would have liked greater clarity over their own role within this context and to have been presented with realistic expectations and objectives to avoid disappointments and confusions.

Overall, Open Book tutors reflected on the challenges to achieve the overall course objectives and outcomes with a diverse set of learners in such a context. As such, they took on a flexible approach and chose to avoid establishing any educational criteria in developing the course so that they could be flexible and 'experimental' in trying different approaches to explore what works best with the group. For example, as reported in an observation form, the tutor adapted the session plan to focus on readings in light of the learners expressing difficulties. In this sense, tutors were flexible around learners' needs and building on their own learning of what works each week. Furthermore, the tutor described being particularly mindful of the lives of Isis learners whilst in prison and wanting to ensure that the demands and content of each session were sensitive to their moods and did not produce additional stressors. For example, the tutor reflected after one session (in the observation form) that Isis learners appeared less enthusiastic possibly as a response to external stresses within the prison. The tutor chose to redirect the session plan to accommodate this. The tutors therefore reported that much of the course was a learning experience for them in understanding and trying different flexible approaches to suit the learners' needs as best possible. As such, the tutor reflected that attempts to deliver on the different aspects of the course (i.e. the artefacts of learning) may have led to confusions where they note:

"…BETWEEN EVERYONE IN THE ROOM, WE ALL HAD A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF WHAT WE WERE DOING… I WAS CLEAR IN MY MIND WHAT I WAS DOING – BUT MAYBE IT WAS MUDDY TO OTHERS"

(Open Book tutor 1)

Learners indeed, felt that the course lacked some clear progression towards the artefacts of learning which had created some uncertainties and disappointments for learners in their progress.

Partnership working

Open Book tutors and prison-education staff overwhelmingly praised the positive partnership established, which overcame some of the operational barriers. Indeed, some of the complexities in bringing external visitors into the prison, facilitating prisoner attendance, allocating classroom spaces, and monitoring prisoner movements (to other prisons or if released), were overcome through good partnership working between Open Book, HMP&YOI Isis, and PET with support from key individuals within the prison. Most notably, the support and involvement of the governor at HMP&YOI Isis was highlighted as vital as she was able to assert some authority and add legitimacy to the partnership which held importance across the prison and with prison-based staff. Furthermore, overcoming the challenges and barriers relied most importantly on the support of key members of prison education staff who were involved in the day-to-day running of the course and has a level of understanding of the broader issues of the prison structures and regime. Open Book staff particularly reflected on the value of having key members of prison-based staff, and particularly praised certain individuals for their involvement and support. This insider knowledge of prison was vital, but importantly, having a passion and drive to want to overcome the challenges and make the course a success was also key. Education staff most notably reflected that although the process of running the course was relatively smooth, challenges and barriers did exist and that a great deal of effort and passion had seen the course through to fruition:

"IT NEEDS SOMEONE WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT THIS AND WANTS TO DRIVE THE IDEA" (Education staff 1)

Therefore, all staff reflected positively on the working relationship between Open Book, HMP&YOI Isis and PET.

However, despite the achievements in overcoming some of the operational complexities, Isis learners reflected that they experienced some barriers to group study which had not been resolved during the course. Although learners had been given approval to come together in these study groups, not all learners were able to access these groups. Specifically, learners in Thames house block[23] experienced greater difficulties in accessing study groups, as explained by Raphael (Isis learner 6):

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[23] There are two main house blocks in the prison: Meridian and Thames house block

"… [THE HOUSE BLOCKS ARE] SUPPOSED TO BE THE SAME, BUT THEY ARE LIKE TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS, REALLY DIFFERENT…THE STAFF THERE JUST DON'T GIVE A CRAP…THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT US…FOR THE COURSE, THAT'S SOMETHING THAT THEY CAN'T CONTROL, BUTS IT'S AN IMPORTANT FACTOR" (Raphael, Isis learner 6)

These learners described how some prison officers based on the house block either lacked awareness of the course or were choosing not to give approval for this additional group study time. The implication were that some learners on Thames house block were not able to benefit from additional group study time and tended to report struggling to keep up with the course demands. As Samuel (Isis learner 3) explained:

"THAMES DIDN'T REALLY HAVE THE INPUT OF THE STUDY GROUP…SOME OF US WERE FURTHER IN FRONT THAN THE OTHERS" (Samuel, Isis learner 3)

Isis learners stated that they continued to voice their frustrations, however, they were never resolved and the learners could not understand why considering the course had such approval and support from the governor. The difficulties in progression collectively as a group was a source of continued frustration.

Overall, stakeholders suggested that this was an example of a good partnership working where each offered an expertise of value to develop and implement the course within this population group and context. The governor particularly highlighted:

I THOUGHT THE INVOLVEMENT OF OPEN BOOK AND PET MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE. I THINK BECAUSE OF HOW OPEN BOOK ALREADY OPERATE WITHIN GOLDSMITHS THERE WAS AN EXISTING UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO DEVELOP ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT FEEL IT IS INACCESSIBLE. PET PROVIDED KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT ON HOW TO ENGAGE WITH HIGHER EDUCATION WITHIN A PRISON SETTING (Governor, HMP&YOI Isis)

Furthermore, the impact of the positive partnership had a greater reach than anticipated where one of the prison officers was awarded officer of the year 2017 from HMPPS for her involvement in the partnership. Another prison education staff also reflected how learner's progression has inspired them to continue their own education, where they stated at the final presentation day:

"I COULDN'T BE PROUDER. YOU'VE INSPIRED ME TO GO TO UNIVERSITY TO IMPROVE MY SKILLS"

As such, all stakeholders reflected that there had been useful and helpful interactions, input, and guidance from all stakeholders and that further collaborations and developments were planned, as highlighted by the governor:

I WANT TO SEE IT EMBEDDED AS A REGULAR PART OF THE CURRICULUM, FITTED IN TO ONE OF OUR PATHWAYS AND SEEN AS NORMAL PRACTICE (Governor, HMP&YOI Isis)

Despite some of the operational difficulties experiences by Isis learners, they also reflected on the achievements of the partnership in establishing the course within a challenging context and were keen for continued developments for future learners.

Precarity of trust

Isis learners highlighted their powerless position as a 'prisoner' and the contrast in engaging with an activity which promised meaningful engagement and participation. Taking part in Learning Together represented a leap of hope and a real opportunity for personal development. However, taking this leap of hope meant moving into a place of uncomfortable vulnerability where they may be let down and disappointed if the course failed to deliver. This also brought additional challenges in 'crossing over' into working alongside institutions, such as the prison, rather than being contained and controlled within these structures.

Building trust for Isis learners was described as an important component of Learning Together where all described the various ways they felt powerless and open to exploitation within the prison by other prisoners and staff. As such, the learners were heightened and alert to potential mistreatment where they were highly suspicious and guarded towards other prisoners, the prison, and other external organisations. As described, Isis learners formed and built friendships and connections between themselves and the Goldsmith learners, however, building trust more broadly proved more precarious. Specifically, Isis learners described how trust was eroded with the lack of clarity, support, and guidance in working towards the external qualification and the research project (the 'artefacts of learning') where, for example, Cameron notes his distrust when the course failed to deliver on many of his initial hopes:

"…I THINK THEY JUST THOUGHT THEY COULD TAKE THE PISS OUT OF US BECAUSE WE'VE GOT LIMITED RESOURCES. WE CAN'T DO MUCH BEHIND HERE … OUR VOICE DOESN'T REALLY MATTER" (Cameron, Isis learner 5)

In this sense, trust was hard to gain but harder to maintain.

