

**Getting out Smarter to Face Life's Challenges; An
Action Research with Young Offenders in Prison**

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Declaration of Authenticity

This declaration confirms that the dissertation entitled ‘Getting out Smarter to face Life’s Challenges; An Action Research with Young Offenders in Prison’, is my original work carried out under the supervision of Prof. Marilyn Clark. It is hereby being utilised as part fulfilment of Masters in Youth and Community Studies and has not previously been submitted to this or any other University by other authors.

Josette Camilleri

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Getting out Smarter to face Life's Challenges; An Action Research with Young Offenders in Prison

Abstract

Josette Camilleri

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A ten week life skills programme regularly conducted these last few years is refined for the users' benefit. The perception that young offenders are commonly perceived as having several deficits which need redressing if they are to desist from crime, is the underlying purpose why the need for this action was felt. Theoretical and practical principles are employed simultaneously until a renewed programme which reflects better the needs of the recipients is generated. The cycle of action and reflection is also ongoing in this participatory action research. The aim is for the young offenders participating in the programme as well as the practitioners involved, to enrich each other's learning and teaching in progress. This action research therefore provides the space for learning for both the researcher and young offenders since both the learners and the practitioner are receiving significant information. A review of the literature involves the exploration of the historical development of prisons from punitive to restorative institutions as well as the benefits of education in prison. Essentially in the majority of European Countries the provision of education in prison is a legal requirement. The different phases of the action research give a general exposition of the process which leads to a renewed programme based on participating young offenders' emergent needs. This is finally presented for implementation.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Preamble

This action research constitutes an investigation of my own youth work practice. The term ‘Action research’ was coined by Kurt Lewin in 1944 to “describe work that did not separate the investigation from the action needed to solve the problem” (McFarland & Stansell quoted in Ferrance, 2000, p.7). Action research produces practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday contexts of their lives. Its aim is to increase understanding of the area being investigated from the part of the researcher and the participants and possibly bring about change. Therefore it involves doing an action and standing back from it to evaluate that action and act to improve it. The study can also be taking place while the action is being carried out and not necessarily some time after. Action research can also be described as a solution-oriented investigation as action can be taken after data is gathered and scrutinised. Coghlan (2005, p.12) also describes action research as “collaborative” since the ‘members studied participate actively in the cyclical process’. It can also be said that the primary goal of action research is to improve the practice and not to acquire information about it. In this instance the action constitutes a reflection on my practice with incarcerated young people residing within a young offender’s rehabilitation unit in a prison setting. The main goal of this endeavor was to instil a sense of emancipation in the participants. The reflective process then aims to inspire youth workers to improve their practices by means of an inquiry. This

dissertation can also serve the purpose of depicting the benefits of introducing the youth work practice in the local prisons.

Following previous practices¹ it was decided that a deeper understanding of young inmates' needs ought to be discovered. The motivation behind this action research in fact stems from the genuine interest to improve on my own practice. The process of this action research aims at deepening understanding by creating a space where new questions would be thrown. The process of critical reflection on past practices assisted by feedback from participants, the collection of data and the development of a renewed programme, the implementation and the repetition of the cycle will be utilised to evaluate and improve the programme created.² Therefore the initial intuitive judgement of young inmates' needs and the 'best fit' for these needs will be reflected on and examined. Questions are posed, ideas articulated and tested so that new questions are thrown up not just for the purpose of this study but perpetually. The aim of this study is to serve both for the researcher to improve the practice as well as the participants who will benefit from the programme. Hopefully it will also provide other prospective youth workers with a framework for similar practices in the future.

1.2 Rationale

Dissertations many times end up laying in the library gathering dust. However an action research provides practical knowledge so that a vision on how things can be improved is achieved. The knowledge and skills gained through this study

¹ The first time that I conducted a similar programme was in the summer of 2011. Since then the programme was conducted every year however activities were changed for the sake of those with a long sentence.

² This cycle is better explained in section 3.4 in chapter 3.

would also serve the purpose of putting the researcher in a position to deliver an improved programme next time another one is conducted. Therefore the learning process will be extended beyond the purpose of the Masters degree. Kolb (1984) states that the action research cycle can also be regarded as a learning cycle. Hence by continuously trying to improve and by reflecting upon one's practices professionals can enhance their performance in their respective areas.

This action research was inspired by a genuine interest in improving a practice which has been going on these past years. A ten week programme comprising topics which the researcher deemed useful in assisting inmates in their rehabilitation process has been voluntarily conducted during the summer months since 2011. In the past rather satisfactory results have been achieved in terms of the level of motivation for participation in the programme. The rationale of this study in fact has roots in this experience. The motivation of the inmates to participate exhibited the need for similar programmes as youth work should not take place only in youth organisations. Young offenders should also be given their due importance. Fine et al. as quoted in Camie et al. (2009, p. 173) stated that participatory action research has a long and global history and has "typically been practiced within community-based social action projects with a commitment to understanding, documenting, or evaluating the impact that social programmes, social problems, or social movements bear on individuals and communities". Nevertheless even though both pains and victories will continue to be experienced, one cannot contend with what is being done and a search for more effective strategies should be carried on with. Drawing upon the ten week experience it can be confirmed that the involvement of young offenders is not an

easy task, however with dedication and perseverance it can be achieved and satisfactory results can be yielded. Besides the study aims at making practitioners aware that they need to deepen their understanding of inmates' needs so as to be in a better position to cater accordingly.³

The importance to respond to young inmates' needs in a personalised, mentoring manner continues to be felt. The recidivism rate remains high and post release provisions are very scant. The delinquent history of offenders should not be used against them to restrain them but instead the entire focus must be on the fact that these young people can make a fresh start in their lives. Acceptance is the foundation step for success with such programmes and the fact that I am a volunteer and an outsider could possibly be the reason for an experienced increased acceptance. Fals-Borda (1979) quoted in Camie et al. (2009) considers the difference between common sense knowledge and the actual observation during a practice, and then followed meticulously by reflection and action both from the participants' side as well as the practitioners', as the pillars and the cyclical steps of participatory action research.

The action research aims at reflecting and exploring whether the true needs of young inmates were being met. The practitioner therefore engaged in what Schon(1987) describes as "reflection-on-action", which takes place away from the event and "reflection-in-action" which takes place in the moment of the event itself (Baumfield et al., 2013). It was sometimes felt necessary to reflect and improvise during the session in order to meet arising needs but generally the

³ The programme that will be reflected on has been running since 2011 however changes in activities have been made every year due to the fact that some offenders would be redoing it the year after.

sessions conducted in the ten week programme were reflected on and evaluated by the practitioner after the sessions. Feedback from recipients was taken in consideration at all times.

The title 'Getting out Smarter to face life's Challenges' does not imply that the researcher will come up with a baggage of skills to fix the inmates. The notion that any practitioner is in a position to fix inmates is in fact criticised in this dissertation. However through continuous investigation and feedback from participants, the researcher will reflect upon the practice and tries to assist inmates to develop an understanding of what they need to foster in order for them to facilitate their own resettlement. Hence this programme aims at making them aware that they can become coaches of their own development.

Unfortunately some young people who encounter problems with the law end up in prison. Incarceration however does not always translate into rehabilitation. The 'one size does not fit all' phrase is commonly used in educational institutions, and differentiated teaching has become a common practice (National Minimum Curriculum, 1999). However in prison, inmates are still being given more or less the same treatment. At the young offenders unit they are not classified according to the crime they have committed and many times those convicted of petty crimes end up with more experienced criminals. Some young people at the young offenders' unit argue that in prison rehabilitating is not possible as one gets to meet many other prisoners and since they have nothing to do in there, the only activity they engage in is discussing crime. This many times leads them to reinforce each other's negative behaviour. Sampson and Laub in

fact asserted that “having delinquent friends increases the probability of becoming officially delinquent by 90 percent” (1995, p.120). Therefore if these young offenders’ time in prison is organised better in an educational and self-developing way instead of permitting inmates to waste time by chattering away all day, they will perhaps have less opportunities to reinforce each other’s negative behavior and perhaps be more equipped and able to face life’s challenges when they are reintegrated in society.

Every task requires however that the people it is intended for cooperate. As Payne quoted in Harrison and Wise stated; “if people are not attracted to the idea, if it does not win their enthusiasm, it is unlikely to work” (2008, p.136). Looking back in hindsight I believe that significant skills to deal with challenges encountered can be gained while serving a prison sentence and it becomes more beneficial if the recipients themselves select the content and methodologies to be utilised. An idea cannot be more attractive than the idea that comes from the person that is going to benefit from it.

1.3 Research Agenda

The main objective of this research was to gain insight and understand whether a self-development programme presented to inmates by the researcher for the past years was beneficial to them in any way and whether the researcher could develop a more relevant practice based on young inmates’ needs. Action research was chosen as it provides the opportunity for the practitioner and the participants to become partners in a continuous learning process. The diagram presented in the page that follows gives a clear exposition of the process. A

partnership was felt necessary for such a project as the main thing that needed to be critically analysed was whether the professionals' approach of deciding themselves on the needs of others was after all the right approach. The term programme in itself might also suggest that by following it the participants will be programmed to comport themselves in a way that the practitioner deems best nevertheless this was not the case.

Social discourses also tend to locate the blame of lack of motivation squarely on the individual and distancing offenders more from the educational programmes provided. We never question whether we are presenting offenders with the opportunity to learn what they themselves consider essential. It comes as no surprise that programmes provided are sometimes not as beneficial as practitioners expect them to be when the supposed beneficiaries are not consulted on the content. By roping in the recipients from the initial phase a better understanding of what can be advantageous is guaranteed. Blaming failure on recipients is only a way of distancing them further. Therefore the first step to be able to deliver the programme in the best way possible was to strip myself of any common sense knowledge and enter the prison walls simply as an unknowing individual who was eager to learn from the inmates what their needs truly are. This stance proved appealing to inmates probably because they too had a stereotypical representation of professionals.

The action research is guided by a number of research questions listed hereunder:

- Are educational intervention programmes what young offenders need?

- How can researchers develop a better understanding of what works?
- How can youth work practitioners and inmates assist each other to develop a better understanding of young offenders' learning needs in order to make programmes work?
- Can programmes similar to the one presented during the action research assist both practitioners and learners to improve their learning?
- How can reflective practices contribute to better outcomes when developing interventions with young offenders? ⁴

It is believed that if the inmates present the solutions to the above questions themselves and hence are able to become agents of change they can suggest how the programme can be developed to reflect their needs even more. The practice employed will improve in turn as it will be catering for the emergent needs of the participants and since the researcher is also a participant in this action research enrichment through dialogue with the participants will take place. Through dialogue participants are given the chance to express their respective realities. Dialogue and reflection are the pillars of better outcomes. Learners will be encouraged to plan and make their own enquiry and become researchers into their own learning too. It is believed that a practitioner-dominated pedagogy which relegates learners to a passive role limits interactions. The programme also aims to encourage thinking so that as Camie et al., (2009) suggested inmates will be able to mold their old selves into reformed individuals however not by discarding their past to start anew but by using the experiences of the past to recreate

⁴ In section 3.5 in chapter 3 one can find information about the participants and the programme conducted can be found in Appendix 1.

themselves as individuals who can think, reflect and feel empowered to keep developing perpetually.

The empowerment of individuals to take control of their own learning was in fact a priority during the duration of the programme. Participants of this action research were encouraged to include topics and omit the ones they considered superfluous. They were also asked about the activities, timing of the activities and duration of the programme. All their feedback was then taken in consideration when after implementing the programme first time round a renewed programme reflecting the modifications suggested by them, was developed. Hence the new programme is considered to reflect more the needs of inmates however the cycle does not end here but as the diagram suggests it is intended to be continuous due to the fact that it aims to contribute to both the researcher's as well as the participants' continuous development. This also means that even when it is redrawn and implemented, the sequence of reflection on the implemented programme will start again. The fact that the participants change and the needs change accordingly is also a motive why the process is continuous.

The objective of the study is that both practitioner and recipients will learn how to take an introspective journey to identify learning needs and possible tools to address those needs. The action research embarked on is an exploration of a process and its underpinning philosophy is in fact that learning to become critical and constructive assists self-development. Freire (1993) criticises leaders who do not take into account the people's view of the world and likewise practitioners who think that they know what is fitting for others still fall short in providing

practices which work. Freire also insisted that all the elements of an individual constitute a totality which is indispensable to action however if we do not examine these elements the action taken might be useless.

1.4 Unpacking the Key Terms

1.4.1 Getting out Smarter

Getting out smarter does not mean that participants will take up a degree after serving the prison sentence. After all that is not the only way to having success in one's life. Nor does it mean that they will be cleverer and better able to conceal their guilt in order to avoid a prison sentence. What is meant by smarter in this case is that young people will be better able to weigh up consequences and make the right choices for themselves. Although the media takes youth crime out of proportion and causes 'moral panics' (Cohen, 1987) we cannot deny that the issue should be given its due importance. Cohen has after all termed 'moral panics' as "necessary forms of communal consciousness-raising to reactive social controls" (Downes & Rock, 2003, p.89). We are all responsible to ensure that social order is maintained and this is not done through blowing problems out of proportion but by taking the bull by the horns and addressing situations in ways that are feasible. Young offenders need a fair degree of resiliency and they need to believe that they can make it beyond the prison gates. These should be considered important educational elements. A fair degree of insight is also necessary as it assists individuals to map out their lives and think about rewards and repercussions.

Bernfeld et al. (2001) state that the nothing-works debate is over as what could shape the next generation of corrections professionals is now the challenge of communicating the knowledge on effective strategies to practitioners. McGuire (1995) quoted in Bernfeld et al. also states that “although some authors still favored the conclusion that ‘nothing works’ in offender rehabilitation (e.g. Logan et al., 1991; Whitehead & Lab, 1989), the international scientific discussion had moved to a more differentiated perspective of “what works” (McGuire, 2001, p.68). The root of the problem is therefore considered to be the lack of effective strategies and practitioners need to keep discovering what works and communicate those findings to the field. Society at large would benefit if cost effective justice is done in our communities and one possible way of making it cost effective is by implementing strategies which decrease the relapse rate.

1.4.2 Life’s Challenges

Young offenders are vulnerable to detrimental psychological consequences because gaining an established position in society once they serve their prison sentence is quite a hurdle. Bandura (1995. p.79) points out that “weak self-efficacy expectancies have numerous causes”. Among these causes he mentions coping “with problems in dysfunctional ways”.