Most notably, learners also point to the paradox in their dual role of working alongside the prison whilst also being contained and controlled within these structures. Indeed, although they valued the involvement of guest lecturers who themselves had real-life experiences of being prisoners themselves, the learners spoke of some low-level suspicions towards ex-prisoners who they perceived were now possibly aligned more closely with prison rather than the prisoners. This paradox was most reflected in undertaking the research project where their position as prisoners and potential influencers of prison education reform intersected. Learners viewed the research project as an artefact of their learning and the potential to raise the prisoner 'Learner Voice' for influence and reform. Indeed, there were some challenges in working towards undertaking this research project, and Isis learners were further disappointed at what they believed was a shift from the research project being an artefact of their learning and something which they had ownership over to an output deliverable for the prison. This subtle shift in power left the Isis learners mistrustful of the purpose of the research project, and more widely, the course itself. They were disillusioned with what they felt was a lack of engagement with their ideas where their suggestions for improving prison education (including, shorter lessons and more varied topics). Samuel spoke about his frustration and disappointment where he states:

"…WE SHOWED [THE PRISON GOVERNOR] THE PROPOSAL AND SHE SAID 'IT'S A GOOD PROPOSAL' BUT THEN SHE FOUND BITS TO PICK AT IT…LIKE 'OH IT CAN'T BE DONE'. YOU MADE US SIT THERE AND GAVE YOU A PROPOSAL BUT YOU JUST PICKED IT, PICKED IT TO PIECES, AND THEN YOU WANT US TO WRITE A REPORT FOR YOU! NO! …TIL THIS DAY, THE PROPOSAL THAT WE'VE GIVEN THEM HASN'T BEEN APPLIED. BUT IT CAN! IT'S SIMPLE!" (Samuel, Isis learner 3)

Indeed, the learners described responding to the concerns from prison education staff and the prison governor towards their ideas, where they attempted to adapt their suggestions accordingly. However, the learners felt that these were also not well received which added to their general feelings of disappointment and ultimately, mistrust towards the course itself and prison that both were not genuine in wanting to focus on their learning or the Learner Voice for improving prison education. Samuel further reflects this where he states:

"BASICALLY, THEY WANT US TO DO ALL THIS WORK, GO AROUND WRITE ALL THE RESEARCH, AND WRITE ALL THIS RESEARCH AND WRITE THIS REPORT SO THAT YOU CAN PRODUCE TO WHOEVER YOU NEED TO PRODUCE TO FOR MORE FUNDING" (Samuel, Isis learner 3)

The Isis learners further reported how these feelings of mistrust were punctuated by various seemingly innocuous comments from Open Book tutors, prison education staff, and the prison governor who referred to the learners as 'guinea pigs', the course as a 'pilot', and the suggestion of wanting the course to succeed to secure future funding and development. Although these may have been referred to in seemingly innocuous manners by staff, this served to make Isis learners feel that they were test subjects rather than individuals with specific needs and ambitions. Jordan (Isis learner 2) reflected on this where he states:

"I STARTED THE COURSE THINKING IT WAS GOING TO BE ABOUT ME…BUT IT'S JUST BEEN ABOUT PRODUCING A REPORT FOR THEM TO MAKE THEM LOOK GOOD. NOTHING TO DO WITH ME AT ALL!"
(Jordan, Isis learner 2)

For Isis learners, there was a deep concern and disappointment that the course might have been another aspect of the prison experience, in stripping them of any control, power, or respect. Indeed, both Goldsmith and Isis learners felt disappointed at the promise of developing a research project which would be part of improving prison education, but in reality, the course and the prison did not provide the support nor commitment to engaging with this aspect of the course. Indeed, prison education staff also reflected on their limitations in implementing and acting on some of the suggestions from the learner's proposal. For example, they had little control and power to change staffing and regime issues. However, staff described how the course and the increased engagement with the learner's had given them "food for thought" (Prison education staff 1) where some changes could be possible with greater time and continued development (some of which have been highlighted further in 'subsequent developments' the discussion section).

Shared critical consciousness

Transcending the themes was the dialogical approach to learning to reach a collective experience of raising their critical consciousness. Here, learning was focused on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world with a greater awareness of social and political power and the contradictions which govern society. Open Book tutor reflected on this critical approach to learning which sought

to examine the forces of power, domination, and control that structure prisoners' lives. By creating equal and reciprocal learning environment, the tutor wanted learners to feel empowered to see their lives differently, where the tutor reflected:

"I WANT PEOPLE TO BE POLITICAL AND REALISE THEIR OWN SITUATION AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. PEOPLE ARE FRIGHTENED OF TEACHING POLITICS AND LAW AND THESE SORTS OF THINGS IN PRISON COS THEY THINK, OH THEY ARE GOING TO TRY AND GET OUT OF THINGS, BUT IT'S LIKE NO – THEY MIGHT JUST THINK 'I'LL TRY AND LIVE MY LIFE DIFFERENTLY COS I UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS ABOUT AND WHAT I NEED TO DO' - AND THAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT" (Open Book tutor 1)

Before Learning Together, learners spoke of how their world view was narrow and they lacked awareness of society. However, on the course, learners were encouraged to read widely and use social science as an avenue to explore and understand the world around them. Indeed, the Isis learners described being inspired during the course where they not only gained basic skills in reading, writing, and literacy, but were enthused to learn where they described the course as 'opening their eyes' and raising their awareness about the world around them. As one student described during the end of course presentation day:

"IT'S ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE, ABOUT CLASS, ABOUT WHOSE VOICES MATTER AND WHAT THAT MEANS"

Through readings, discussions and dialogue as a group, the learners developed a group critical consciousness to explore how their individual ideas and experiences intersect with institutions and social powers.

Indeed, much of these discussions had occurred within the formal sessions, however, Isis learners spoke about the dialogues within their own group study sessions. These sessions were largely driven and guided by the learners themselves with support from the facilitating peer-worker, where they focused on in-depth reading and discussions of key passages of work from notable philosophers and thinkers (only some of which were part of the course readings). Isis learners spoke of the transformative effect in developing their critical thinking skills, which led to a shared critical consciousness of how they see the world. Some spoke of the impact of this development where they were less impulsive and judgmental towards others in light of this awareness of individual's lives and circumstances. For example,

Raphael (Isis learner 6) spoke of how he is now more relaxed and open within the prison where he says:

"…DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER…I HAVEN'T COMPLETELY SHUT OFF AND BECOME AN EASY TARGET BUT I WON'T PUT MY BACK STRAIGHT UP TO ANYONE…I GATHER DATA, SEE WHAT THEY ARE LIKE, WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT ON WING" (Raphael, Isis learner 6)

Others also described developing personal insights into their own lives where they explored their relationships with family members and friends and the roles they played in their lives and in their learner journey. The learners reflected on their personal transformations within their presentations at the end of the course, where many of the Isis learners reflected:

"…IT'S MADE ME PUT MY LIFE INTO PERSPECTIVE"

"SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR ME OPENED MY EYES TO THINGS THAT I DIDN'T THINK ABOUT WHEN MAKING DECISIONS THAT GOT ME IN HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE"

"IT HAS MADE ME UNDERSTAND WHY PEOPLE CHASE THE LIFESTYLE PORTRAYED IN MUSIC […] THINGS THEY CAN'T AFFORD, LIKE NEW PHONES OUT EVERY SIX MONTHS. WHEN I'M OUT I'M NOT GOING TO BE CHASING THOSE THINGS ANYMORE"

"I'D NEVER READ ANY SOCIAL SCIENCE BEFORE. IT'S A BIG SUBJECT. I REALISED THAT YOUR IDENTITY IS PARTLY BORN AND PARTLY MADE BY SOCIETY, [AND] THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ACTUALLY REFLECTS OUR SOCIAL JUSTICE SYSTEM!"

Furthermore, one of the learners returned to the prison to attend the presentation day, having been released just a few week before. He too reiterated the impact of the course on release, where he stated:

"THERE ARE THINGS I'M APPLYING NOW ON RELEASE THAT I DIDN'T THINK I WOULD"

Indeed, Isis learners thrived within the learning environment where critical discussions relating to power and society were highly relevant to their lives both within and outside the prison.