The need for self-efficacy to be fostered is strongly felt in a prison context. The needs of young offenders many times run parallel to the needs of other young people however in the prison setting needs are not always met because of the lack of ‘normal’ social interaction and other limitations the prison walls provide. Young offenders often perceive themselves as weak and unable to deal with

challenges. They need to come out with the idea that they can make it through life as rehabilitated individuals. Cognitive behavioural theorists in fact argue that it is “important to alter a person’s belief about himself in order to bring about an enduring change in behaviour” (Camilleri, 2010, p.36). Strong self-efficacy beliefs act as protective factors against numerous unfavourable evaluations.

Instead of having a lot of time without meaningful activities to break up each day, young offenders’ time can be organised so that personal characteristics which assist young people to become smarter to face life’s challenges are enhanced. Life offers many challenges which are received willingly by some but others encounter difficulties.

There are many volunteers who are willing to dedicate some of their free time to invest in society. However the Young Offenders’ Unit is a domain which should not depend solely on volunteerism. Policy makers should also consider employing youth workers and thus investing in programmes which are sensitive to offenders’ needs and which address potential challenges young people come across.

1.4.3 Young Offenders

The Young Offenders’ Unit is the section formerly at Corradino Correctional facilities and which has since the 7th of November 2013 been transferred to Mtahleb. It houses young male offenders between the ages of 15 to 21. At YOURS, which is how it is commonly referred to, there is no section for female

young offenders hence female young offenders are detained with older prisoners. There is also at times disparity in relation to crimes committed both in the female section as well as the young offenders' section. When the main prison is full or if someone is considered vulnerable he will be placed at YOURS even though his age might exceed the 15 to 21 age bracket. The age bracket can thereby be as wide as 15 to 30. Prison officials are however cautious not to let the older inmates influence negatively the younger ones (Prison Official CCF).⁵

Many factors lead individuals to take up delinquent paths. Becker and Strauss (1956) as quoted in Little (1990, p.34) assert that "the first step is the most important in commissioning a new career". Whether the onset of the criminal career escalates or not depends on many factors based on experiences. Also whether a conscious decision to break the law is made by individuals is a debatable issue. Little developed a model of five episodes about the criminal career. He states that:

The criminal identity of persistent young offenders is based upon a series of decisions which appear rational to them. Secondly, in exercising this choice, the young person uses guidelines shared with those who are sympathetic to his lifestyle. Thirdly, the juvenile justice system, despite vigorous and sometimes successful attempts to divert and deter delinquents, actually contributes to the criminal identity of the young people under scrutiny. Fourthly, the criminal identity is not always congruent with the behaviour of the young offender and, finally, the identity develops and changes with each episode in the criminal career. (Little, 1990, p.9)

⁵ A prison official was interviewed and the information provided in this paragraph is in accordance with the interview. The interview was recorded and transcribed however he preferred to remain anonymous.

Clark (2006) considers commitment as an important contingency to the criminal career. According to her, commitment grows out of the offenders' interpretations of the prospects they come across along their criminal career. In her research she discovers how offenders commit to the criminal path when they see conventional opportunities narrowed. She considers contact with the police, the court and prison as solidifiers of commitment to crime. In fact in her study she discovers that some of the inmates did not even consider being locked up as a deterrent. Only a few felt that a conventional lifestyle could have offered them more gains.

Delinquency can be looked at from various angles as it can be biological, psychological and sociological. Some view it as an urge one is born with and thus stems from the genetic make-up of the individual. Jessor and Jessor (1977) in fact came up with Problem Behaviour Theory to explain maladaptation in adolescence. This theory can be described as a conservative theory which places the individuals and their environment as the root of problems that arise. The opposite stance is more productive as it gets us thinking what we can do to improve the situation rather than just locating faults.

There are then the psychological perspectives of delinquency and these include cognitive thinking. After Erikson's theory of identity development (1968) Marcia (1980) developed four statuses of identity. One of these is the Moratorium identity which posits the individual "in the midst of an identity crisis" (Santrock, 2005, p.181). Therefore among the commitments an individual explores are those alternative to the conventional. In view of this it can be said that everybody is a potential delinquent and in fact Reckless' Containment theory (1950) asks the

question 'why not?' Reckless identifies the pressures presented by society and recognises that all humans are subject to criminal behaviour.

However others view crime as a social problem resulting from the discrepancy between an individual's resources and his desired goals. Merton (1938) as quoted in Little, (1990, p.17) describes this as "a strain between the internalised goals and the social rules of behaviour". He goes on to say that some end up choosing the "illegitimate attainment of cultural goals". The strain theory holds that social structures within society may pressure young people to commit crime. According to Merton (1957) it is when the individual's goals and legitimate means to attain them are not in balance that an individual is more likely to commit crime. Lower class individuals are more likely to experience these strains if they aim for the same goals as the rest of society and due to their limitations fail to achieve their goals. In fact inmates sometimes claim that they are simply making minor corrections to an unjust world when they rob those who they perceive as rich and thus privileged. Among the emergent results in Clark's (2006, p.208) study it transpired that a sense of injustice increases commitment to crime through what is described as "a sense of entitlement".

Some forms of offending such as joy riding and smoking cannabis are nothing more than thrilling experiences for some youth. They would get away with it if this was not considered as deviant behavior by society at large and more importantly by the criminal justice system. By labeling young people delinquents for petty crimes society is more likely to create fully fledged criminals. This is even more so because as Maruna (2004) quoted in Bain and Parkinson (2010, p.71) stated "we are not as quick to de-label as we are to label and judge". The

authors in fact pose a question which ought to be reflected on. They probe “at what point does an offender experience the de-labelling which would enable them to become nothing more than a human being?” They go on to insist that “by giving the label we take away from the individuality of the person”. They continue to say that we “gain power over them and place the offender in a position subservient to those around them” (Bain and Parkinson, 2010, p.71).

As opposed to the above the choice theory highlights the benefits or consequences of the path taken. Therefore the individual is seen as juggling among engaging or not engaging in crime and selecting what is perceived as most advantageous. According to Clark (2006, p.204) the choice theory states that “the offender chooses to commit crime and can therefore be deterred”. As one can see this theory therefore places the responsibility entirely on the offender.

But perhaps one of the most disputed theories of crime which explores this phenomenon is the Social Control Theory. The Social Control Theory emphasises the importance of social bonding as a deterrent to delinquency. Sampson and Laub argue that “the dominant institutions of social control in childhood and adolescence are the family, the school, the peer group and the juvenile justice system” (1995, p.17). Hirschi’s (1969) study on social control measured parental supervision to determine the relationship between crime and control. 55% of serious delinquents reported ‘low’ supervision and only 12% reported ‘high’ supervision (Downes & Rock, 2003, p.231). “Intimacy of communication and affectional identification with parents” also exhibited links with delinquency. Later on in life social control depends more on an individual’s

investment in work, marriage, parenthood and one's place in the community. In fact Marcia (1966) identified establishing a career and engaging in an intimate relationship as an individual's main deterrents for considering taking up a delinquent career and when desistance becomes more probable. To substantiate this Hirschi (1969) in fact asserts that delinquency is a result of the individual's weak attachment to society. Perhaps weak social bonding comes about when an individual lacks certain skills such as communication, building relationships, self-control, self-esteem, resilience, dignity and acceptance and that is originally why the ten week programme conducted with inmates of the young offenders unit evolved around these topics. However this notion was later reflected on and the views about this reasoning changed significantly.

Young offenders, although perhaps considered a marginal group, need assistance to avoid the pains of imprisonment for the second time. Society at large stands to gain if the time behind bars is utilised in a reforming way. However, a great deal of prison life is spent either idle or socialising with similar others and reinforcing adverse behaviours, or else locked up in a cell. This lifestyle does not contribute to reform and hence it is optimistically hoped that life skills programmes which incorporate the topics mentioned earlier on, become part and parcel of a daily or weekly correctional facility's schedule. This is because as asserted by Bernfeld et al., (2001, p.33) "there is little evidence that punitive sanctions effectively deter criminal acts amongst adjudicated offenders: their effect as judged by large-scale reviews is either neutral or in some instances negative".

1.5 The General Structure of the Study

The first chapter of this piece of work gives an exposition of the study in general. The rationale and the research agenda are explained. Subsequently the key terms are defined and explained so that a better understanding of the subject matter is facilitated. The second chapter entails a critical historical review on prisons as custodial institutions, education in prison and its impact on rehabilitation, reintegration and resettlement. The current education interventions in prison are then delved into. The methodology employed is expounded in the third chapter. Information about the research approach, participatory action research, the process, methodological issues surrounding the different phases, recruitment, hindrances encountered, ethical considerations and the procedure follow in that order. Chapter four is then divided into four different phases with various sections to give an exposition of the action taken. Phase one entails a critical reflection on young offenders' needs. The risk paradigm is discussed and how risks can be turned into strengths follow in another section. Concepts of power, control and normalisation and Freire's philosophy on liberation are also delved into so that a sound foundation on the subject matter is established before the outcomes are presented. The sections in phase two entail the curriculum of the ten week programme and the analysis of the interviews conducted before the commencement of the programme. The implementation is then reflected on and evaluated. In phase three the participants' feedback on the intervention is analysed while phase four exhibits how the new programme was developed and a description of what it would entail. The concluding chapter comprises the limitations of the study and some recommendations for service development. The implemented programme and the revised programme are presented in the

appendices. In the latter one can also find a copy of the consent form, the information letter and the questions utilised for the various interviews that were conducted to substantiate this study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to set the scene for reflection by delving into the historical context of how prisons have developed from punitive institutions where retribution was its main agenda to restorative institutions. Prison education and its impact on reintegration and resettlement will also be discussed. This chapter in fact outlines the shift from punishment both corporal and non-corporal to rehabilitation to the contemporary concept of reintegration and resettlement. Present prison educational provisions are portrayed in the last section of this chapter and the rationale for the provision of education is discussed.

2.2 Different ways of Colonising Prisoners

Stepping back in time to take a historical perspective one will see that in the past the most favoured crime reduction policies were based on retribution and utilitarianism. Legitimate incapacitation took various forms across the years and these ranged from torture, imprisonment, mutilation, execution and hard labour. In discipline and punish Foucault (1977) exhibits how control of the individual shifted from corporal punishment and he explains this through Damien's torture (1757) to Faucher's timetable (1830) where although the type of punishment varies the main aim remains to take control of the individual in a demeaning manner. Torture as a public spectacle died out in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its aim was to terrorise the public and deter it from crime however the outcomes were more that the executioner came to resemble the criminal. Furthermore many times the execution outweighed the severity of the crime

itself. The execution of Damiens (1757) exhibits how during torture the criminal was turned into an object of pity and admiration, while the executioner and the judges as themselves the murderers and deserving of abhorrence. Foucault expresses his opposition to this brutal approach by stating that; “the public execution is seen as a hearth in which violence bursts again into flame” (1977, p.9). This type of punishment was abolished but another form of colonising followed a few years after. What is meant by the term colonising in this context is that the prisoners were taken control of and moulded into obedient individuals. This stance was deemed advantageous but whether the strategy contributes towards the development of the individual and the eradication of crime stands to be criticised. Faucher’s (1830) pamphlet on prison reform presented a set of rules and a rigid time table for young prisoners in Paris. It included a day which began at six in the morning in winter and five in summer and entailed nine hours a day of work and two hours of tuition. The latter included reading, writing, drawing and arithmetic which took place in a very confined space. This was considered to be a more humane form of control and punishment. Therefore it was considered that the suffering of prisoners had shifted to a more subtle style. In countries like Austria, Switzerland and some parts of the United States the use of prisoners in public works was practiced. Foucault (1977, p.8) explains how these convicts were distinguished by their uniforms and shaven heads. They were made to “perform their degrading service under the eyes of keepers armed with swords, blunderbusses and other weapons of destruction”. However as Paternak (1987, p.97) put it “the shift from a mode of punishment which emphasised physical torture to modern punitive techniques which rely on an economy of suspended rights reveals a new type of power with a new aim”. The

aim Paternak talks about in this phrase is the aim to normalise, a concept which will be discussed further along this chapter. It seems that the strategies utilised for crime reduction have always centered on fixing the criminal. The notion that crime reduction can come about through fixing society is not debated much. However one must also reflect that society and its citizens co-determine each other's fate and hence society ought to shoulder responsibility instead of pointing a finger. Therefore instead of focusing on fixing the individual we can perhaps start considering fixing some aspects of society.

As a matter of fact even though the concept of torture as a public spectacle was abolished much remained to be debated whether torture just took another form instead of being eradicated. Paternak (1987, p.109) explains this shift from “an ideology inspired by the king's ‘rightful’ vengeance, to a proposed policy of analogical punishments aimed at reform, to a situation where the procedures of a normalising discipline predominate”. In fact according to Foucault, the mode of punishment which emphasised physical torture just took another form in contemporary punitive techniques and this modern form relies more on suspended rights. Foucault explains all this as a ‘new type of power with a new aim’ that of ‘normalisation’. This is more or less the focal point of Foucault's argument. He argued that Jeremy Bentham's design of a panopticon was nothing more than panopticism. He explains the latter as the general ideas about the control of the population. He asserts that bio political power controls society. Rather than applying discipline, social and political power exerts control over people in a society. Control in his opinion is inflicted on everyone irrelevant if the law is broken or not. In every society it is not uncommon to see the

government stepping in to control different aspects of life and thus employ panoptic surveillance. This surveillance brings about fear which in turn drives people to obedience. Discipline is continuously imposed but what makes this stance worse is the fact that right or wrong is judged by a standard measuring rod. The different social classes, the upbringing, the opportunities presented, the individual's exposure to crime and other elements which facilitate crime are generally ignored. Power relations can in fact be observed in different domains in life. Foucault even looked at emancipatory projects as a form of social control and criticised them intensively. He in fact described the world we live in as one in which human beings are constantly being judged, disciplined and controlled (1977). Still, unfortunately, many times practitioners present programmes without actually delving in the real needs of the ones who are presumed to benefit from them. Perhaps even the term programme ought not to be utilised since it implies that the remedy for crime control can be pre-planned. Even though what is presented in this dissertation can be suggestive it can never be taken as conclusive. We practitioners many times think we know what is best for the people we are working with. We prove to be cream of the crop in exercising and establishing our positions of power over the people we work with. Only by placing ourselves at par with participants can learning from each other become possible.

2.3 Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is an attempt to stop offenders from leading unconventional lives and return to the path acceptable by law and society. While preventative programmes attempt to deter youth from offending, rehabilitation targets youth

who have already engaged in delinquent behavior. The idea of rehabilitation is generally supported however it came to be questioned and abandoned, following Robert Martinson's survey of 231 studies on offender rehabilitation entitled; *The Effectiveness of Correctional Treatment: A Survey of Treatment Evaluation Studies*. Miller (1989) reports that the idea was that if 'nothing works' in rehabilitating offenders then it was better to deter crime by severe punishment and incapacitation. However the shocking rise in crime rates after the rehabilitation concept was abandoned exhibits that rehabilitative programmes cannot be chalked up as failures. In fact a year before his tragic death Martinson suggested a multitude of rehabilitative models despite his initial skepticism and famous publication (1974) regarding the question 'Does nothing work?' An anti-treatment sentiment became prominent therefore for the next two decades a concerted effort to document the benefits of rehabilitation ensued. Bernfeld et al. (2001, p.68) stated that "although some authors still favoured the conclusion that 'nothing works' in offender rehabilitation (e.g. Logan et al., 1991; Whitehead & Lab, 1989) the international scientific discussion had moved to a more differentiated perspective of what works". Among suggestions of protective mechanisms against antisociality which is deemed as a risk factor to offending, Bernfeld et al. put forward the following;

bonds to non-deviant family members or other reference persons; acceptance and supervision in education; cognitive competencies and planning for the future; an easy temperament; school achievement and bonds to school; non-deviant peer groups; work motivation, vocational, skills and employment and a supportive and pro-social intimate partner (Bernfeld et al., 2001, p. 83).

On the other hand the National Offender Management introduced in 2005 was a further initiative to strengthen, as Gain and Parkinson (2010, p.68) put it “the end-to-end management of Offenders”. They go on to remark that successful reform and rehabilitation must include a commitment to the four ‘Cs’ namely; continuity, consistency, commitment and consolidation. The models and suggestions of rehabilitation presented however need to be continually tested because what works in one case might not work in another and it is of utmost importance that prisoners do not return to the community worse off than before conviction.

The concept of reformation and rehabilitation emerged towards the end of the 19th century. Rehabilitation assumes that crime results from personal deficiencies therefore even in this case the root of the problem is located in individuals. David Cameron in a speech in London (22-10-2014) stated that ‘prevention is the cheapest and most effective way of dealing with crime, everything else is simply picking up the pieces’. Farrington and Coid (2004) on the other hand argue that when the controlling approach is taken the medical model of developing lifestyles which minimise the development of a disease is followed. However Farrington and Coid enquire “to what extent can research be applied which will impact upon the lifestyles of individuals to prevent them from developing criminal careers at some point in their life?” (2004, p.33). Therefore the term rehabilitation connotes a change in behavior assisted by intervening professionals. Rehabilitation too hence belongs to technologies of bio-power because it tries to exert control on those constructed as ‘abnormal’. It might be said that it views criminal offending as a sickness in need of treatment.

The million dollar question now is whether prisons truly serve the purpose of rehabilitating. Behind bars prisoners are cut off from the community and their families. In some cases isolation is necessary to protect the well-being of society however many of the young offenders are convicted due to substance misuse charges. The support of the family and the community in such cases is vital. Additionally the desire for drugs in prison increases due to the boredom young offenders face behind bars. Many measures taken to prevent accessibility of illegal substances in prison continue to prove futile. In fact a prison official described some of the crafty methods inmates employ to pass the urine and other drug tests. Besides sometimes prisons increase the hostility of young offenders towards justice and society. Instead of learning to respect authority in prison they learn to despise it. Also prisons provide inmates with the space and free time to reinforce each other's negative behavior and become better criminals. The success of rehabilitation can hence never be measured because not going back to prison does not necessarily suggest that an individual has been rehabilitated. The real reason could be that behind bars offenders learn how to get away with crime and avoid being caught. Therefore the complexity of this issue can never be undermined and if success of rehabilitation is turned into statistical data the importance of each individual's progress might be missed.

Nevertheless rehabilitation should not imply molding individuals to what is perceived as acceptable by society. Freire (1993, p.152) criticises extensively welfare programmes which present easy solutions to the disadvantaged and states that these "act as an anesthetic, distracting the oppressed from the true causes of their problems and from the concrete solution of these problems". Sometimes

welfare programmes are just politicians' means of manipulation in the sense that they are provided for justification purposes. In that way policy makers cannot be blamed that nothing is being done but really and truly they sometimes don't even manage to scratch the surface of a problem. A sensible way of looking at rehabilitation is to define it in terms of assisting young offenders to re-view themselves as agents who make choices which make a difference to their quality of life and to "repair the wounds left behind" (Fine, 2006, p.261). This can come about by recognising what they consider as unjust and feel empowered to attempt repairing the injustices of the world. In fact nowadays discourses focus around the notion of reintegration and resettlement so much so that even David Cameron in his speech 'making prisons work for offenders' admitted that jails must have a positive impact on inmates.

2.4 Reintegration and Resettlement

Since most offenders in the YOURS section are convicted due to drug related crimes it is worth looking at the European monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug addiction. In fact they define reintegration as 'any social intervention with the aim of integrating former or current problem drug users into the community'. It considers housing, education and employment as the three pillars of reintegration in society. Unfortunately in the report Malta is mentioned as one of the countries identifying deficiencies in the social reintegration services or programmes. The main challenge for prisoners who are making the transition from custody to the community remains how they will adapt to the life outside after their release. In fact it is not uncommon for offenders to exhibit concern for when they would be

released as they consider being 'out there' as a challenge which they are not being prepared to face.

The Council of Europe report (2011) affirms that preparation for reintegration should start as soon as offenders are admitted to prison. Some also argue in favour of prisons taking on the approach of communities within the walls. Readapting to a routine beyond the gates is not an easy task especially after a long sentence. This is because at YOURS inmates have everything done for them and according to feedback from an ex inmate little things such as switching on a cooker are also forgotten while in prison. To emphasise how disoriented he felt when he was released he explained how he was about to be run over by a car right in front of the eyes of his family who had come to pick him up from prison. This is proof in itself that the preparation of prisoners for reintegration is something that should be envisaged and worked towards right from the beginning of their incarceration. The COE report (2011) in fact defines the social integration of prisoners in terms of 'offering access to educational, cultural and recreational activities, underpinned by conditions of incarceration that respect each individual's human dignity and help them to achieve better standards of health, for example by treating substance misuse problems'. Involvement in substance misuse programmes is one way of assisting inmates achieve a successful re-integration. Whether locally we are reaching the desired target still stands to be debated for some inmates usually comment that prison does not assist them to overcome their substance misuse problem but simply denies them access. Comments such as 'I look forward to my release so I will be able to start using again' are not uncommon unfortunately.

Therefore as this statement implies if prisons do not serve the purpose of addressing the needs of inmates, the latter are more likely to reoffend. Incarceration should not control offenders behind bars without preparing them to integrate and resettle in society after their release. The responsibility should go beyond the confines of the prison walls. Re-integration and re-settlement should therefore be looked at as a journey where society at large and not just prison staff participates to determine its success or failure. Clancy et al. (2006) as quoted in Maguire and Raynor (2006, p.31) associate lower reconviction rates with “continuity of contact” especially “volunteer mentors who have more time to offer and also a more unconditional commitment to helping”.

A Report provided by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) revealed the importance of placing resettlement to a position of high priority (Maguire & Raynor: 2006). The authors state that many of the recommendations of this report transpired into policy in the Government’s Reducing Reoffending National Action Plan (2004) which had the resettlement of prisoners after their release at the core of its agenda. Maruna’s (2000) interview-based study of offenders in Liverpool as reported by Maguire and Raynor (2006, p.24) revealed that a key element of desistance was “a belief by the offender that he/she had begun to take control of his or her own life: whereas active offenders seemed to have little vision of what the future might hold, desisting interviewees had a plan and were optimistic that they could make it work”. The authors in fact make a comparison between the ‘opportunity deficit model’ and the ‘responsibility model’. They explain that as opposed to the opportunity deficit model the responsibility models acknowledge the difficulties faced by offenders but also recognise the fact that ultimately offenders

make choices regarding their response to circumstances. They continue to say that offenders “may need to focus on habits of thinking, beliefs and motivation in order to make more successful choices” (Maguire and Raynor, 2006, p.31). Therefore assisting offenders to plan and take control of their life might be one possible way of reducing re-offending. The soft skills that can be developed in prison are innumerable and with some innovative methodologies inmates can be motivated to participate. Motivation and determination are after all necessary characteristics when it comes to facing obstacles they are likely to come across upon their release and by assisting them to strengthen these characteristics we will be helping them to experience a smoother reintegration and resettle in society. In addition to this Maguire and Raynor (2006) suggest continuity of contact with project workers especially volunteer mentors beyond the prison gate. The benefits of the programmes provided during custody have to be continually reinforced otherwise the value may be lost.

2.5 Educational Interventions in Prison

A report to the European commission by GHK consulting (2013) reveals a meagre percentage of only 3 to 5% of prisoners who are qualified to undertake higher education. There is in fact a high instance of early school leaving among prisoners. In fact research has consistently demonstrated that low academic skills, underemployment and a criminal lifestyle are interrelated (Thornberry and Christensen; 1984, Cantor and Land; 1985, Blumstein et al.; 1986, Tewksbury and Vannostrand; 1996). The UN convention on human rights has acknowledged

the right of prisoners to access education while in prison. Reference regarding the importance of education and training to prisoners has been made by the 'Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners'. Cultural activities which enhance the development of the human personality have also been referred to in the 'Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners'. The European Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom also states that 'No Person shall be denied the right to education' (Art.2). Besides The Council of Europe supported and approved recommendations related to education in prison not just to low achievers but also to those who have higher educational attainment. All this makes it clear that there is a joint consensus that education and training improve the chances of employability and thus contribute towards reintegration and resettlement.

However one might question why prisoners should be granted access to education while serving a prison sentence because victims mainly expect prisoners to be punished for the crime committed rather than be educated. Essentially education and training are potentially beneficial to society because of various reasons. First and foremost education is the key to reducing the social costs of crime. It facilitates the prisoners' reintegration as it helps them to improve their ability to deal with challenges and prepares them for the labour market. Prisoners in fact acknowledge that education improves their employability prospects. Employability is thought to be one of the key factors which reduces re-offending and thus contributes greatly to reintegration and resettlement. Many prisoners also view education as an opportunity to make sensible use of their time while serving the sentence.

Education is empowering as it has the capacity to change the prisoners' perception of the self and others and it is these perceptions that determine attitude and behavior. Therefore the purpose of education is not solely acquisition of skills but goes much beyond. It enhances the prisoners' motivation to take control of their own lives and thus develop a sense of agency.

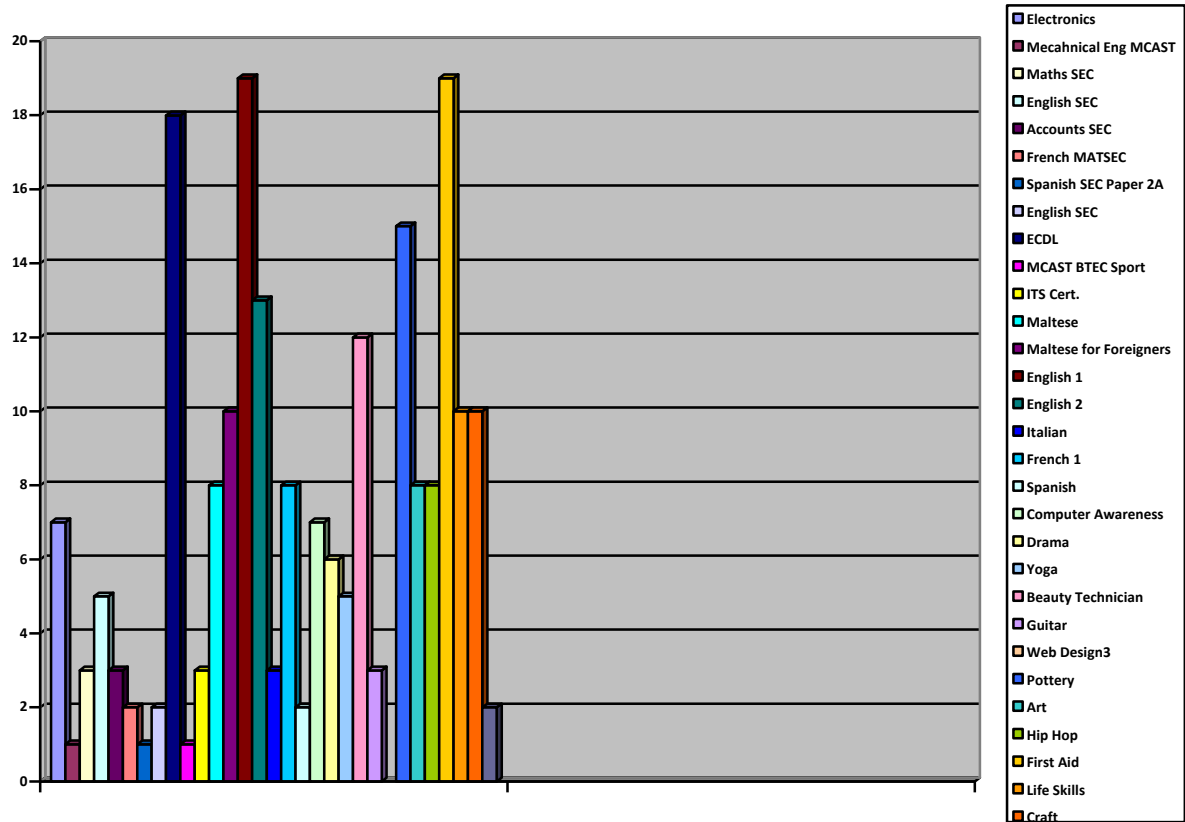
Nevertheless prison education presents challenges. Both pains and victories are experienced when conducting educational programmes in prison. Relatively few prisoners tend to participate in educational programmes and keeping pace with mainstream education systems is not always possible in prison especially where the use of modern technology comes in. This fact is due to security measures.

75% of EU countries reported that less than one in every four prisoners participate in education and training. These figures are trivial and when one considers the benefits of education in prison one would understand that the situation is unfortunate. A recent three-state recidivism study conducted by the Correctional Education Association (Steurer et al., 2001) on over 3600 inmates found an overall 23% drop in recidivism by those who participated in correctional education as opposed to those who did not. However even though this evidence highlights the value of correctional education, many studies have failed to distinguish between different kinds of correctional education. Some studies found that academic educational programmes are more effective in reducing recidivism than vocational or life skills programmes (Brewsdter and Sharp, 2002; Cecol et al., 2000; Jensen and Reed, 2006), whereas others argue

that participation in any in-prison educational programme is beneficial for inmate rehabilitation (Gordon and Weldn, 2003; Jancic, 1998; Jenkins, Streurer and Pendry, 1995; Mackenzie, 2000; Wilson, Gallagher and Mackenzie, 2000). Education can be welcomed by the prisoners if the emphasis is on the learner and built on the latter's knowledge and experience. A harmonious relationship with the educators facilitates learning therefore youth workers working in this context require both this and sound pedagogic skills.