However, taking this critical pedagogical approach within prison by design produces both benefits but also challenges and tensions. During the course, Isis learners described developing a critical consciousness of their role in society and the criminal justice system, particularly relating to the issues of privatisation and

neoliberalism[24]. Isis learners were aware of the growing focus within prisons in England and Wales to achieve targets and the pressures to manage and gain funding. This learning resonated with the learners and provided explanations for some of discomforts with how they were currently treated within the criminal justice system; not as a human beings but as bodies which was churned through the system. Furthermore, the Isis learners had also grown increasingly dissatisfied with some ongoing 'residual' problems[25] as well as the growing mistrust relating to the lack of information relating to the external qualification and the research project. As such, they started to question the motivations of the prison, PET, and Open Book and their commitment to genuine real change and reform or whether they too were working towards their own over-riding self-serving public relations and funding interests. Although they recognised the dedication and passion from staff in setting up the course, the learners believed that the course had somewhat lost its way with its preoccupation with longer term goals.

Prison education staff also reflected on their dual position in supporting the learner's developments on the course, but their concern with the extent to this shared critical consciousness forming, which had gone beyond what they had anticipated. Much of their concerns focused on the learning which occurred outside of the formal course sessions within the independent study groups which were facilitated by a peer prison facilitator. This facilitator was viewed as potentially having a disruptive influence over the learners where, as one of the prison education staff reflected:

"SOME OF THE STUFF THAT HE WAS DOING CAME ACROSS AS RADICAL – BUT REALLY INSIGHTFUL. HE WAS MANIPULATING THE GUYS INTO HOW YOU LOOK AT SOMETHING CRITICALLY AND THEY WENT A LOT DEEPER THAN THEY NEEDED TO. THEY NEEDED TO KEEP IT TO THE SURFACE FOR THIS COURSE. THEY WENT TOO DEEP" (Prison education staff 1)

Here, prison education staff reflected on the extent to which learners were activated through the learning and felt that the learners had gone 'too deep'. They described the challenges of managing these concerns where they halted plans to support study groups to form across the house blocks and expressed that they had

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[24] It is likely that Isis learners engaged in some of these topics during study groups which were held between formal course sessions.

[25] There had been delays in Isis learners receiving their bursaries, in refurbishment plans for their study room and in getting t-shirts printed as the logo had not been approved.

some initial inclinations to remove the facilitating prisoner from the course. However, the facilitating prisoner subsequently chose to leave the course on his own accord, where prison education staff felt that this was likely to have been "the right decision". However, Isis learners described the actions from prison education staff as 'infantilising' where the suggestion that they were being manipulated by the facilitating prisoner was viewed as scapegoating of a single person. This became a continued source of frustration, mistrust, and disappointment for the Isis learners, who felt that prison education staff were scapegoating the facilitating prisoner rather than engaging with their concerns, where Samuel states:

"…FOR THEM TO PICK ON HIM AND SAY HE'S MANIPULATING OUR MINDS OR BRAINWASHING US IS WRONG…HE'S ACTUALLY HELPING US TO UNDERSTAND, GIVING US A BETTER UNDERSTANDING, COS THEY'RE JUST GIVING US A FAÇADE AND HE'S TAKING THE FAÇADE AWAY AND SHOWING US WHAT'S REALLY BEHIND IT" (Samuel, Isis learner 3)

Isis learners reflected their desire to continue developing critical consciousness, yet the overriding prisons goals to restrict and limit this.

Open Book staff also described their own positioning as between the prison and learners. They reflected on the challenge to working for significant change and promoting greater engagement and learning within a challenging prison environment which was not conducive to learning and resistant to reform. As one tutor reflects:

"IT'S A HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC POSITION - YOU ARE HAVING TO SIDE WITH THE BAD GUYS TO DO ANY TINY BIT OF GOOD" (Open Book Tutor 2)

As such, taking a critical pedagogical approach within prison by design produces both benefits but also challenges and tensions. Open Book tutors therefore saw the demonstration and vocalisations of shared critical consciousness from learners as a sign of achievement, where as one Open Book tutor reflected:

"…THEIR EXPRESSIONS OF DISCOMFORT AND ANNOYANCE WERE PERFECTLY LEGITIMATE, AND IF I HADN'T BEEN WORRYING ABOUT THE PROJECT FALLING APART, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT IT WAS AMAZING BECAUSE THEY WERE SO VOCAL AND SO PASSIONATE. THEY WERE ARGUING ABOUT POLITICS IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS ROOM — ABOUT IDENTITY, STATUS, CONTROL, AND RIGHTS! IT WAS BRILLIANT — BUT CHALLENGING!" (Open Book Tutor 2)

However, Open Book tutors were also mindful of balancing the learning developments on the course whilst considering the limitations and challenges of being in a prison context. They acknowledge that equipping learners with the skills to understand society and their lives and place within these structures, need to be carefully managed where one tutor reflects:

"YOU DON'T GIVE WEAPONS TO CHILDREN, SO YOU DON'T LET PEOPLE DO THINGS THEY ARE NOT READY TO DO. SO YOU DON'T WANT TO OVER-DO IT, YOU DON'T WANT THEM TO GET REALLY FIRED UP AND EXCITED AND TO JUST LET THEM GO BACK TO THEIR WING AND GET THEIR DINNER AND EAT IT NEXT TO THEIR TOILET" (Open Book Tutor 1)

Tutors here reflected on the complexities of the challenges in developing a novel course within the prison, meeting the needs of the range of learners, whilst wanting to demonstrate impact to ensure sustainability and future developments of the course. The course was complex and ambitious, but this was part of the process of personal and social transformations where some of these tensions were ultimately viewed by Open Book as an important part of the Learning Together process. Indeed, Isis learners having reflected on both the positivity and challenges in the course, suggest that ultimately, the prison commitment to real change and reform was limited and slow-moving where, as Samuel notes:

"...THEY [THE PRISON] DIDN'T TAKE IT SERIOUSLY ENOUGH... IT WAS MORE TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT THEY DIDN'T WANT IT. THEY WASN'T READY TO CHANGE IT" (Samuel, Isis learner 3)

This particularly placed discomforts on Open Book tutors and highlighted the complexities of developing Learning Together (and Learner Voice more broadly) within this challenging context, where the extent and speed of which reform is possible can be sources of frustrations for those who reside in them.

Discussion

Summary of key findings

The findings reveal both the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of the Unlocked Learning Together partnership. The strengths included the provision of person-centred support to learners needs, the use of peer role models, and the potential of through-the-gate support from Open Book which helped to shape and allow the exploration of a multifaceted learner identity which contrasted with the restricted 'offender' label. The course allowed for time and trust to form between the learners, where the gender-mix and similarities in age fused the group into a unity where respectful 'banter' and positive social norms were part of a positive learning environment. Transcending the themes was the dialogical approach to learning where learners reported a collective experience of raising 'critical consciousness' where Isis learners particularly thrived within the learning environment where critical discussions relating to power and society were highly relevant to their lives both within and outside the prison. However, challenges were reported in bounding the social connections as a way to manage the potential risks where Isis learners felt infantilised by the rules and Goldsmith students felt over-burdened by the responsibility placed on them to manage these boundaries. Furthermore, tutors reflected on the challenges of delivering a course with a diverse set of learners within a challenging context, where some difficulties were faced in progressing through the 'artefacts of learning' (i.e. external qualification and the research project). Learners were also frustrated at what they saw as the lack of commitment and progress in raising Learner Voice and their efforts and suggestions for reforms to prison education. The findings point to the complexities of developing Learning Together within these challenging contexts, where the extent and speed to which reform is possible can be sources of frustrations for those who reside in them.

What this adds to our knowledge

This evaluation provides insights into the strengths and challenges of Learning Together in a young adult prison population. As such, the findings make a contribution to knowledge relating to desistance theory, peer and social models of learning, working within and with prisons, and critical consciousness in prison.