CCF offers a variety of educational programmes in prison however most of these courses target the inmates of the main prison. An Education coordinator is responsible for managing these educational programmes and supervising online research when necessary. In the bar chart provided below a list of all the educational provisions according to an answer to parliamentary question number 762 during the 39th sitting on the 26th June 2013 are exhibited in figure 2.1.1 for the readers' perusal.

Figure 2.1.1



European Computer Driving Licence courses, English and First Aid prove to be the most popular courses in prison. Unfortunately only occasionally inmates are granted permission to follow vocational courses in institutions such as MCAST. Currently there are only three, none of whom from the young offenders' section. One of them is in Mechanical Engineering, one in Electrical Engineering and another in Agribusiness. Due to the length of sentences young offenders rarely get to benefit from such opportunities. This is because according to the local prison regulations inmates can only enroll as students in educational institutions during their last two years of imprisonment.

The Young Offenders Section at Imtahleb only get to receive a small fraction of educational opportunities and complaints such as there is nothing to do in prison are not uncommon.⁶ Besides the majority of those attending lessons would be foreigners and the main motivation is usually to learn English for extradition purposes. An art programme coordinated by the Centre of creativity in St James Cavalier in September 2013 was also a great opportunity for young inmates to express themselves through art. During the official opening I could feel how apart from exhibiting their talents they were passing the message that they are more than just prisoners.

2.6 Conclusion

The interest of rehabilitative programme administrators to implement good practices in the correctional field must never cease. Teachers and youth workers must keep reflecting on their practice and encourage participants to engage in critical reflection to identify what works. This chapter has given a historical review of punishment and incarceration. Contemporarily we think in terms of reintegration and resettlement and as documented in the previous section various educational programmes are offered in prison. Freire (1993) describes education as an 'instrument for liberation'. Learning to identify one's learning needs and learning to learn are some of the best liberating mechanisms that educators can offer young offenders. Both youth workers and inmates can embark on such a learning process to maximise their personal development.

⁶ Music, English, Pottery and Life Skills are the only options currently presented to inmates of the young offenders' section

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology employed in this action research aimed at encouraging reflection from both the researcher as well as the participants to collaborate in learning and thus enhance the usefulness of a ten week programme conducted at the Young Offenders' Unit at CCF. The programme was originally designed by the youth worker and entailed what the practitioner deemed necessary skills for offenders. This is due to the fact that because of security reasons, in order for access to be granted one has to present in writing what one intends to do. However learning in dialogue with the learners was intended by the practitioner. Through a process of continuous critical reflection together with the participants' contribution to participate and provide feedback, a programme which addresses more the needs of participants could be developed. The responsibility to speak critically and constructively with inmates was felt and participants' needs are considered fundamental to the programme's effectiveness. Some general information about the research approach, participatory action research, the research process, methodological issues surrounding the different phases of the action research, the recruitment process, hindrances encountered, ethical considerations and the procedure to expose the methodology employed follow for the readers' perusal.

3.2 Research approach

This participatory action research goes beyond verstehen which refers to understanding the meaning of action from the researcher's point of view as it

does not content with understanding but goes on to reflect on the action which both the participants and the researcher deem effective. Therefore the researcher in this action research does not only enter the shoes of the other but enters also in partnership for learning together with the participants. Participants in this study were invited to become agents in re-creating the world by giving meaning to it according to their individual needs. Discourses about offenders center mainly on lack of education, apathy and re-offending. It was thus felt that a group perceived with such undesirable properties could not be looked at as capable of re-creating the world. In this participatory action research however they are invited, encouraged and guided to become agents of change.

The methodology utilised was hands-on and the action involved working with a group that is set apart from the rest of society. Challenges and needs which are different from work with groups in other contexts were hence encountered. The approach utilised draws upon the philosophy of praxis. In the theses for Feuerbach (1888) Marx criticised philosophers for failing to change the world even though they have interpreted it in various ways. He felt that there is no point in theorising without taking action. This action research seeks out the participation of both researcher and participants as equal partners in learning and does not rely solely on theory but has action at the core of its objective.

3.3 Participatory Action Research

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2005) action research requires among other things; attention to the process, reflection and replanning and keeping record assists the researcher to truly dig deep into the process, reflect and refer to the records when planning similar programmes so as to improve the practice. The core component of this research is in fact the process just mentioned. This project was not a problem solving endeavor but rather a quest for knowledge about how the practice could be improved. It was a qualitative research which aimed at providing the space for self-development. In fact it involved both the researcher and the participants in a mission to improve a programme which can be made available to other practitioners working in the field. The participants' and the researcher's partnership in this research was absolutely necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the redrawn programme and to deepen their understanding of how they can both develop in the most advantageous way possible. This participatory action research also aimed at assisting the researcher to develop a more critical view of pre-planned educational prison programmes.

Ferrance (2000) explained that there are four basic themes within the definitions of Action Research which are; empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge and social change. Ferrance provided a cyclical model to explain how the process of action research should be ongoing therefore engaging the researchers in an everlasting desire to expand their knowledge and utilise this knowledge to bring about change.

This stance was in fact employed to gain a better understanding on the relativeness of a ten week programme originally designed on the practitioner's perception of inmates' needs. This programme was in fact reflected on and some points for a deeper reflection immediately emerged. The assumption that the programme addressed the needs of inmates was critically analysed and the ball was immediately set in motion by the collection of data from secondary sources as well as by means of interviews with young offenders. However it must be noted that this study does not rely on one single method of data collection. Triangulation was in fact adopted as while the ten week programme based on the emergent needs of young offenders interviewed was being conducted the researcher observed the interaction and the comportment of the young people during the sessions and prepared and kept record through immediate evaluations. These also included self-evaluations and recommendations of what the researcher could do to improve the practice⁷. The focus group conducted at the end of the programme so that room for evaluation from the subject's point of view was allowed complimented the participants' continuous feedback. The focus group aimed among other things at gathering information on whether life skills programmes are of any assistance at all and whether prison inmates are keen to have such programmes included in their weekly or perhaps even daily schedules. Feedback for the content and methodology was also requested. Therefore the study also aimed at brainstorming for a multitude of opinions which the inmates themselves came up with so that the researcher could weigh up the options and put forward suggestions for more work with young prisoners in the future. Simultaneously it aimed to assist the researcher to develop her reflective

⁷ A copy of the sessions conducted during the ten week programme together with the evaluations written immediately after each session can be found in appendix A.

capabilities and question what perhaps was before considered common sense knowledge. Essentially this partnership in learning assisted the participants to develop in domains that are most beneficial to them.

In her grounded theory of Maltese male habitual offenders Clark (2011) exhibits how the interviewees described distinctive behavior patterns that are not congruent with conventional lifestyles and that make the criminal lifestyle attractive. People working in the field of offenders must acknowledge that offenders many times are not repentant and therefore this fact should set us to think laterally. As Clark stated “the system must do more than simply punish them but we need to understand their experiences, their lives and their perspectives” (2011, p.577). This action research attempted to delve a little into offenders’ experiences however one must also bear in mind that what offenders might consider beneficial may not be considered the same by society hence this fact requires careful consideration. Young offenders are invited to take an active part in their learning by engaging together with the continuous reflection of the researcher, to learn how they can take control of their development. As Freire (1993, p.49) put it; “they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit but as a limiting situation which they can transform”. Young offenders and the researcher are invited to take the leading role in learning to learn.

3.4 Research Process

Kurt Lewin has been known as the founder of action research in the United States (Camie et al., 2009). He brought to light how participant knowledge increases validity and how democratic and participatory research are fundamental to social change. Adelman (1997) as quoted in Camie et al. (2009, p.174) revealed that Lewin created the space for “the development of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people participating in collective research”. Lewin brought together thought and action, in other words gave birth to praxis. He insisted that there should not be action without research but on the other hand not even research without action. Freire (1993) described this process as the action and reflection in order to transform the world. In fact the procedure utilised for this participatory action research is a cycle where reflection is salient in all the stages of the process as the diagram presented at the end of this section suggests. The reflection on the selection of the issue, the results of all the interviews, the observation during the ten week programme and the focus group conducted at the end of the ten week programme are all taken in consideration when drawing up a renewed programme. This renewed programme is not conclusive but sets the cycle in motion for the same process to be repeated.

Initially the fact that young offenders are commonly perceived as having several deficits which need redressing if they are to desist from crime was reflected on. Hence the ‘fixing’ model of the ten week programme originally designed is reconsidered. The idea is that the ten week programme originally designed for young inmates at Corradino Correctional Facilities will be redrawn to address the

needs of the inmates. The research agenda lends itself to the three steps described by Coghlan (2005) which are; planning, taking action and evaluating the action. Since the programme was originally designed on the researcher's perception of inmates' needs the necessity to reflect on these assumed needs was felt. Therefore a collection of data from primary and secondary sources was felt necessary in order for the identification of needs to emerge. With this information at hand an attempt to identify the core areas for the development of a programme could be made. The ten week programme was drawn up and conducted with young offenders in the YOURS section. Observations were made and feedback from participants documented immediately after every session so as to ensure accuracy. The necessary modifications to tailor for suggestions by participants were made to the weekly sessions. Photos of the activities were also taken and included so that a record of the technique and a feel of the dynamic of the group could be visualised and hence a more accurate record of the implementation phase could be provided. A forty minute focus group conducted with the participants provided feedback for the evaluation of the programme and set in motion the redrawing of another programme.

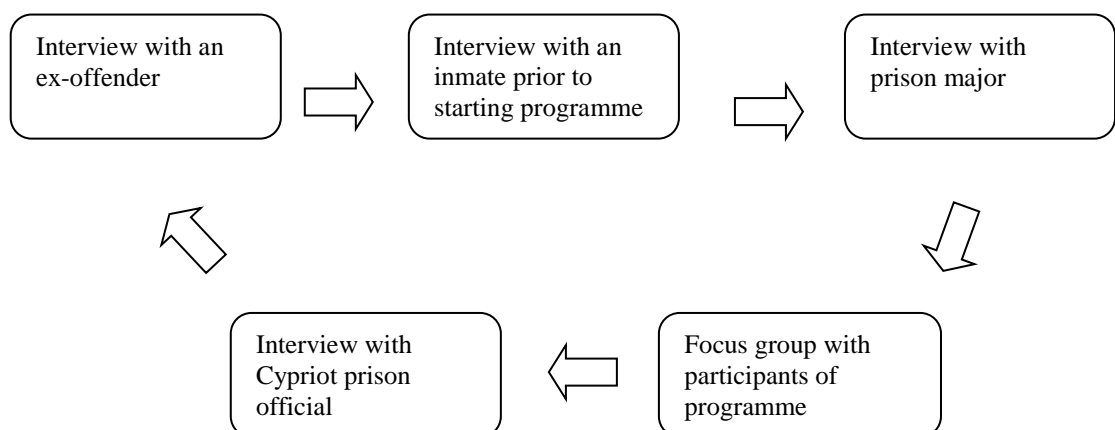
Therefore after this process the cycle starts all over again. After analysing the emerging needs the second attempt is made. The attempt again aims at embarking on another programme which reflects more the needs of the participants and to assist the researcher to develop into a more effective practitioner. Therefore the model presented in the next page can be utilised for as long as the practice keeps going. The model in fact exhibits how the action which is numbered step five takes us to the collection of further data, analysis of

this data, reporting of results and finally the drawing up of another programme reflecting emerging needs. This action research therefore provided data which operated on more than one level since both the learner and the practitioner are receiving information that enriches the learning and teaching in progress.⁸

3.5 Methodological Issues Surrounding the Different Phases

3.5.1 Data Collection Strategies

After the selection of the issue, data was collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. Academic literature surrounding the issue under examination was analysed and this has assisted in the formulation of interrogations for reflection and interviews. The various interviews conducted were also used in a cyclical manner to substantiate the practice and ameliorate it. The diagram below exhibits how the interviews conducted assisted in maintaining a binding process. Every time a need emerged further data was collected through literature and interviews.



⁸ The diagram presented on the page that follows exhibits clearly the process utilised in this action research.

3.5.2 Data Analytical Strategies

Data was primarily collected from secondary sources. Themes surrounding crime and society's perception of young offenders as in need to have their deficits redressed were critically reviewed. The first step for collecting data from primary sources was to contact an ex offender who had embarked on the ten week programme when it was offered for the first time. The data collected was taken in consideration for the drawing up of a revised programme however this programme was again revised after data was collected from an inmate who had consented to participate in the action research. Emergent needs indicated that an interview with the major in charge of the prison section where the action research was proceeding, would give the practitioner a better understanding of issues that constantly transpired, so that improvements could immediately be made to the practice. A focus group at the end of the ten week programme provided a general perspective on the programme as a whole. Practices from another country were then explored in order for the maximisation of a renewed programme to be guaranteed. The model above is intended to be used for as long as the practice persists.

3.5.3 Sampling and Recruitment Strategies

Contact with an ex offender was maintained after the programme was conducted in 2011 since mentoring is advocated for by the researcher. On one of the occasional meetings the plan of a participatory action research with young offenders in prison was communicated. The young person immediately

consented to participate in the interview. An appointment was set and the interview ensued in a quiet cafeteria. The interview was recorded and transcribed and topics for development were highlighted. The questions for the second interview with a prison inmate were then formulated. After access to prison was granted, the recruitment of participants followed. Conveying the details of the participatory action research was considered necessary to be done by the researcher since it transpired through the interview with the ex-offender that many details had been omitted in the past. Therefore all the inmates were addressed in the common room and out of the seventeen serving a sentence at that time ten were enticed by the idea and consented to participate. One of them also volunteered to be interviewed for feedback about their needs when this requirement was communicated to them. Information letters were read to them and together with consent forms were duly signed. The interview with the inmate as well as the focus group with the participants at the end of the ten week programme were recorded and transcribed and points for consideration were highlighted for the drawing up of a revised programme. It must be noted however that out of the ten who originally consented to participate five made it to the end. This rate was not unexpected since three out of the five who dropped out were still under arrest when the programme started and they were released midway through the participatory action research.

3.6 Recruitment Process

Importance was given to the recruitment phase. Information was given to the participants before they consented to embark on the programme. An explanation

of what participants were going to be doing and what measures and research tools were going to be used and how the data was ultimately going to be used was communicated. All inmates were invited to participate and they were all given the initial information however at no time were they coerced or bothered to attend for the sessions. Attendance was always out of their own free will as although participants came from a very controlled environment it was deemed important that the participants' outlook of the programme remained voluntary. Apart from the researcher who engaged in the learning process with the inmates, ten males, one of them being a foreigner, between the ages of 18 and 27 ended up participating in the ten week programme reflected upon during the participatory action research. According to the prison major the twenty-seven year old was at the young offenders' section because other divisions were at that point in time full.

Baumfield et al. (2013) declared that any research with human beings which does not report what information participants were given and what opportunities there were for collaborating with researchers cannot be called high quality. For this reason written information letters were distributed after a concise verbal explanation and the participants' requests taken in consideration at all times. The information letter and the consent forms presented to them were short and comprehensible however they were read to the ones who requested assistance before they were signed. Great effort was made for the avoidance of past deficiencies. Signed consents are not included in the appendices for preservation of anonymity purposes instead a sample of the consent forms utilised can be found.

3.7 Hindrances

Prison is a very specific learning environment. It presents challenges which one might not necessarily come across in other institutions. One must however recognise that investment in this area is worthwhile in the long run. However access to prison is not easily granted and it was a very risky endeavor preparing for a dissertation in the knowing that access could be denied. Resources for the sessions could be denied access too and this meant that an alternative plan had to be at hand at all times.

The teaching and learning method utilised was also one that the participants were not accustomed to. The emphasis of the teaching style was on the learner and the intention of the learning outcomes was for the inmates to build on their individual knowledge and experiences. The method utilised was non-formal and since this method is not widely practiced and still unfamiliar to many the participants sometimes failed to link the activity to the theme. It took the participants quite a while to become accustomed to the non-formal style of education so much so that some debated during the focus group that some of the activities were childish although quite a few stated that these were an enjoyable way of conveying a message.

Activities could not be supported by photographs for presentation purposes. However photos of the activities were usually taken after leaving the premises. Some of these are included to session plans and the reflective evaluations in appendix A. The modern technological recording devices were not allowed

access and this meant that a recorder formerly used by journalists had to be borrowed. This created some problems during transcription as these devices are not so efficient in terms of clarity. However since the recording of the focus group was immediately transcribed, recollection could be relied on.

On arriving at Corradino Correctional Facilities it was not uncommon to discover that some of the inmates were indisposed. It was in fact not uncommon for court summons to clash with sessions and this meant that if a participant missed a session the continuity of the programme would be suspended. On one particular occasion a person from Sedqa's unexpected visit also disrupted the session but these disturbances were discussed with the major and an assurance for the effort of the avoidance of these circumstances was given. These instances created unduly delays and hindered the full benefits of the outcomes of the sessions.

One also has to take extra care in maintaining good relations with the staff while at the same time not impeding the credibility of the participants. All in all however these hindrances were conquered and the participatory action research including the ten week programme, were implemented successfully.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The action research conducted as part fulfillment of Masters in Youth and Community Studies may be outside the parameters of one's comfort zone and as described in section 3.7 it was a risky endeavor. It was understood that the study required many ethical considerations. After receiving approval from the dissertation board, the proposal was submitted to the University Research Ethics

Committee. The proposal was found to be ethically sound and participants were considered safeguarded.

Nothing is impossible and if one really believes that an action can bring about a positive change then the action should be pursued. Besides during the ten week experience with prison inmates in 2011 a great need for such programmes was observed. This need could not be overlooked. It can be said that the eagerness of certain inmates to have the sessions was the prime motivating factor for this initiative to materialise a couple of years after.

It is understood that when tapping into delicate areas such as the Young Offenders Unit, many ethical issues need to be taken into consideration. Young offenders are considered as part of a vulnerable group hence this is an area that should be treated with great caution. The selection of appropriate language to avoid judgmental inferences was in fact always given high priority. Schlosser (2008:1506) reminds us that ‘because inmates are a stigmatised and highly protected group, special care is required in designing the instruments used’. However Dalen and Jones (2010, p.10) were right in stating that “the overprotection of inmates might lead to harmful consequences for that same population”. In fact they go on to describe how being too protective can prevent beneficial outcomes. Therefore they suggest that research of potential benefit should be pursued with caution.

As stated above this challenge could only be taken after the success of a similar programme in the summer of 2011. However looking back in hindsight it can be

affirmed that such an endeavour also requires a relationship of trust and if this is not fostered problems will be encountered. Howard Williamson quoted in Harrison et al. (2007, p.38) defined youth work as “the building of a trusting and credible relationship with young people in order to support and broaden their learning experiences and thereby enhance their personal development”. Therefore it has to be ensured that the participants are comfortable with the researcher and even so they can never be coerced to collaborate. Hence participation was voluntary and a detailed explanation of what their participation would entail was given to inmates beforehand. Furthermore their level of comfort was continually assessed and they were advised that they could withdraw from participating further any time they wanted even if this meant that the study would fall on its face. However as it has already been stated the motivation behind this research stems from the young offenders’ insistence to have such programmes. They maintained that they should be offered educational opportunities more frequently to minimise the boredom they face behind bars. A commitment was also made with participants that should they wish to be fed back the outcome, that is, the final redrawn programme based on their feedback they could do so. Contact details were given to the participants who would have served their sentence by the time the programme is conducted again in the summer of 2014. Baumfield et al. (2013, p.35) stated that “this commitment to closing the feedback loop and ensuring that the participants have a say in how the data collected from them is considered, interpreted and reported” means that they are asked to “invest in the process and outcomes” and hence they will be brought on board to truly commit to the research.

Special attention also needs to be given to fostering a sound relationship with prison staff (Nielson, 2010). Special attention needs to be dedicated to the avoidance of taking sides. Therefore impartiality and confidentiality were guaranteed even to staff. Prison staff was never bypassed as a group and dress code and other regulations were observed constantly.

3.9 Procedure

Several interviews were conducted to substantiate the participatory action research both in the initial phase as well as during the course of the study. The purpose of the interview conducted before the ten week programme was to serve as the foundation for the formulation of the programme to be presented during the participatory action research. Rather satisfactory comments have been received from a past participant of the programme hence the topics assumed were not changed although recommendations on the content were taken in consideration. Modifications were applied again after the interview with an inmate who had consented to participate for the duration of the ten week programme. An interview with a prison official aimed at exposing the other side of the coin. The need for examining this perspective emerged after continuous objections from the inmates' side which were outside the parameters of the researcher. This interview in fact put the researcher in a better position to articulate arguments during the sessions when the need arose.

The sessions of the ten week programme were conducted in the young offenders' section within the Corradino Correctional Facilities. The room utilised was very

restricted and monitored by a CCTV. The sessions lasted two hours and were conducted every week for eleven weeks. The appointments were set on a daily basis with the prison major therefore flexibility was mandatory. The techniques employed during the sessions aimed at encouraging participants to think and build on their knowledge and experience while at the same time assisting the researcher to delve into these experiences to become enriched with knowledge and be in a position to provide a more effective practice. For this reason a journal was kept and updated right after every session with the participants. Thus a concise recollection of strengths and weaknesses and other impressions of the sessions follow every session plan in appendix one.

The focus group was part and parcel of the last session in prison. Hence it took place in the same area as the sessions of the previous weeks under the watchful eye of the CCTV. Therefore a large part of the participatory action research developed behind the prison walls save for the interview with the ex-offender, the continuous reflection of the researcher and the study visit in the island of Cyprus. The latter has been beneficial in assessing and evaluating whether the practice offered during the action research measured up to that of other professionals in other countries. Psychology Masters' students who had conducted a research to identify the learning needs of prisoners were also met with and their findings were discussed. Even though the emergent results focused more on the academic aspect of education much insight was gained. All these experiences have been very enriching.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodology employed for this study. It should provide the readers with a clear understanding of what this participatory action research entails. It also sets the scene for the different phases of this study. These phases are in fact presented in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 4

Action Research Phase 1 – A Critical Reflection on Young offenders’ Needs

Phase 1 - 4.1.1 The Risk Paradigm

The National Youth Policy 2010-2013 emphasises the fact that youth are viewed as a resource rather than a problem. Nonetheless one of the themes addresses transitions and vulnerability and labels these as risky. Youth transitions are viewed by the National Youth Policy as more risky than those of previous generations and it is assumed that some young people are sometimes more vulnerable than others to substance abuse and delinquency and crime. These assumptions place the responsibility squarely on the young person. This perception of vulnerability and risk can be an obstacle to a fuller commitment to dealing with youth crime in the appropriate way. It can also prevent policy makers from providing more effective responses. Challenging this perception is crucial and the other side of the coin needs therefore to be examined as well.

Mitchell et al. (2001, p.217) stated that “it becomes extremely difficult to understand or isolate specific areas of risk without situating them within young people’s multidimensional lives, that is, the social, ideological and economic milieu within which they live and make sense of the world”. Now risk perception approaches to youth focus mainly on negative aspects. It was Stanley G. Hall (1904) who coined the phrase ‘storm and stress’ to explain about the relationship between adolescence and distinctive patterns of behaviour amongst young

people. Hence he associates the youth period with negative connotations. In fact he described it as a turbulent time charged with conflict and mood swings. Therefore one might argue that perhaps the negative representation of youth as a generalised and homogeneous group can partly be owed to Stanley G. Hall. Even nowadays young people are generally viewed as ‘deficits’ and hence we are continuously seeking ways of ‘fixing’ them, deter them from taking risks and mold them into conformists.

Douglas (1992) as quoted in Green, Mitchell and Bunton (2000) has argued that even in these days and time when we hear the term ‘risk’ it is predominantly in the context of a negative outcome. Representations of youth in fact center on discourses of deviance, disaffection and protection. The *raison d’etre* of this assumption might be based on heuristics by which some adults judge the risks young people face and the benefits of intervention. Such approaches take a ‘social problems’ approach, and automatically sets one’s mind to search for the ‘causes’ of problems and possible ways of providing solutions. However it can be argued that the burden of prevention and intervention programmes sometimes outweigh the benefits of the objectives. Risk-factor researchers themselves point out the flaws in their methods and warn against over-promotion of prevention (O’Mahony, 2009). Case (2007, p.98) asserts that if risk prevention programmes which are underpinned by research cannot reduce offending then really and truly they are “based on sand”. He therefore insists on a “deeper, more open-minded investigation which includes inter-personal dynamics” (practitioner/young person relationship) and which increases the likelihood of positive, pro-social behavior. Farrington (2002, p.664) on the other hand states that “there is only a tenuous

link between risk factors and prevention programmes”. It is therefore imperative that such programmes, if they are to be provided, are based on the true needs of the recipients. Risk factor prevention paradigms have in fact been criticised of being insufficiently sensitive to “individual, social and temporal differences relating to age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, local area, country and political and historical context” (Case, 2007, p.93).

Mitchell et al. (2001) reveal that even though risky behavior provides a mix of danger and excitement to young people, risky acts are contemplated and evaluated by young people before embarked on. Young lads for example recognise that associating with older young men’s risk taking behavior can have negative repercussions on their lives and social status especially when the risky status associated with the older men is transferred to the younger ones. A concrete example emerged in one of the interviews of the study by Mitchell et al. when a twelve year old explained how the older guys can run faster and the little ones get caught by the police. On the other hand young women identified drinking alcohol and mixing with older guys as risky. Stereotypical gender expectations are apparent however the link between alcohol and unsafe sexual practices is frequently debated and well documented. Therefore in many ways young people prove themselves to be skilled risk managers and survivors more than we adults assume them to be.

O’Mahony (2009) identifies a list of risk factors. Among these risks are; poverty, poor educational provision, unemployment and inadequate parenting skills. Five separate categories group these risks into different factors namely; neighborhood

and community factors, socio-economic deprivation, family background/parenting, individual factors and academic and school factors. The root of the problem seems to be placed many times on the individuals but is there enough understanding of youth crime? Can youth crime be just a social construct? After all crimes such as drunk driving and tax evasion are many times overlooked or underestimated in their significance as such offenders are perhaps educated and successful individuals therefore their acts are minimised in importance by society.

Adults many times fail to consider that perhaps if left to their own devices young people will come round to dealing with challenges. Perhaps risk is sometimes simply a defense mechanism strategy which assists certain individuals to succeed in life's journey. Furthermore notions of rudeness and unacceptable behavior are social constructs relevant to space and time. What was acceptable behavior ten years ago might no longer be and what is considered as rude in one society is perfectly acceptable in another. Besides Farrington (1978) tested the hypothesis that individuals who are publicly labeled as delinquents, stand a greater chance of fulfilling the prophecy and become fully fledged delinquents by increasing their delinquent behavior. The results of his study exhibited that youth who were found guilty in court between interviews at ages 14 and 18 increased their delinquent behavior. Being apprehended can therefore serve as a reinforcement of delinquent behavior rather than as a deterrent.

4.1.2 Power, Control and Normalisation

Foucault (1977) wrote extensively about oppressive discipline and the mechanisms of power to alter an individual. He explains how Bentham's Panopticon design was meant to monitor and maintain control. The design aimed at creating the effect of being seen without seeing, of being cut off from other inmates and hence neither attempts at a collective escape nor plans for new crimes for the future could be made. The main aim of this fictitious machine was to exert power. In fact Foucault (1995) labeled it as 'a laboratory of power'. However this can be looked at from a different angle. The panopticon moves the focus of attention from a system of control to a system of surveillance. Foucault (1975) describes how power is exerted by some particular institutions such as education and justice. These institutions transmit the orders, apply them and punish people who do not obey. Foucault states that the individual's choices of action are controlled by what is known (1975). Power through knowledge is in fact at the core of Foucault's theory and educational institutions and justice have the power in their hands. They set rules using measuring rods which are not always attainable by all and sundry. Their surveillance and regulation attitude sometimes backfires as it makes offenders rebel against the system. Furthermore many times these institutions enhance the power of the middle class up and exclude the working class from this power. In fact Osler and Starkey (2005, p.211) stated that "whilst schools are potentially powerful instruments for preparing young people to participate in society, and at their best give them the right and the opportunity to participate in the life of the school itself, they remain in many cases, institutions that create failure, resentment and exclusion". Loeber

et al. quoted in O'Mahony (2009) explain that schools could be considered prevention tools for delinquency if all children found them as rewarding as the bright children do. Therefore educational and prevention programmes need to be designed in ways that are effective for all and sundry. On the other hand as Bergschmidt (2004, p.63) criticised "the principle of therapy instead of punishment would fit Foucault's analysis of power shifting from punishment to discipline and normalization". The roots of Foucault's arguments in fact lie in technologies of bio-power, disciplining, normalising and controlling anybody who deviates from the 'norms' of society; norms which are after all socially constructed.