Desistance theory and Learning Together

The insights lend support for understanding the potential of education within desistance theory. Learners reflected on their development on the course where they saw themselves in greater control of their futures with a clearer purpose and meaning in their lives. Through learning in ways which is relevant, personal, and supportive, learners were able to make sense of their past lives and identities as 'offenders' and turn this into something positive. More broadly, learners described the changes in their behaviours and intentions for the future; they reported being calmer and more considered in their interactions with others and they were keen to seek further opportunities signalling a move away from further criminal activities. A learner identity provided the confidence to consider non-criminal pathways which had not been previously deemed suitable or achievable. The findings therefore suggest that desistance theories should consider the role of education and learning with the process. This is particularly relevant for young adults who are experiencing a number of other life experiences, such as becoming fathers, where Learning Together can be part of realising their potential past the 'offender' label and towards learners, fathers, friends, sons and beyond. Indeed, the potential for Learning Together as part of the provision of a holistic, person-centred approach is particularly relevant to the young adult prison population, with the potential for a generational level change in reoffending.

However, developing a learner identity alone will not lead to desistance without continued commitment and opportunities for change which individuals can act upon, where continued through the gate support is essential. Indeed, this Learning Together course is somewhat unique with the involvement of Open Book at Goldsmiths, who are already established to support people from a range of non-traditional backgrounds to enter higher education. Indeed, Joe Baden OBE from Open Book, reaffirmed the long-term commitment to the learners where he stated during the presentation day:

"YOU ARE ALL VERY BRAVE, GOING AGAINST WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TOLD IN THE PAST…I LOVE WHAT I DO NOW, MY FAMILY LOVE ME AGAIN. THIS IS NOT LIVING, HERE IN PRISON. COME AND SEE US AFTER RELEASE. THIS EXPERIENCE COULD CHANGE YOUR LIFE"

Indeed, a number of learners demonstrated a commitment to engage with Open Book on release however, one learner who had been released at the point of

interview, reflected on the challenges in reintegrating back into society where engaging with Open Book was certainly a desire but not a priority. Therefore, the findings support a desistance model which understands that moving away from crime is a difficult and complex process where change requires continued opportunity and support after prison.

Peer and social-based models of learning

Learning Together seeks to connect people who otherwise are unlikely to meet, with the aim to share experiences and knowledge where equal value is given to all; the focus is to learn from each other rather than to directly produce change (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016). The findings highlight the particular value of Learning Together for young people where these social interactions and the influence of positive peers are important aspects of young adulthood. Indeed, during young adulthood, maturity is developed through life experiences such as the completion of full-time education, gaining stable employment, leaving home, having stable partnerships, and becoming responsible for oneself. These are important indicators of reaching well-adjusted and positive adulthood (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2006). However, the criminal justice system has struggled to fully understand and respond to the unique needs of this population group (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2016). The findings point to the benefits and value of Learning Together in harnessing the influence of social and peer-based models of learning in a young adult group. Indeed, learners described the motivating effects of the Goldsmith learners and the desire to adopt and demonstrate learner identities. Furthermore, Isis learners described the strong friendships and bonds formed between themselves, which they acknowledged was unusual within a prison context. They were keen to support each other's progress and development, where they were able to engage in critical dialogue to develop a shared critical consciousness. Here, 'young adulthood' is constructed as an asset which can be utilised and supported as part of developing learner identities, which contrasts with the perception of young adults as unreliable, untruthful and hard to engage (Ashby, 2011; James, 2013; Wilson, 2006). Learning Together demonstrates how young adults have the potential to demonstrate and become more than what these negative, deficit and risk-based approaches assume of them.

However, there are specific complexities relating to the use of peer and social-based models of learning and in maintaining boundaries for risk management. Indeed, the approach adopted within this Learning Together was similar to other prison-university partnerships where rules and practices were co-created within the learning environment, whilst considering the rules of the prison. The Inside-Outside program in the US highlight that bonds between learners are inevitable but that parameters are critical within the prison context which is a;

"CLEAR-CUT, BLACK AND WHITE ENVIRONMENT...THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SHADES OF GREY"

Although learners in this evaluation were aware of the need of such rules and boundaries, some saw these as rigid and requiring further conceptualisation and fluidity within this context. These issues may be particularly pertinent for young adults where friendships and social bonds are critical and meaningful during this stage of maturity and development. Bounding these within a set of seemingly arbitrary and nonsensical rules were viewed as infantilising and compounded some existing conflicts, where the course was perceived as potentially another aspect of the restrictive prison experience.

Furthermore, there are complexities in understanding and defining what is considered to be positive peer-influences. On this course, the influence of a prisoner peer facilitator was deemed concerning by some staff involved in the partnership who were worried at his persuasiveness and potential manipulation within the role. Staff were challenged to reflect on their own practice and the extent to which power sharing and ownership over learning can be achieved within the prison context. Prison educators were placed in a particularly challenging situation in deciding how to manage the influence of the peer facilitator, but reflected on their decision to continue to engage in meaningful and participatory ways and avoid taking an authoritative approach. The findings suggest that there are complexities and tensions involved in Learning Together, but these issues should not be a reason to revert to authoritative approaches, but should be opportunities to develop the participatory and equalising approach in Learning Together. The findings therefore point to the overall benefit of Learning Together for desistance and the role in supporting young adults continued maturity whilst in prison.

Working within and with prison

The evaluation highlights the value in forming effective partnerships between Universities and prisons where a number of operational barriers were overcome and the course was delivered as planned week on week. Notably, the course also sought to utilise the 'Learner Voice' where equalising partnerships were sought with prisoners where more learner-focused and learner-centred models of education are achieved through working with and alongside prisoners for individual and wider transformations. Indeed, a number of PET activities have demonstrated the benefits of developing 'Learner Voice' particularly highlighting the benefits when at the highest level of participation (Auty et al. 2016). Learners in this evaluation reflected on their desire and motivation to be part of the highest level of participation to raise the Learner Voice to produce what they saw were much needed changes to prison education. However, they were disappointed that this engagement was not at the highest level of participation where they were active and equal partners in the plans for reform to prison education. Instead, learners raised concerns that participation was at best consultative (and at worse, tokenistic), where learners were asked to provide some of their views which would be considered by prison administrators. This was highly disappointing and contributed to feelings of frustration and scepticism in the Isis learners. There was a sense that hopes and expectations had been raised but with little action and implementation of their views for changes.

This raises the extent to which Learning Together courses like this can support 'Learner Voice' within a context which is designed to control and restrict, and where reform is limited with slow gains and progress. This can be frustrating for prisoners where gaining trust from prisoners is challenging within these contexts, and once gained, can easily be eroded through raising false hopes and expectations. Indeed, prisoners report having to 'jump through the hoops' of assessments (Crewe, 2011) where key performance indicators have become driving forces for development and measuring success in prison and prison education. Learning Together needs to be mindful to not drift into or alongside these frameworks where tasks and activities become a product for the prison and universities, rather than grounded as artefacts of learning for learners. Indeed, Learning Together may consider avoiding utilising learners to produce reports and outputs directly associated with the prison and consider other avenues for this type of activities. For example, the partnership between HMYOI Feltham and Royal Holloway, University of London engaged

learners in an activity where a submission was made to the HMIP call for suggestions of the needs of young adults. Potentially this may be a more suitable activity as this still aligns with the values and goals of Learner Voice, but was not done on behalf of the prison holding the learners. Although no formal evaluation of the Feltham learner's views on this task were gained, this nonetheless may represent the subtle but significant distinction required by Learning Together to ensure equal and trusting relationships with learners first and foremost.

Critical consciousness in prison

The transcending themes in these findings was that of the development of a shared critical consciousness. Freire's work is highly relevant where the focus on the immersive experience of learning and raising contextual awareness, added a critical dimension to learner's sense of identity. Here, transformations in learners were inextricably tied with developing critical skills to challenge accepted norms and power structures and their capacity to connect with one's situated position in society. Bringing learners together in a group context provided a space for meaningful exchange through accepting everyone as they are and to grow together.

However, a gap remains in understanding how such critical approaches are applied and the impact and difficulties within a restrictive and controlled prison context. These findings reflect on learner's raised critical consciousness and desire for change and progress which may be difficult or impossible within the timeframe of the learners, leading to frustration and discontent. In this sense, critical consciousness may paradoxically trigger emotionally distancing reactions and become a barrier to engagement rather than a strength. To counteract this, raising critical consciousness also requires a willingness for all involved to challenge their own position of power and privilege; stakeholders must also consider their own professional pressures to meet targets and achieve impact and correspondingly engage and act upon their own critical reflections. This can be particularly challenging for stakeholders when funding and roles are precarious in the current climate of austerity and cut-backs. Both learners and stakeholders should directly and collectively engage in these wider tensions, particularly relating to the challenges of exerting individual agency within structural constraints. The findings suggest therefore that raising critical consciousness should be a shared process between learners and stakeholders.

Limitations

This evaluation provides insights into the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of Learning Together in a largely young adult prison population. Whilst the evaluation highlights some important themes, there are a number of caveats to take into account. Interviews were conducted in the weeks after the final session but before the final presentation day; the evaluation therefore captures very early insights from learners and staff. Further work should consider interviewing learners after the presentation day, when learners have had more time to reflect and consider their full learning journey. The evaluation also sought to utilise information from different methods of data collection. However, the evaluation subsequently relied on qualitative insights since there were large amounts of missing data from surveys and observation forms. This may reflect some of the difficulties in using these methods after a busy course session but may also reflect learners' reluctance to provide feedback via the course tutors. Unfortunately, the researcher had limited time and resources to collect this data directly, but future evaluations should prioritise efforts to include survey and observational data. Furthermore, the lack of mid-course focus group also limits some of the initial goals to gather insights over the development of the course. The evaluation also relied on insights from learners, Open Book tutors and prison education staff involved in the course. The evaluation would benefit from gathering further insights from other stakeholders such as representatives from PET, guest lecturers, and prison-based staff. Learning Together partnerships also value collaboration and participation, which should be embodied within the associated research and evaluations. This evaluation did seek to engage, involve and utilise participatory approaches where learners were consulted at different stages of the evaluation process. This process had been driven by the Isis learners who wanted to ensure the findings reflected their views and experiences. As such, the researcher consulted the Isis learners after initial analyses where the themes relating to their interviews were discussed. Furthermore, one of the Isis learners who was still present in the prison after the analyses phase was complete, was consulted where he provided some steer and support for this final report. In this way, this evaluation attempts to bridge some of the gap between the researcher and the participant and involve learners in the evaluation process. Although this is a strength of the evaluation, this reflects a consultative participation where future evaluations should

seek to engage learners with greater participation. Much of the limitations in moving beyond consultation were due to restrictions over research time, resources, and funding where future evaluations should prioritise and factor in this important step for evaluation studies.

Subsequent developments

Since this evaluation, there have been a number of developments at HMP&YOI Isis which have stemmed, in part, from this partnership. These include:

- **Report of learners' research findings:** Learners on this course administered a survey as part of the course (an artefact of their learning) which has since been analysed and written up as a final report by one of the Isis learners. This was given to the education department as well as the deputy governor for consideration.

- **Subsequent Learning Together courses:** a second course on 'Philosophy' was completed and a third course on 'Creative Writing' is currently underway between Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP&YOI Isis. Three of the initial learners were involved in developing the second course and interviewing potential prisoners. Prison staff report that there has been greater awareness of Learning Together within the prison where some prison-based staff have encouraged prisoners to apply. Open Book tutors also report that there has been a growing interest at Goldsmiths where they have seen more queries from staff and applications from Goldsmith students. Times Higher Education have also expressed interest in this partnerships and have visited to observe the course in action.

- **Completion and use of the study room:** A specific room has now been allocated and refurbished for the purposes of Learning Together sessions and other higher education learning (i.e. through Distance Learning) activities.

- **Increasing access to further and higher education:** Open Book have supported three UCAS applications for learners to engage in further and higher education study beyond Learning Together. PET's Advice Manager also came to speak to the learners about possible course options where learners were provided advice on funding of distance learning courses through PET. There has also been an increase in distance learning applications to PET from students at HMP&YOI Isis.

- **Development of academic pathways:** as reflected during the interviews with the Governor and prison education staff at HMP&YOI Isis, academic pathways have been formed where prisoners are encouraged to examine their learning needs and motivations with staff where through this learner-centred approach, a tailored academic pathway is established for each individual prisoner.
- **Establishment of a student voice group:** a student voice group has been developed where a group of learners from HMP&YOI Isis feed into developments in education. Most notable, the student voice group have helped to organise and host an event with UCAS about disclosure of criminal convictions in the application process into higher education.
- **Developments relating to prison staff:** Prison education staff continue to be in contact with PET, most notably where one staff member presented at a PLA conference. The prison officer involved in this Learning Together course was also awarded prison officer of the year for innovation for her involvement with the partnership.
- **Prison induction for future outside learners:** The education department, alongside the prison, now offer an induction specifically for future outside learners to inform and prepare them for being in the prison environment and managing the risks which may arise.
- **Support for future learners:** The PUPiL network set up by PET has plans to produce short leaflets for both 'inside' and 'outside' learners with suggestions of how they can build on their experiences and learning after the project has finished.

Recommendations

This evaluation seeks to inform the development of future Learning Together partnerships where 20 recommendations have been developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, including one of the Isis learners. The recommendations relate to policy, the course development and future research.

Recommendations for policy

1. A specific education policy for young adults

Prisoners are often presented as a homogenous groups with young adults treated and managed with a similar policy focus as the adult prison population. This evaluation suggests that young adults are an important group to consider with specific educational and developmental needs relating to their transition to

adulthood. PET and other organisations should seek to influence the development of policy for a specific approach for young adults within the prison system which considers the unique learning needs in light of their transition to adulthood and desistance pathways.

2. *Commitment to skills for the future: critical thinking and active learning*

Skills for the future emphasise the importance of interpersonal skills, higher order cognitive skills, critical thinking and active learning with a reduced need for low and medium-skilled roles[26]. This evaluation presents a strong case for offering educational opportunities such as Learning Together which tap into learners' potential, knowledge, and aspirations and can promote the skills for the future. Education commissioners should therefore consider the offer of a broader range of courses to develop these skills for the future alongside the offer of more vocational and job-related skills. Indeed a focus on 'careers' rather than 'jobs' may be more suitable for this age group, particularly given their stage and potential for life-long development. Policy makers should also ensure that these skills for the future are considered to reflect the changing landscape and ensure that young adults are equipped to flourish in this future climate.

3. *Commitment to Learner Voice*

Governors of prisons with a high proportion of young adults should place greater value on the 'Learner Voice' and develop meaningful ways to involve learners in improving education provision, with timely feedback mechanisms and communication with learners which demonstrate a clear commitment to both short-term and long-term developments. More broadly, much of the developments and potential of Learner Voice requires significant reform and reframing of current perceptions of young men as unreliable and untruthful to valuing their expertise through 'learner voice'. However, stakeholders must be mindful of the precarity of developing trust, where they must ensure they manage expectations of what is realistic in each prison context and communicate these effectively and with honesty. Furthermore, prisons must commit to meaningful and genuine engagement and co-production and avoid taking a purely consultative approach to developing Learner Voice.

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[26] See The future of skills employment in 2013: https://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/future-skills-employment-2030

4. *Further development of prison-university partnerships*

Governors of prisons with a high proportion of young adults should seek to build relationships with and collaborate with universities and prioritise these partnerships within their wider strategies for providing rehabilitative opportunities. This can be facilitated by PET's PUPiL network and/or the Learning Together network where appropriate. Partnerships should be developed to consider the long-term sustainability of the partnerships and avoid a 'parachute' approach to implementing a single course within a prison without future commitment.

5. *Widening access to higher education*

Universities must commit to widen access and support for young adults who are in prison and reach out to initiate prison partnerships. Although most Learning Together partnerships have been formed through the motivation and good will of individual staff, Universities must also develop and embed this commitment within their overall strategies to increase access for the most vulnerable and underrepresented groups and support continued learning on release. Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and Project Rebound[27] in California for example, provide a channel to support continued development where learners are encouraged to continue their progress on release. Indeed, Isis learners have continued to receive support beyond the initial course where other university partnerships would benefit from establishing similar Open Book initiatives to support not just Learning Together students on release but also to commit to breaking down the barriers many from disadvantaged backgrounds experience in accessing higher education.