4.1.3 Freire on Liberation

Common discourses among offenders centre on the notion that situations cannot be changed and hence a fatalistic stance is adopted. They feel that now that their conduct has been tainted there is no turning back and they will not be given a second chance in society. They resign themselves to this situation and sometimes the prison bars provide them with a certain degree of safety. Freire argued extensively in favour of education for liberation in response to this stance. The need for young offenders to recognise their situation and plan action for their liberation prevailed during the action research. Freire wrote about the fatalistic stance that attempts to persuade us that nothing can be done to change the situation. Sometimes people accept their oppressive or unfavourable state as the norm and it almost becomes their natural state. Consequently this acceptance brings about feelings of defeat and a lack of motivation. Instead one needs to free himself of this fatalism and become an agent of change. Freire's conceptual

framework was adopted to the participatory action research. Young offenders were not only the object being taught but also the subject doing the teaching. Freire encouraged a collective activity that benefitted everyone. He also encouraged dialogue in order for the reality of every individual to be entered into and transformed. In fact he stated (1993, p.65) that “critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation”.

Freire also encouraged critical consciousness in the struggle for liberation as this focuses on assisting the individual to achieve an in-depth understanding of the world and to question about the nature of an individual’s social situation. Questions lead to seeking answers. An English saying goes ‘teach the poor how to fish so they will never go hungry’ and it is believed that recognition of the skills to think critically about the world and getting the process of reflection to action, to reflection, and back to improved action; then individual necessary transformations become possible. The central premise of Freire’s theory is that education is liberation and the first step to educating oneself is recognising own learning needs and then learning to learn. This fact was the underlying premise of the action research.

4.1.4 Turning Risks into Strengths

As observed in section 4.1.1 of this chapter, young people and risky behaviours are entwined. However risk perception approaches do not necessarily have to focus on negative aspects. Generally young people are competent risk managers

and have the essential life skills to deal with life's challenges but unfortunately some encounter difficulties and this is where youth work potentially comes in.

The problem is that many times assistance which is deemed effective is provided disregarding the fact that young people themselves can be the most effective agents in identifying the support they need. The risks, society associates youth with, can only be turned into strengths if young people are allowed the space to be themselves re-creators of their situations. They are the best identifiers of their own needs however there is risk involved in bringing about changes and that is why risk taking should be encouraged. Freire (2001, p.41) stated that "proper to right thinking is a willingness to risk, to welcome the new, which cannot be rejected simply because it is new no more than the old can be rejected because chronologically it is no longer new".

4.1.5 Outcome of Critical Reflection – Development of Curriculum

Following the critical reflection on the fact that young offenders are viewed as having several deficits or risks which need redressing if they are to desist from crime an attempt for a resolution was made. It was felt that the most appropriate intervention would be a self-guided one. The fact that young people needed to become actively involved in their own learning was acknowledged. Therefore feedback from them was requested both before starting the sessions for the ten week programme as well as during the implementation and when it was concluded.

Change is not driven only by “knowledge, skills and determination” (Bernfeld et al., 2001, p.201) but also by curiosity. Reflection is the result of curiosity. Curiosity about what works and how things can work better and what results can be achieved has the potential to bring about some positive results. Bernfeld et al. continue to say that curiosity drives the spirit of experience and allows learning to take place. Schon (1983) described reflective action as the ability of professionals to think about what they are doing while a problem or a need is being addressed and this is the core of the aim of this participatory action research.

Reflection involves exploring one’s feelings and also one’s thoughts on a practice. In youth and community work constant reflection is a must as one needs to develop self-awareness before being in a position to assist others. This is learnt through introspective thinking. Self-awareness assists the youth worker to be in a position to understand one’s learning needs. On the other hand self-awareness also assists the young offenders to reflect and recognise their learning needs thus construct their own course of action. This is in line with Freire’s philosophy (1993) of emancipatory education and education as an instrument for liberation. The need for practitioners not to fall in the trap of normalising according to their perception of young offenders’ needs was determined in the first phase of the action research.

Action Research Phase 2- Intervention - Implementation of the Programme

Phase 2 - 4.2.1 The Curriculum of the ten week Programme

The original programme conducted with inmates prior to embarking on this action research entailed the same topics as the ones utilised when the programme was originally designed. It was agreed that the topics would be; communication, relationships, self-control, self-esteem, resilience and dealing with failures, dignity, acceptance, time management, self-efficacy and participation in society.⁹ Following the feedback from an ex-inmate minor changes were adopted to the topics. However due to the fact that some inmates had long sentences, all the activities were changed, to engage past participants again and keep the interest level stable.

This chapter presents the analysis of an interview conducted with an ex prison inmate regarding his views about the programme and the analysis of an interview conducted with an inmate before he embarked on the programme. The programme conducted can be found in appendix A however an evaluation of this programme follows in sections 4.2.3a to 4.2.3k.

4.2.2 Analysis of Interviews conducted before the ten week Programme

Young offenders' lack of agency emerged during the interview conducted with an inmate who participated in the programme in previous years. He explained how prior to starting the programme they were told that they would be spoken to by an

⁹ The plans of these sessions can be found in appendix A

external visitor about the opportunity to participate in a ten week programme. They did not know what the programme entailed and their perception of 'life skills' was in fact completely off the mark of what it actually entailed. This fact indicates the importance of including participants in the planning phase as participants would owe the programme when involved and commitment is more probable. Furthermore by including inmates in the initial phase relevance to their needs would be guaranteed. Access to prison is however not an easy task and winning the trust of authorities, officials and inmates is the first necessary step. It would be easier for an insider to adopt this strategy but being a volunteer reliance on own perception of their needs was necessary to make the first entry. An attempt to gain feedback from a police official proved fruitless when the only feedback received was 'lock them inside and throw away the key'. This again proves the degree of antagonism and distrust between criminals and law enforcement agents.

The lack of information provided to inmates placed them in a passive role. Hence when the programme was introduced again, time was taken for an explanation to be given in detail including the objectives and the procedure that was going to be adopted. Besides information letters were distributed to all the participants and consent forms were read to them and signed. Since feedback about the content was positive it was decided that the same topics would be utilised however the activities were changed completely due to the fact that two of the participants had participated in the programme the previous year. However the fact that none of the participants had suggestions when consulted is worrying. It could be attributed to lack of lateral thinking which our educational system

fails to encourage. Educators are still reluctant to lead students to become independent learners and students are not being encouraged to select what they actually want to learn. Formal educators stick to the curriculum because they feel that it is their sole duty to do so. Will Durant has said 'Education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance' and this statement suggests that educators' main duty is to encourage learners to keep making new discoveries. However we educators are many times more concerned about our agendas than individual learners' needs. We have failed to engage learners in the critical pedagogy that Freire argued in favour of in order for individuals to be able to connect their experiences to their social contexts. Inmates cannot be blamed for not having suggestions as they have been brought up in a system which believes that students are empty sacks to be filled. Our educational system is still in line with the banking concept of education. In prison young people find themselves in a subordinate position and they are stripped from empowerment. Perhaps this fact leads to further lack of thinking and an apathetic stance is adopted. In some cases it can be said that incarceration is incapacitating instead of rehabilitating.

An interviewee suggested that the group should not exceed eight to ten persons. In his opinion this was the ideal number for control to be maintained and everyone to participate actively. He also suggested that Maltese and foreigners should not be separated but he suggested that the programme created the opportunity for them to mingle and for the foreigners to try harder to improve their English. Amongst methodological suggestions he included that activities should be adequate for their age. This suggests that exposure to the non-formal style of education is still very scant and consequently the objective of the activity

is not always understood. He also exhibited the need for the programme to be on-going and conducted by someone working full time in prison. He suggested that time in prison should be organised with activities of this kind and that the existent apathy be eradicated once and for all.

A quote from the Times of Malta dated 30th January 2011 stated that a difficulty many released prisoners encounter is reintegrating into society. The article remarks that since these people are without a job, possibly homeless and without any source of income, it is very difficult for them to get by and it is possible that the option of returning to the criminal path would outweigh any other options. If the root of the problem is not tackled these young people might easily wind up behind bars over and over again. In fact amongst other significant suggestions the interviewee added that someone should be responsible for smoothing the transition from prison to beyond the gates. He believes that inmates should be assisted to find employment thus the possibility of relapsing is reduced. He explained that the major challenge initiates upon being discharged. Shipping out becomes a possibility and in fact he ended up OD when he felt that there was nowhere else to turn.

‘Ma stajtx insib kif naqbad xogħol....gejt OD....ma kontx naf fejn ħa ndur iktar’

‘I couldn’t find myself a job...I overdosed....I didn’t know which way to turn’

Another interviewee also expressed his frustration as he feels that the time behind bars is not serving the purpose of assisting him to overcome his problem. He feels that he will relapse as soon as he is released. He expressed his wish to have

his time organised and hence reaffirmed that inmates would like to eradicate the existent apathy.

‘Jien għandi problema bid-droga....billi niġi għal ċertu żmien hawn u jsakkruk fiċ-ċella ma jagħmlulix ġid, anzi ngħid igri nahrab ‘l barra ħalli nerga nibda nieħu’

‘I have a drug use problem... coming here for some time and being locked in a cell does not help me, but makes me wish I’d be out as soon as possible so that I will be able to take again’

Following this feedback it was decided that if the programme had to be extended, skills such as sitting for an interview and writing a CV will be included. However it must be kept in mind that even if inmates manage to improve their employability skills another barrier would still be encountered because of their tainted conduct. However the wish expressed by the participants was kept in mind and more weight was given to related topics. Besides sessions regarding employability skills were also included.

Another interviewee suggested peer to peer education as he feels competent in a particular area however due to logistic problems his proposal to conduct DJ lessons never materialised. Perhaps encouraging more initiatives from inmates assists in their individual reformation and fosters a sense of agency. Feeling competent and useful also enhances one’s self-esteem which in turn fosters self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be defined as the “individuals’ beliefs that they can master a situation and produce positive outcomes” (Santrock, 2005, p.434). Therefore the concept is related to self-esteem which is increased when a person manages to achieve desired goals. Conversely it is decreased when a person fails

or receives negative feedback. Lazarus (1991) quoted in Santrock (2005) explains that when problems are faced and coped with, self-esteem is often enhanced. Self-efficacy is an important element to the character as it is the belief that one can master a situation. Bandura postulates that “a host of factors, including personal, social, and situational ones affect how efficacy-relevant experiences are interpreted” (1995, p.5). The need for such a characteristic to be instilled in young offenders is crucial. In fact Reckless (1961) quoted in Camilleri (2010, p.56) asserts that “a positive self-concept is the most effective restraint on delinquency and therefore activities which foster self-esteem ought to be encouraged in order to assist young people to choose conventional paths”. Siegal and Senna (1994, p.188) reinforce this by stating that delinquency is “a product of weak self-concept and poor self-esteem”.

Williamson (1990, p.111) declares that “individuals who have committed criminal acts are in some way deficient in social skills, personal skills, or other attributes, which contributed to their decisions to commit the criminal acts”. When deficiencies are mentioned the first thing that comes to mind is designed programmes to assist in the overcoming of these deficiencies because it is hoped that once the prison sentence is served, the young people will function as law abiding citizens without difficulties. Many other factors however come into play and as experience suggests each and every case has to be analysed on its own not just by those who are doing the teaching but also by the learners. The reason for continuous reflection is self-explanatory as the content that is taught is reflected on and selected according to relevance and needs. The purpose of participatory action research is to enable practitioners and learners to function as thoughtful,

reflective, active and continually learning agents of change. In fact the conceptual framework behind this programme is self-awareness and the interviewee claimed that one of the outcomes of the programme was in fact increased insight. Due to this the interviewee claimed that he learned to accept feedback from others and try to improve according to feedback received. It has also assisted him to analyse his attitude in relation to everyday circumstances.

‘Ghenitni hafna li kont naf li għandi xi haġa tajba imma hemm xi haġa li rrid nirrangaha’

‘It has helped me to identify the fact that I had positive aspects but also others that needed redressing’.

Attitudes can be an inheritance of various factors such as genetic or environmental. Sometimes an individual’s behaviour is determined by his attitude even though constraints might keep us from behaving in ways that are consistent with the way we have been brought up to believe is ‘right’. There is evidence however that “people who are more aware of their attitudes are more likely to behave in ways that are consistent with those attitudes” (Atkinson & Hilgard’s, 2003, p.663). In a study a Halloween trick-or-treaters were left alone to help themselves to candy. They were asked to take only one piece but 34% disobeyed. However when a full-length mirror was positioned in a way that the children could see themselves and thus be more aware of their actions, the number of disobeying children dropped to only 12%. The mirror therefore served the purpose of making the children more self-focused and this fact led them to behave in a more acceptable manner.

People tend to focus their attention on external factors because self-reflection might bring into light our personal shortcomings. To deal with this discrepancy we tend to alienate ourselves on work and other activities to avoid turning inwards. Perhaps this is also the reason why people are so occupied nowadays. Self-reflection at times brings out things that we would rather ignore. The interviewee in fact pointed out that one of the good points of the programme was in his opinion the ability to cause them to reflect and think about their lives.

‘Kont taġtina ċertu homework li konna nkunu rridu naħsbu fih filgħaxija...għax jekk taħseb tghin hafna hux li tirrifletti’

‘You used to give us kind of homework and we used to have to think about it in the evening....because when you think, it helps you to reflect’

Getting to know one’s strengths and weaknesses can be too much for a person to handle. Sometimes we lack the courage to face facts and we find it easier to run away from them. Carver and Scheier (1981) as quoted in Brehm et al. (1999, p.73) state that “the solution chosen depends on whether people think they can reduce their self-discrepancy, and whether they are pleased with the progress they make once they try”. The interviewee proudly stated that the programme benefitted him and other inmates he had come into contact with behind the gates.

‘Il-messaġġ wassaltu...jien per eżempju ħadtu u hemm hafna nies oħra li ħaduh għax jien iltqajt ma’ nies oħra wkoll’

‘You delivered the message...I got it and there are many others who got it too because I have met others’

Therefore ‘shaping up’ and behaving in ways that reduce self-discrepancies is possibly one of the best solutions for crime reduction. However every individual

has his own understanding of shaping up. Research supports the idea that self-awareness leads people to behave in ways that are either consistent with the personal values or with socially accepted ones (Gibbons, 1990 as quoted in Brehm et al. 1999).

The interviews themselves too proved to be empowering as both the practitioner and the inmates were involved to work together towards a positive change. Therefore participatory action research does not wait for policy makers to do something about the findings but action can be employed instantaneously by researcher and participants themselves.