6. *Development of a national prison-university network*

At present, prison-university partnerships are developed through individual organisations, however, prisoners tend to experience 'churn' through the system presenting challenges in selecting and retaining learners. Furthermore, learners are not always released into the local communities of the prison and can be released and move nationally. For example, not all HMP&YOI Isis learners will be residing in London, where Goldsmiths University is based, after release. Further thought should therefore be given to building effective 'through the gate' pathways into a network of different universities. This should wrap around learners

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[27] See http://asi.sfsu.edu/asprograms/project-rebound/

on release so they are able to continue higher education learning wherever they move and live. PET, as a national organisation supporting higher level learning, is well placed to provide this facilitative and central role. Community Rehabilitation Companies and Probation Trusts should also be trained how to support learners who have been involved in university partnerships to build on their aspirations after release. Where a learner is not ready to apply straight to university after release, thought should also be given to how they can remain in touch with either an academic or charitable organisation to continue to receive advice and guidance to support this long term goal. This would also require participation to be recorded on their computer-based records. A PUPiL Alumni network could provide such ongoing support.

Recommendations for course development

7. Establish key roles and responsibilities

In developing Learning Together courses, key individuals should be identified within the prison and university where roles and responsibilities are clearly established. Staff from all levels in the prison should be encouraged to be part of Learning Together, which should include senior prison staff (particularly prison governors) as well as on-the-ground staff who are gatekeepers and can overcome operational barriers. Staff should be encouraged to engage in Learning Together as part of training opportunities and continued professional development (CPD) development. Universities, particularly heads of departments and senior staff, must ensure appropriate time, support, and resources are provided for staff to engage in Learning Together.

8. Refine objectives and outcomes

Courses should have a clear objective with defined learning outcomes which are relevant for both inside and outside learners. Where appropriate and deemed relevant, an externally validated qualification could be offered to inside learners with clear information on how to progress and achieve this. Objectives and outcomes for outside learners should strive to include course credits, certificates, references, and opportunities for writing and publications. These objectives and outcomes should be clearly communicated to learners in advance of starting the course. Artefacts of learning should also be embedded within these course objectives and outcomes and should engage learners as

active agents of change rather than providing outputs for other agencies. Activities and tasks during the course should seek to demonstrate effect or outcomes within or close to the course duration rather than focusing solely on long-term developments.

9. *Increase access into the course*

Partnerships should seek to reach out to a broader range of inside learners and publicise the course more widely to ensure equity in accessing these opportunities. Furthermore, partnerships should continue to develop across a wider range of universities, particularly those with a diverse student population, to ensure continued equity in opportunity for the student population. In particular, outside students should be supported in taking part in partnerships through the provision of financial bursaries and subsidising travel costs to ensure equal access to Learning Together.

10. *Embed additional support for learning*

Courses should seek to engage with a range of learners and should avoid setting education criteria for entry onto the course. Instead, partnerships should embed additional support for learning to ensure all learners are provided with the necessary support to achieve the course objectives. Additional group study sessions should be encouraged and built into the course with an active commitment to support these from the prison. If written material is provided, this should be considered in relation to the format (i.e. font size, density of text), length (i.e. complete section of texts or highlighted paragraphs), when this is provided (i.e. in advance or a few sessions in advance), and if supporting guidance is needed (e.g. topic questions and tasks).

11. *Dynamic management of boundaries and risks*

All learners should be involved in co-producing ground rules which should be revisited, adapted, and managed in a constructive and inclusive approach. Specific pathways for inside and outside learner should be established to allow either learners to confide, divulge, or debrief on difficulties experienced with the option to speak with prison staff/tutors or an external source independent of the course (for example, PET).

12. Emphasis on participation and collaboration

Partnerships should seek to participate and collaborate with learners through a variety of approaches. Learners should be included as key stakeholders in the development and refinement of the course. They should be included in key discussions and meetings from the planning stages with meaningful engagement and involvement. Learner feedback should also be gained throughout the course (i.e. through an end of session survey) where the course should be flexible and responsive to feedback.

13. Early planning and commitment to the final presentation day

A final presentation/graduation day should be prioritised as a key element of the course for both inside and outside learners to celebrate achievements. Learners should also be provided with support and guidance to prepare for the presentation day. Stakeholders should prioritise the planning and commitment to developing this day and ensure there are provisions for an event which includes learners, stakeholders, and learners' families.

14. Increase multi-disciplinary and cross-department working

Partnerships should seek to provide a broad and rich range of courses. Universities should seek to collaborate across various disciplines and departments and broaden the offer of courses to include other options. Prisons should also seek to collaborate with other prison departments such as health services and gyms, and utilise their intranet and other technologies to increase the reach and impact of such partnerships (see PUPiL network for examples).

Recommendations for research

15. Commitment to robust evaluations

Despite the growth of Learning Together, there have been few formal evaluations or published research and analysis. Published evaluations also tend to focus on the positive feedback derived from short evaluation surveys which are conducted by Learning Together stakeholders. Further evaluations need to be prioritised to inform the development of Learning Together (and other prison-university) partnerships. Evaluations should be considered during the early initiation stages of partnerships with adequate support, funding, and resources to conduct these utilising a range of participatory and creative methodologies to draw out impact.

16. Inclusion of learners in planning future developments and design of evaluations

Learning Together partnerships value collaboration and participation, which should be embodied within research and evaluations. Learners should be involved in the design, development, and final production of evaluations as well as in disseminating findings and being part of stakeholder groups to continue the development of current and future partnerships.

17. Exploration of education within theories of desistance

Desistance helps to understand the processes by which people desist and can help to refine criminal justice efforts to help people stop offending. Many advocate that criminal justice practice should become desistance focused therefore emphasising the need for holistic, flexible and person-centred approaches to supporting people who have offended. In understanding the role of education, and Higher Education in particular, within this desistance framework, the association with reoffending may not be focused solely on the deficits in academic attainment and acquiring employment but rather learning can be something more transformative which effect individual's self-identity, agency, and social capital. Despite this increasing recognition of the role of education and learning in the desistance process, there has been a lack of theorised understanding where learning has been somewhat overlooked in desistance theories. Further research is warranted to examine this further.

18. Focus on the impact on other outcomes

Although reducing or ending offending is a key goal for criminal justice policy and practice, partnerships should also seek to examine the impact on other outcomes which are important to learners and which may sit within other priorities. These should align with the new definition of prison education used by the Ministry of Justice and the PLA's Theory of Change for Prison Education (i.e. prison culture, wellbeing, social capital, human capital, knowledge, skills and employability).

19. Examination of peer influence and social contexts for learning

Learning Together provides a means to connect people who otherwise are unlikely to meet to share experiences and knowledge where positive equal value is given to all. The focus is not to change people but to learn from each other

which leads to change more widely. Learning Together therefore focuses on developing social and peer contexts for learning which this evaluation demonstrates is highly relevant and applicable to young adults. Further research should examine and build on the findings to examine how peer and social contexts for learning can be cultivated and managed for this age group. Indeed, the extent to which individuals are influenced by others depends on the characteristics and the attributes of the learners and peers; the closer learners can identify with peers the more likely they are to be influenced by them. Learning Together focuses on the bringing together and sharing of knowledge between different groups, however, further research should examine the extent to which the mix and shared characteristics of gender, ethnicity and age influences group dynamics within this context for learning.

20. Exploration of impact of challenges and tensions

This evaluation highlights the tensions which may arise with building a shared critical consciousness where further research would benefit from understanding the difficulties in working within and alongside prisons and the approaches to support learners and stakeholders as agents of change. Furthermore, a realist and pragmatic understanding of risk management in relation to both inside and outside learners and the promotion of social bonds and friendships which are bounded and controlled require further exploration through further research.

Conclusions

Despite the growth of Learning Together, there have been few formal evaluations or published research and analysis, particularly relating to young adults in prison who make up the large proportion of both prisoners and university students. This evaluation therefore seeks to provide some insights into a Learning Together partnership between Open Book at Goldsmiths, University of London and HMP&YOI Isis (supported by PET) and contribute to the already growing discussions and reflections. The findings reveal both the strengths and challenges in developing, implementing, and achieving the goals of the Unlocked Learning Together partnership. The findings point to the complexities of developing Learning Together and Learner Voice within these challenging contexts, where the limited possibilities for speedy change can be sources of frustration for those who reside in them. Future Learning Together partnerships should continue to build on the strengths in building learning spaces in prison and promoting higher education learning, but should consider the limitations and barriers which exist in the prison context.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Session aims and objectives

Pre-course session: Launch

Session 1: Introduction

- Introduction to the module
- What we expect of you and what you can expect of us
- Assignment information and where to get help
- What is research?
- What is a researchable topic?
- Who is research for?

Reading:

- Becker, H. S. (2007) Telling About Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1
- Lee, R. (1993) 'Covert, Adversarial and Collaborative Research' in Doing Research on Sensitive Topics

Session 2: Qualitative Research: the basics

- What is data and how do we deal with it?
- Methods and methodologies: what does it mean to 'do' research?
- What does it mean and is it true (validity and reliability)
- How does research translate into theory and/or policy?

Reading:

- Bryman, A. (2001) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3: The Nature of Qualitative Research.
- Mills, C. W. (1970/1959) The Sociological Imagination. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1.

Session 3: Ethnography

- What is ethnography? Advantages and limitations. Observation/participation spectrum
- Ethical dilemmas in ethnographic work
- Sponsors and informants
- Auto-ethnography

➢ Positioning the researcher

Reading:

➢ Duneier, M. et al (eds.) (2014) The Urban Ethnography Reader. New York: Oxford University Press. Introductory Essay, 'An Invitation to Urban Ethnography' pp. 1-9.

Session 4: Positioning the Researcher: Insiders and Outsiders

➢ What does it mean to be an insider or outsider?
➢ Researching as an insider: advantages and disadvantages
➢ Research relationships
➢ Reliability and validity in insider research
➢ Reflexivity – what is it and why is it important?

Reading:

➢ Dwyer, S.C. And Buckle, J.L. (2009) 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research' in International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8 (1)
➢ Hoque, A (2015) British-Islamic Identity: Third Generation Bangladeshis from East London, London: Trentham Books at IOE Press, Chapter 3, pages 43-54

Session 5: Participant observation

➢ Participant observation
➢ Advantages and disadvantages
➢ Limits to participation
➢ Recording observations while participating

Reading:

➢ Forsey, M.G. (2010) 'Ethnography as participant listening' *Ethnography* 11:4, 558-572.
➢ Bourgois, P. (2003) In Search of Respect Ch5

Session 6: Qualitative interviewing

➢ Advantages and disadvantages
➢ What is social reality?
➢ Structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews

- Practical issues
- Analysing interview data

Reading:

- Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T. (2000) Doing Qualitative Research Differently: Free Association, Narrative and The Interview Method.
- Lury, C. and Wakeford, N. (2012) Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social. London: Routledge. pp. 1-24

Session 7: Reading research

- What are the key things to think about when reading others' research?
- What does it mean to think critically, and what is the difference between critical thinking and criticism?

Reading:

- Burdsey, D. (2015) One Guy Named Mo: Race, Nation and the London 2012 Olympic Games Sociology of Sport Journal

Session 8: Research ethics

- What are 'ethics' and why do they matter?
- This session will look at the principles of ethical research and some of the dilemmas a researcher might come across in fieldwork.

Reading:

- Ali, S. and Kelly, M. (2004) 'Ethics and Social Research', in Seale, C. (Ed.) Researching Society and Culture. London: Sage, pp. 58–76.
- Goffman, A (2014) On the Run Ch7 and Epilogue

Session 9: Visual sociology

- What is visual sociology?
- What methods does it use?
- What's the point of it and how can we use visual methods in our everyday life?

Reading:

- Back, L. (2007) 'Listening with our eyes' in The Art of Listening

Session 10: Writing research

➢ How to write up your findings: We will look at techniques of methodological writing, including fieldnotes and research reports and how to present these as part of an assignment.

Reading:

➢ Becker, H. S. (1998) Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're doing It. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3.

Post-course: Presentation day

Week [1]: [title of session]

We want to know what you thought about today's session. Please can you complete these short questions:

Are you an Isis Academy or Goldsmiths student? Please circle   Academic / Goldsmiths

I understood most of the content of this session	**0** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** Disagree Neutral Agree
I gained new knowledge from the session	**0** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** Disagree Neutral Agree
The session was interesting and engaging	**0** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** Disagree Neutral Agree
I felt I could contribute and ask questions during the session	**0** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 **10** Disagree Neutral Agree
What did you like the most from today's session? (optional)	
What could be improved? (optional)	

Appendix III: Tutor observation form

Observation report

Date: **Completed by:**	
Session title	
Guest speaker	
Facilitator	
Number of learners present	
Learning objectives	
Learning methods used	
General reflections	

Learners

Qualitative topic guide

Information sheet provided: Yes / No

Consent gained: Yes / No

Date and place of interview: ....

Interviewer name: ....

Participant ID number: ....

Gender: male / female / other: ....

Age: ....

1. **What first got you involved in the course?**
   Prompt: experiences with education/learning before, motivations to take part

2. **How did you get on with the course?**
   Prompt: how many sessions did you attend, sessions the liked, relevance to them, gaining knowledge and confidence, difficulties and challenges with the content, how they developed over the sessions

3. **What did you like about it?**
   Prompt: specific sessions, specific speakers, learning methods (e.g. group work)

4. **What do you think could be improved?**
   Prompt: practical issues, information supplied beforehand, course content, delivery methods, and speakers

5. **Where there any *practical* difficulties you came across?**
   Prompt: information provided before sessions, getting to the location, printing out readings, time of sessions.

6. **Overall, how has the course benefitted you (if at all)?**
   Prompt: personal learning/achievements, further courses/studies, career plans

7. **Do you have any other comments?**

Staff/tutors

Qualitative topic guide

Information sheet provided: Yes / No

Consent gained: Yes / No

Date and place of interview: ……………………………………………

Interviewer name: ……………………………………………………

Participant ID number: ……………………………………………

Gender: male / female / other: ………………………

Role: ………………….

Participant ID number: ……………………………………………

Gender: male / female / other: ………………………

Role: ………………….

1. How did you first get involved in the course?

2. What has been your role?

3. What do you think worked well?

4. What do you think could be improved?

5. Overall, how would you say the course benefitted the learners?

6. Overall, how has the course benefitted you (if at all)?

7. Do you have any other comments?

Appendix V: Information sheet and consent form (semi-structured interview with learners)

<u>Your experiences on the introduction to social science course</u>

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project to understand your experiences on the social science course. Before you decide, please read this sheet, it will explain why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and please feel free to ask any questions to me in person or via my contact information overleaf.

Who am I?

My name is Anita and I am an experienced researcher. Prisoners' Education Trust, Goldsmiths, and HMPYOI Isis have asked me to talk to the people on the course to ask about your experiences. I do no work for the Prison Service.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in a one-hour interview where you will be asked about your experiences on the course. This will include what you liked, did not like, if there were any difficulties, and how it can improve. You do not need to take part.

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form, confirming that you understand what the study involves and have had a chance to discuss any questions with the researcher. You will also be asked to state whether you are happy for the interview to be recorded.

What is the purpose?

By asking these questions, we want to know how the course can be improved in the future.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

The information you share in the interview will normally be kept completely confidential. However, the researcher will be obliged to pass on to a member of staff any information regarding:

- A threat to cause serious harm to yourself or to others

- A serious threat to prison security

- Any further offences you admit to for which you are not yet convicted

All of the information you give will be anonymised so that those reading reports from the research will not know who has contributed to it. Your responses will be kept secure with your signed consent form stored separately from the responses you provide so that no one can match up your responses to yourself. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to participate. You can withdraw at any time and may do so without giving a reason. Following the interview you have up to two months following the date of your interview to withdraw from the study if you wish to. If you do take part, you do not have to answer any question put to you and do not need to give any reason for your decision not to do so.