4.2.3 Self-Evaluation of Implementation of Programme

Following the interviews with an ex prison inmate and another who had never participated in the programme it was decided that the same topics will be utilised for the ten week programme however there was the possibility of past participants joining up again. Hence the activities were changed and thus past participants could embark on a newly designed programme. Prior to starting with sessions an explanation regarding the importance of commitment was explained to inmates. It was crucial that if they were to provide feedback at the end of the sessions they had to be knowledgeable about the content.

The techniques adopted aimed at allowing inmates to connect the sessions to life experiences. Instead of the traditional methodology of teaching development of skills, inmates learned through energisers, fun activities and tasks. Their learning

was then encouraged to be applied immediately to their everyday context and even though they exhibited resistance at first, they learned to view the benefits of developing the social skills communicated to them during the ten week programme. Lyon et al. (2000) as quoted by Ashkar and Kenny (2008: 506) reported that “most saw prisons as a dislocating experience unconnected to their lives outside and were critical of the lack of preparation for life back in the community”. Therefore an effort was made to relate the sessions to life both inside as well as outside the prison walls.

An evaluation of every session implemented follows. As stated earlier a journal was kept and an evaluative reflection was recorded right after every session. This method ensured accuracy as the immediate impressions were referred to when the revised programme was being designed.

4.2.3a Communication

Bornstein et al. (1979, p.120) claimed “that individuals who came into conflict with the law may be deficient in appropriate interpersonal skills is not a new concept”. It should therefore be noted that the link between lack of interpersonal skills and delinquency has long been established. Such skills can be strengthened using a variety of non-formal techniques. However the most important factor was gaining insight of what participants’ perception of the term was. One of the most practiced techniques during the sessions was always brainstorming for the meaning of the different topics. This assists practitioners to gain some insight on different realities. Communication was in fact the first topic of the programme to

be discussed. Very few could define the word and they had to be guided when the word was brainstormed. Poor communication skills lead to failure to listen to others and if this is not developed one can easily become withdrawn. Through the energisers of communicating non-verbally, they have come to understand the importance of eye contact and other features that enhance communication. Participants felt that it was necessary to include another session regarding authentic dialogue and examining different perspectives. They suggested that the programme should not be limited to ten weeks but should be prolonged. More sessions about these topics were considered for the prolonged programme as it is believed that developing further the interest to listen to others and examining the realities of others would assist in the reintegration and resettlement.

An attempt to bridge sessions together was always made. Continuous reflection was demanded even from the participants' side and the sessions always started by asking participants about the previous session and what opportunities they had to put the skills discussed into practice. Like this they could connect what they were practicing during sessions to their everyday life instantaneously. This approach was necessary since inmates often complain that the skills discussed cannot be utilised in the prison context.

4.2.3b Strengthening Relationships

Lawson, Segrin and Ward (1996) claimed that it is very difficult to initiate relationships with new acquaintances in prison because of the nature of the

restrictions of the institution and the limited contact established by the correctional facility. Inmates tend to forget that their conviction is temporary. Participation in the programme can reap benefits if it instils in young offenders the motivation to seek new understanding and endows them with skills to make sensible choices.

A brainstorm of what constitutes loving relationships and abusive relationships initiated the session entitled strengthening relationships. The more the participants understand what the aims of the sessions are the more willing they seem to take on an active role during sessions therefore for this session the objectives were clearly set out for everyone to ponder on. A discussion on what constitutes healthy or abusive relationships, and the benefits of generating healthy relationships ensued. Through another activity participants were encouraged to develop interpersonal relations by getting to know each other.

4.2.3c Self-Control

Cann, Falshaw and Friendship write about Reasoning and Rehabilitation and Enhanced Thinking Skills that are cognitive skills programmes which attempt to address maladaptive thinking patterns and aim to teach offenders particular cognitive skills which enable them to think and behave in a pro-social manner. Amongst the targets included they mention “self-control, problem solving and reasoning skills, social perspective-taking, critical reasoning, assertiveness and

emotional control” (2005, p.169). Lack of self-control contributes to maladaptive behaviour. The self-control theory holds that people with low self-control are unable to delay gratification and hence are more prone to engage in criminal behaviour in order to satisfy immediately their needs. Assisting young offenders to consider the consequences of their actions was therefore deemed important and one of the sessions addressed what was considered a limitation of offenders by the researcher. Low self-control people are focused on themselves therefore the programme also focuses on communication, building relationships and acceptance in order that sensitivity towards others is fostered.

Self-control is associated with success upon release. It impacts areas such as self-esteem, interpersonal skills and emotional responses. The various areas where self-control can be lacking were highlighted during the session. As reinforcement, activities which emphasise the necessity of self-control were utilised. According to the feedback received relevant, enjoyable activities have increased the motivation of participants hence fun activities were always the core of the content.

Participants admitted having poor self-control however when discussing issues like getting into fights and irresponsible sex they tend to boast about their failings instead of trying to come to terms with them. Hence prompts were utilised during the session to bring into light the long term consequences of lack of self-control. Gottfredson and Hirschi defined self-control as “the tendency of individuals to pursue short-term gratification without consideration of the long-term consequences of their acts” (1990, p.1330). They argue that lack of self-

control is not only one of the major causes of crime but also contributes to other similar anti-social behaviour. The self-control theory views the “motivation to crime as invariant, based on the assumption that pleasures gained from crime are equally obvious and attractive to all” however “the tendency to consider the long-term consequences of action alternatives at the point of decision making, is the primary source of individual differences” according to the theory (1990, p.1327 to 1330). Gottfredson and Hirschi state that individuals lacking in self-control are usually more risk taking, adventurous, short-sighted in terms of consequences, impulsive and insensitive to other people’s feelings.

4.2.3d Self-Esteem

The correlation between self-esteem and delinquency has been widely studied with evidence suggesting that the way people act depends largely on the way they view themselves. Good behaviour therefore follows from a good self-concept. Zimmerman et al. (1997) quoted in Santrock (2005, p.176) stated that low self-esteem can develop in many problems like “depression, suicide, anorexia nervosa, delinquency and other adjustment problems”. Emergent results of a scientific study exhibited that “delinquent or deviant behaviour may even have enhancing effects on self-esteem” (Wells, 1989, p.248). Strengthening self-esteem through advantageous factors was therefore felt important and thus incorporated in the ten week programme.

Harter (1990) discussed the importance of lack of self-esteem's contribution to offending. She insisted that when young people do not measure up in the eight domains that self-esteem assesses they will feel the need to enhance their self-esteem in other domains. An attempt in other areas of competence is made and this sometimes includes non-conventional ways and means. Therefore young offenders were also guided to be positive and identify the beautiful characteristics in others so as to get positive feedback and enhance their self-esteem.

It is very hard for inmates to identify beautiful characteristics in others and look into each other's eyes and speak about each other's positive characteristics. Activities centred on guiding them to learn to identify the positive characteristics in themselves in order to be able to recognise those of others. Hence they encouraged inmates to reflect on their positive attributes. Low self-esteem is often accompanied by lack of motivation so a discussion on competences and possible ways of expressing oneself through one's capabilities ensued allowing them to ponder on their positive attributes and speaking about them. By being positive and identifying the beautiful characteristics in others it is probable that positive feedback is bounced back. Through this positive feedback, self-esteem can be enhanced.

4.2.3e Resiliency/ Dealing with Failures

In view of the fact that young people may experience vulnerability to delinquency, the National Youth Policy (2010-2013) lays emphasis on 'the need

to foster resilience and self-efficacy in young people'. Resilience is the quality that allows individuals to come out of experiences that can be devastating even stronger than before or perhaps just bouncing back from bad experiences and picking up from where one has left. Perhaps the latter is a more realistic yardstick for young people serving a prison sentence due to the fact that problems to integrate in society may still be encountered. The National Youth Policy clearly states that resilience needs to be fostered. Hence this leads us to understand that resilience is not considered something that one is born with. It is more of a process which can be learned. It is understood that every individual has different ways and means of incorporating different experiences to foster resilience. Different institutions such as the family, school and the community all contribute to make resilience more likely to be fostered.

Richardson quoted in Henderson et al. (1999) defines resiliency as the "process and experience of adapting to disruptive, opportunistic, stressful, challenging, or informative life prompts in a way that provides the individual with more protective and coping skills and knowledge than prior to the disruption" (1995, p.31). Disruptions are encountered by everybody in the course of a lifetime hence coping mechanisms are an asset to all and sundry particularly those who have been incarcerated since society might hinder their reintegration.

Richardson and Gray, quoted in Henderson et al. postulate that "consciously choosing how one responds to life's experiences is key to instilling and finding control in life and assists in resilient integration of these experiences" (1999, p.35). They asserted that there are three ways of responding to life's challenges.

One can feel defeated and give up, one can get past a challenge and return to one's comfort zone or last but not least, learn from the experience and become endowed with skills to deal with life's challenges. The latter resonates with the aim of the session which was to deal with challenges and make the right choices.

Flexibility is much desired in the prison context. Since the trip into the inmates' past caused discomfort it was immediately abandoned and charting one's life ensued.¹⁰ This activity permitted offenders to reflect on their life in order to explore how the shortcomings can be transformed. The uselessness of the 'banking concept of education' (Freire; 1993) emerged when participants exhibited annoyance when a lecturing stance was momentarily adopted. Innovative activities are much more effective.

4.2.3f Dignity

Waldron (2007) focuses on the role of dignity as the foundation of human rights while Habermas (2010) directs his attention to dignity as the moral substance of human rights (Misztal, 2012) however Kant remains the major theorist of dignity. The latter according to Misztal viewed dignity as a sign of an 'end in oneself' and associated this foundational idea with human capacity. Kant stated that 'dignity is an absolute inner value all human beings possess' and he even goes on to say that "humanity itself is a dignity for a man cannot be used merely as a means by any man but must be used at the same time as an end" (2012, p.102). No matter

¹⁰ A line graph was used to record the highs and lows of one's life.

the crime committed educators must assist offenders to maintain or in some cases restore dignity. Waldron (2007) as quoted in Misztal (2012) asserts that “when a person’s dignity is not respected, what is challenged is the reality of his or her existence for others”. Therefore the value of the person must never be undermined.

Inmates often complain that the way they are spoken to by prison wardens is appalling. This fact might have negative consequences on the person’s dignity. Besides when they are back out in the community offenders tend to be looked at as lesser beings. Instead of expecting to be respected by being courteous and respectful inmates turn to strength and masculinity to earn esteem. Hence the importance of insisting that esteem and respect should be expected and that learning to respect others paves the way for being respected. Pinker (2008) as quoted in Misztal in fact states that “dignity is a phenomenon of human perception; some features of people trigger ascription of worth and the perception of dignity elicits a response in the perceiver” (2012, p.109).

A mind map of characteristics which constitute respect and others that constitute lack of respect created the space for participants to discuss and conclude in a way that brought together the aims of the activities. It must be acknowledged that difficulties are often encountered in the prison context as opportunities to practice the skills gained are at times disrupted. Nevertheless offenders are continuously encouraged to foster a better attitude among each other as this also assists in the preparation for life beyond the prison gates.

4.2.3g Acceptance

The outcomes up to the seventh session exhibited that participants were reporting positively to the content of the programme and some were reporting changes in their attitude. They also remarked that they were becoming more reflective and that the programme was helping them to explore other people's perspectives. Ashkar and Kenny (2008, p.596) elicit findings from their study which suggest that "incarceration places detainees into a state of readiness for positive change" so advantage should be taken.

Some interesting arguments emerged while facilitating the discussion about acceptance. When they wrote questions to test each other's level of acceptance the examination of the other side of the coin was encouraged. The questions centred mostly on their lived experiences like; would you employ an ex-drug addict? And if your daughter gets pregnant out of wed lock would you accept her partner? These prompts gave way to a deeper reflection which could then be expanded to a wider context. A discussion on other marginalised groups ensued. Their level of acceptance seemed high however posing a few critical questions rather than just accepting their self-rating would have assisted them to think deeper and give a more truthful rate of acceptance.

A reflection on the acceptance of differences ensued. The level of tolerance of other people's points of view and the flexibility in accommodating different

customs, needs, backgrounds and situations were examined. Respect for the individual as a person was encouraged even because of the diversity of the prison population. Observations indicate that inmates form cliques continuously hence the relevance of this topic stands out.

Suggestions by participants were utilised when the lyrics of a song where acceptance is the core message was presented to them for reflection. Rehabilitative programmes should take the participants' preferences in consideration because only when participants owe the programme can they benefit from it. The inclusion of music was in fact suggested by an interviewee before the ten week programme started.

4.2.3h Time Management

Based on the assumption that the proverb 'idle hands are the devil's workshop' holds true a session on time management was included. It is believed that the more offenders engage in pro-social activities and the less time they have hanging out the better they will manage to suppress their criminal urges. The prison culture requires many different coping mechanisms. Young offenders usually have nothing to do so most of their time is spent watching TV, playing X box and talking among themselves. Boredom is not uncommon and perhaps this creates the urge to experiment with illicit substances. Encouraging inmates to set up an effective time management plan was therefore felt necessary. Prioritising

is the fundamental step to successful time management. Awareness on catching oneself wasting time was also raised.

Educators tend to underestimate young offenders' capabilities at times. In fact when challenged they come up with amazingly creative ideas. Through the slogans to pass a message to young people regarding time management these ideas were expressed. A pie chart exhibiting how young offenders are actually spending their time was also effective in making them aware of the large amount of time they spend sleeping and talking to each other. However a question that ought to be asked is if inmates have enough opportunities to make better use of their time.

According to a study by Ashkar and Kenny (2008) incarceration places offenders in a position of readiness for change towards a conventional life. Ashkar and Kenny continue to suggest that rehabilitative programmes should take advantage of this opportunity by providing a wide range of treatment according to the individual's needs while they are incarcerated. Among these they mention "offence specific treatment, psychological treatment, counselling, educational, vocational training, social skills training, anger management and problem solving" (Ashkar and Kenny, 2008, p.596). It is also the responsibility of prison administration to manage time in order for all necessary programmes to be implemented with offenders.

4.2.3i Self-Efficacy

Allred, Harrison and O'Connell state that self-efficacy has important implications for behaviours in a variety of life domains and as Gist and Mitchell (1992) put it, it involves "the beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (2013, p.212). Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls, 1997 in Allred et al. (2013) exhibited how a group can share beliefs in their capacity to be change agents. They explain how Bandura's (2000) social cognitive theory suggests that "contexts that give rise to self-efficacy may also contribute to the emergence of another form of human agency, namely collective agency or efficacy" (2013, p.213). For this reason it was deemed necessary that this attribute be enhanced through a session which entailed mainly the recognition of one's talents.