What are the risks and benefits?

You may feel uncomfortable, distressed or worried answering some sensitive questions. Please feel free to discuss these concerns with the researcher. However, you are free to withdraw from the study at any stage.

By taking part in this study, you may find it beneficial talking to someone about your experience and it helps develop the course in the future.

Where can I go for support should participation in the research cause me anxiety?

If, once you have finished the interview, you feel that some of the things that you have talked about have made you to feel anxious or distressed, or for any other reason you would like to follow up on anything from the interview, there are a number of ways that you can access support:

• You can speak to a member of staff or ask the researcher to contact a member of staff who you would like to talk to.

• You can contact a peer support worker, such as a Learning Together mentor or a Listener, or upon your request we will contact on your behalf another person of your choice in your establishment to let them know that you would like their support.

• You can contact the Samaritans, whose number will be printed on posters on your wing, or available on the internet.

More information or complaints

If you would like more information about the study or would like to make a complaint feel free to speak to us directly. You can contact Nina Champion at FREEPOST: PRISONER' EDUCATION TRUST

Contact details of researcher

Anita Mehay

c/o Prisoners' Education Trust

FREEPOST: PRISONERS' EDUCATION TRUST

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please keep this for reference and to contact us with any questions.

Goldsmith learners consent form

Consent form
Your experiences on the introduction to social science course

☐ I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

☐ I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the researcher of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do.

☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood and been satisfied with the information given as a result.

☐ I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher or the supervisor (details on the information sheet) without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice. Withdrawing from the study will not have an adverse impact.

☐ I agree to being contacted again by the researcher or associated researcher for further questions relating to this study or for follow-up information at a later date. This might involve clarifying answers or being asked to take part in other research.

☐ I agree to the interviews being recorded.

☐ I agree to let the researcher use quotes from interviews and conversations, as long as this is done in such a way that I cannot be identified.

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of participant		Name of researcher	
Signed		Signed	
Date		Date	

Isis learners consent form

Consent form: Your experiences on the introduction to social science course

☐ I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

☐ I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the researcher of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do.

☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood and been satisfied with the information given as a result.

☐ I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

☐ I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the researcher or the supervisor (details on the information sheet) without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice. Withdrawing from the study will not have an adverse impact.

☐ I agree to being contacted again by the researcher or associated researcher for further questions relating to this study or for follow-up information at a later date. This might involve clarifying answers or being asked to take part in other research.

☐ I understand that behaviours which are deemed to be against prison rules and can be adjudicated against (see Section 51 of the Prison Rules 1999), illegal acts, and behaviour that is harmful (e.g. intention to self-harm or complete suicide) may be disclosed to NOMS.

☐ I agree to the interviews being recorded.

☐ I agree to let the researcher use quotes from interviews and conversations, as long as this is done in such a way that I cannot be identified.

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of participant		Name of researcher	
Signed		Signed	
Date		Date	

Appendix VI: Information sheet and consent form (semi-structured interview with staff/tutors)

Evaluating the Learning Together project

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project to understand your views of setting up and running the Learning Together course. Before you decide, please read this sheet, it will explain why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and please feel free to ask any questions to me in person or via my contact information overleaf.

Who am I?

My name is Anita and I am an experienced researcher. Prisoners' Education Trust and Goldsmiths have asked me to conduct a process evaluation of the Learning Together project. This aims to assess how the project is being implemented by focussing on the project's operations, implementation, and service delivery (as opposed to the effectiveness of the project and its outcomes).

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in a one-hour interview on your own or in a small group where you will be asked about your involvement and views in setting up and running the project. This will include exploring the difficulties, barriers, and strengths of the project, and how it can improve in the future. The evaluation is concerned with the project and not your own personal performance.

You do not need to take part. However, if you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a consent form, confirming that you understand what the study involves and have had a chance to discuss any questions with the researcher. You will also be asked to state whether you are happy for the focus group to be recorded

What is the purpose?

By asking these questions, we want to know how the course can be improved in the future.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your responses will be kept secure with your signed consent form stored separately from the responses you provide so that no one can match up your responses to yourself. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Do I have to take part?

You do not have to participate. You can withdraw at any time and may do so without giving a reason. Following the interview you have up to two months following the date of your interview to withdraw from the study if you wish to. If you do take part, you do not have to answer any question put to you and do not need to give any reason for your decision not to do so.

What are the risks and benefits?

There are few risks in taking part in the focus group, however please feel free to discuss any concerns with the researcher. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage. By taking part in this study, you may find it beneficial to provide your views which will help develop the course in the future.

More information or complaints

If you would like more information about the study or would like to make a complaint feel free to speak to us directly. You can contact Nina Champion at FREEPOST: PRISONER' EDUCATION TRUST

Contact details of researcher

Anita Mehay

c/o Prisoners' Education Trust

FREEPOST: PRISONERS' EDUCATION TRUST

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please keep this for reference and to contact us with any questions.

Appendix VII: Ethical approval (Goldsmiths, University of London)

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Research Ethics & Integrity Sub-Committee

Approval Status: Approved

To: **Dr Sarah Lambert, OpenBook**

From: Professor Simon McVeigh, Chair

cc: Karen Rumsey

Date: 1 March, 2017

Ref: EA **1326**

We are pleased to inform you that the Research Ethics & Integrity Sub-Committee has approved your project: *Learning together – Open Book Prison Education Project.*

Approved ethical applications are available in the Research Office for other researchers in the college who are applying for grants; they may also be sent out as email attachments if requested. This is to help applicants. Please let Karen Rumsey know within two weeks of this letter if you would rather not have your ethical application form available in this way.

Best wishes for your project,

Karen Rumsey

Karen Rumsey, Secretary, Research Ethics & Integrity Sub-Committee
pp Chair

Appendix VIII: Research approval (National Offender Management System [NOMS])

National Offender Management Service

HM PRISON SERVICE
Public Sector Prisons

London & Thames Valley Psychology Services
Directorate of Public Sector Prisons

Telephone: 0207 023 7069
Email Claire.smith3@hmps.gsi.gov.uk

Anita Mehay
Goldsmiths University
New Cross
LONDON
SE14 6NW

10th March 2017

NRC ref: 2017-006

Research Title: Evaluation of the 'Learning Together project: an introduction to social science course'

Dear Ms Mehay,

In response to your application to undertake research in NOMS I am pleased to grant approval for your research, on behalf of the Regional Lead Psychologist, subject to compliance with the conditions outlined below:

Conditions:

- Approval from the Governing Governors at HMP Isis. *Please note that NRC and Regional Psychologist approval does not guarantee access to establishments/offices; Access is at the discretion of the Governor and subject to local operational factors and pressures.*
- Compliance with all security requirements.
- Complying with local regulations regarding specific research equipment, e.g. recording equipment, electronic equipment.
- Compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- All hard copy data is anonymised prior to leaving the prison and stored securely.
- Ethical approval from Goldsmith's University is confirmed
- Informing and updating the approving body promptly of any changes made to the planned methodology.
- It being made clear to participants verbally and in writing up to what point they may withdraw from the research, the mechanism by which to do this and that this will not have adverse impact on them.
- The researcher must prepare a research summary for NOMS which (i) summarises the research aims and approach, (ii) highlights the key findings, and (iii) sets out the implications for NOMS decision-makers. This must be submitted to the initial approver, copied to the National Research mailbox, alongside the NOMS research project review form. Further guidance on the format of the report is available upon request.

- If you intend to publish the findings, you are required to seek permission from NOMS via the Regional Lead Psychologist (LTVPS@noms.gsi.gov.uk), the Governor of HMP Isis and the National Research Committee (national.research@noms.gsi.gov.uk). Approval will only be considered after the findings of the research are known.

Yours Sincerely

By email – no hard copy to follow

Claire Smith, C.Psychol, AFBPsS
Cluster Lead Psychologist
London and Thames Valley Psychology Services (based at HMP Pentonville)
NOMS Psychology

cc: Regional Lead Psychologist, Emily Thomas, Michael Harrison, NOMS National Research Committee