Prisoners are among the most stigmatised groups in a society. It is therefore possible for them to start believing that they are good at nothing. Bandura (1990) as quoted in Allred et al. (2013, p.213) stated that "over the life course, self-efficacy is a highly influential component of the self-concept that is capable of impacting life paths". To draw on their capabilities an exhibition of the participants' artistic talents at St James Cavalier was constantly referred to. The satisfaction on the inmates' faces for having their work appreciated is truly unexplainable. Discussing the capabilities of every individual is important as the levels of self-efficacy depend on success in specific domains. Positive feedback provided by significant others is also important to strengthen the levels of self-

efficacy and for this purpose participants were continuously encouraged and praised for every accomplishment. Every individual was encouraged to create own learning journey but it was also important to assist inmates to recognise their strengths.

4.2.3j Participation

Being active and participative are possible ways of staying away from trouble with the law hence the objective of the session about participation. Basically young offenders were invited to move from the retribution mode to make a contribution to Society. Ashkar and Kenny (2008, p.592) explained how services provided in prison like educational and vocational ones provide inmates with a sense of achievement. They identified “improved self-esteem and a variety of practical skills to enable them to work within the community, as benefits of educational services provided in prison”. Padfield and Maruna (2006, p.347) suggest participation directed according to the different needs of individuals. According to research results it was suggested that responses to rule breaking should be therapeutically directed. They therefore suggest that someone who tests positive to substance use tests might be ordered to participate in addiction programmes and someone who exhibits difficulties keeping appointments might be referred to “life skills courses designed to encourage responsible time-management”. Whatever form the participation takes it should always be directed to assist inmates rehabilitate themselves in order for them to find it easier to reintegrate.

We are many times enfolded by the generic stereotype that inmates do not participate in activities. Conversely most participants were involved in some way or another. Perhaps they lack the required commitment and at times honour other priorities. Therefore the session took a different turning and commitment was discussed. The experience and flexibility of the practitioner need to be employed in such circumstances. One always needs to be prepared to address arising needs.

Underestimation of inmates' capabilities is one thing people working in the field need to be cautious of. Young inmates' ability to think deeply is surprising. It is however necessary to exploit further this attribute. Self-awareness is not always lacking however the circumstances and the opportunities young inmates' encounter result in law breaking. Perhaps they do not always exhibit the will to change their paths but lack of choices would leave even the most law-abiding people no option but to consider unconventional options.

4.2.3k Examining different Perspectives

An additional session was included to the ten week programme after the need to examine the other side of the coin was felt. The aim was to assist participants to reflect on the duties and responsibilities of the prison officials. A role play to examine how inmates are affected by the rough approach of some officials was utilised. Bernfeld et al. (2001, p.275) explained how role play allows newly developed behaviour to be tried and through the feedback received by the

facilitator the newly developed skills can be “fine-tuned and rewarded”. However the need for training of prison officials if the system aims at being reformatory rather than punitive was felt. Nielson (2010, p.317) stated that in order to “maintain security and control, officers depend on the collaboration, good will and some degree of bonding with prisoners”. This is fostered through dialogue and empathy and perhaps if officers interact with young offenders instead of keeping a distance or adopting the authoritative approach they will both learn to see each other’s point of view. Inmates have exhibited effective approaches through role play and this shows that they can be the best indicators of what works. This reaffirms that they must be led to construct themselves as agents of what works.

The programme was concluded by giving inmates a booklet entitled ‘Ten reasons why I should not come back’. They were invited to keep the booklet and reflect on the reasons in the silence of their cells. In conclusion the programme has been successful and it is believed that it has had distinct effects on young participants. In order for the ball to keep on rolling the knowledge and insights gained must be passed on to “an interior leadership structure” (Fine et al., 2009, p.177). The latter in fact state that “participatory researchers have an obligation to find, build and then pass the torch on” (2009, p.177) if they want the action to move forward. Besides practitioners must also have the constant will to discover what works and be practitioners and learners at the same time. Bernfeld et al. (2001, p.200) state that “change is not driven only by knowledge, skills and determination, but also by curiosity”. Raising up reflective enquiries assists

researchers and practitioners to keep on exploring new strategies which work best.

Action Research Phase 3 – Participants’ Evaluation of the Intervention

Phase 3 – 4.3.1 Analysis of Focus Group

At the end of the programme a focus group intended to gather feedback from participants regarding the relevance of the topics and the activities was conducted. This strategy was adopted as the programme aimed at assisting participants to create a tailored ‘learning trip’. If participants can identify what works, the programme can be amended, and a more effective one provided. Hence they were invited to take an active role in identifying what works. Freire’s (1993) philosophy of attempting to enter the world of the participants to get a better understanding of their needs has been adopted. The approach of presenting a project corresponding to my own view of what works was rethought critically and participants were taken on as partners in this action research. Therefore during this study the youth worker was not the only one doing the teaching but participants also contributed both to teaching the practitioner as well as to teach each other through sharing experiences. Freire (1993, p.80) described this as a joint responsibility for a “process in which all grow”. It was also hoped that the development of self-awareness through introspective thinking would assist participants to think and put forward some pragmatic suggestions.

One of the first things that emerged in the focus group was that for most participants the circle time and group activities were a new experience. This is evidence that more exposure for the acquisition of different kinds of skills is

needed. They explained how the discussions have brought them closer together and how they used to continue discussing long after the sessions were over.

‘Kif ġejna dan il-programm ġejna ħafna close ta’ xulxin, bdejna niċċajjaw u ġieli ċċattajna fuq xi affarijiet li konna nilagħbu hawnhekk.....hemm barra kulhadd għalih’.

‘When we started this programme we became closer, we started joking and there were times when we joked about games we had done here...out there everyone lives in isolation’.

However some inmates remarked again about certain activities which they considered childish. The idea of utilising the non-formal method would have been discarded had they agreed but some considered the activities fun. The idea of explaining the objectives of the activities before, or simply employing more discussions instead of the activities was pondered on. The disparity in feedback was however an indication that a continuous attempt in finding what is fitting should be adopted. This is because inmates are not just one homogeneous group but they all have different needs and preferences. One thing that could be done in order for inmates to be really included in the learning process is to start every session with an identification of needs and discuss methods which address the needs identified. I appreciate however that this can only be done after a few sessions together to be able to get an understanding of the group’s dynamic and for them to be able to recognise their needs and articulate them.

During the focus group it was a pleasure to hear participants reminding each other the activities we had had for different topics but perhaps all the participants of this action research need to awaken critical awareness and enhance the thinking process. Freire (1993) described these characteristics as the key to

liberation however during the focus group the need for participants to dig deeply in their thoughts was felt. It was hard to raise critical questions because sometimes concern about involving everyone in the discussion took precedence. As stated earlier Freire (1993) asserts that our educational system does not encourage critical thinking and it is still very traditional in terms of imparting knowledge and making students passive entities who adapt themselves to the world. Drawing on Freire's philosophy it becomes important to advocate for young offenders to become agents of change and not perpetrators of conditioned behaviour. Critical thinking might also be a possible solution for the high percentage of second time offenders to be reduced¹¹.

A participant disclosed that this time was the third time for him in prison. He described how prison has made him a tougher person and after serving his sentence the first time he was imprisoned, he immediately relapsed. He went on to say that now that he has got a longer sentence relapse is more probable because prison has become like a home to him. He acknowledged that even though opportunities were presented to them the ultimate effort must come from within the individual. Such declarations however place more responsibility on the practitioners as offenders need assistance to arrive at a point where they will be able to make conscientious choices.

'Int għamilt il-parti tiegħek tajjeb ħafna imma mbaġhad minna trid tiġi, il-biċċa l-kbira minna trid tiġi'.

'You have done your part pretty well but ultimately change must come from within'.

¹¹ 75% of offenders are repeat offenders according to Home Affairs Minister Hon. Dr. Emmanuel Mallia (The Times 23rd September 2013)

However this quote resonates with the Freirian philosophy that manifests that in order for change to occur participants must become agents themselves. Freire (1993, p.75) stated that as long as the individual “remains a spectator in the world and not a re-creator the status quo will be maintained”. Freire in fact explained how the banking concept of education makes individuals more passive as it tries to adapt them to the world and make them fit in.

Relapse prevention has both internal as well as external aspects. Internal refers to when the individual himself decides whether he will manage to overcome unconventional desires whilst the external aspect is based more on supervision and control. The fear of relapsing was salient giving an indication that prison has definitely not served the purpose of rehabilitating or preparing offenders for reintegration and resettlement. It was felt that the bars are serving to protect offenders from temptation to relapse rather than providing them with skills to deal with unconventional desires. Souza and Dhani (2010) in fact indicate that according to suggested evidence the way that people adapt to imprisonment influences their post release success. It was perceived that relapse prevention still depends very much on control giving an indication that our prisons are not emancipatory at all.

‘l-ikbar biżgħa tiegħi hi kif noħroġ minn dak il-bieb’.

‘My worst fears are when it is time for me to leave through that door’.

Participants felt that the ten week programme should be extended and they suggested more sessions regarding substance misuse and anger management.

The level of commitment is limited so much so that out of the ten who embarked on this programme only five persevered. Therefore concerns regarding dropout rate if programme had to be extended was pointed out. However participants insisted that having a small group that was really interested as they were can reap unexpected benefits. This communication exhibits how one can learn in dialogue with the participants. Communication with practitioners offers inmates the space where they are no longer just obedient listeners but investigators of beneficial strategies. This transformation is necessary since as one inmate pointed out, in the eyes of prison officials offenders feel that they are nothing more than just prisoners.¹²

‘Hawnhekk tagħmel x’taġħmel xorta ha taqlagħha għax inti hawnhekk priġunier għalihom, hawnhekk qisu speċi tal-aħħar stage fhimt?’

‘Whatever you do in here you will always be reprimanded because in their eyes you are just a prisoner, here it is like the last stage do you understand?’

Freire (1993: 86) was very right in pointing out that ‘the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation’ and one way of doing this is to utilise the time behind bars constructively. Unfortunately presently young offenders spend most of their time with prison guards where orders are plentiful but dialogue is inexistent. Matza (1964) pointed out that criminals all have some contact with conventional others or institutions in the course of their life and they are somehow influenced by this contact. In fact Hirschi’s (1969) social control theory focuses on the social bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. It has been noted that the more the youth worker manages to establish a

¹² Perhaps many of these observations emerged after the researcher’s intensive reading of Freire’s philosophy of Education.

relationship of trust with the participants of the programme the more they seem willing to conform to the conventional way of life. In contrast negative influences have adverse consequences and as one inmate pointed out:

'Bla ma trid dawn tilda taggixxi bhalhom'

Unknowingly you start behaving likewise'

Therefore it is perhaps high time that prisons start considering having youth work practitioners mingling on a daily basis with the inmates. The oppressive stance of the prison guards silences the inmates from questioning and perhaps unknowingly makes them passive. Alternatively through establishing a relationship based on dialogue a climate of mutual trust can possibly be built and transformation can gradually take place.

So far we have only managed to scratch across the surface in reflecting, identifying needs and possibly bringing about a positive change. This has happened from both the practitioner's side as well as the participants'. Critical reflection is a learned process which takes more than just ten weeks to conquer. Awareness raising is however the first big step. I know that the continuous cycle of reflection and action will be perpetually adopted because its benefits in developing critical awareness have been recognised. Therefore this will be a never ending cycle and as long as the programme is conducted the learned cycle of critical reflection and action will continue to take place.

Action Research Phase 4 – Development of a New Programme

Phase 4 - 4.4.1 Practices from another country

Since not many distinctive ideas emerged from the evaluation of the programme it became apparent that some groundwork had to be done by the practitioner. Following a group visit to Cyprus Prison department as part and parcel of the Convicts Liberty Aid Programme, it was decided that contact be made with an official who conducts social skills programmes in prison to discuss and share and thus widen the repertoire of good practices. Similar to Cyprus prisons our local civil prisons were also built by the British in the same century; that is the nineteenth century. Both countries have only one prison and both are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice. Malta and Cyprus are more or less on the same lines in terms of prison population and resources. Therefore it was felt that cooperation with this country could yield feasible results.

Cyprus prison is divided into three sections; there is the closed prison, where detainees are kept under strict security measures, the open prison; where security measures are more lenient and the centre of guidance and out of prison employment where detainees work outside the prison during the day and return to base for the night. This categorisation is very wise since prisoners are prepared in steps for life in the community. In the past young offenders were in the same wings as other offenders but since their entry in the EU, Cyprus prison department had to establish a separate wing for young offenders between the ages of 16 to 21. Locally we have gone a step further by moving the Young

Offenders' section from Corradino to Mtahleb. Only time can measure the benefits of this transition.

Many educational programmes are available to inmates. Among these the interviewee mentioned; Computer, Greek, Russian, Psychology, Mental Health, Dance lessons, Mathematics, Painting, Mosaic, Arts, Cooking and also Fitness lessons which are offered four times a week. Apart from this Cyprus Prison Department cooperated with Neapolis University and created a special programme to meet individual learning needs of young offenders. This programme was offered for two hours a day for two years. A social skills programme is conducted by a social worker every week with sessions having duration of two hours. The social worker who conducts these programmes is also a prison warden. Asked whether it is possible to be a prison official and an educator at the same time he answered that this role actually gives an opportunity for the prison official and the offender to improve their relationship since during lessons the official takes on a different role. It might assist the offender to recognise better the role of the prison wardens and the warden to learn more what the individual needs of the inmates are. He believes that with this kind of interaction communication can be facilitated. Nielson (2010, p.318) highlights some of the difficulties encountered by prison wardens when she states that "the officer's code of conduct provides an ideal for social interaction in an environment that is far from ideal". She continues to say that "painful and straining emotions come with being and working in an intimate and violent environment, like a prison, where relationships, social and personal agendas are not always clear" (Nielson, 2010, p.320). Bosworth and Carrabine (2001, p.501)

also describe prisons as problematic by calling them “sites of great power inequalities”. They state that ‘hierarchies inside prisons exist among staff, between officers and inmates and within the prison population itself’. The role of an educator might assist the prison official and the prisoner to bridge this gap. Sparks et al. as quoted in Bosworth and Carrabine (2001, p.503) in fact state that “prisons cannot be run by coercion alone but rather that the prisoners themselves must, to some extent, comply with the practices and ideas to which they are subject”. However in order for better results to be yielded instead of compliance we should start thinking more in terms of cooperation between prison officials and the prison population.

The number of young offenders participating in the programme provided by Cyprus prison department is approximately fourteen to eighteen. Some of the difficulties encountered during these sessions run parallel to our local context. Amongst some of the difficulties mentioned we find; the needs of this specific target group, the different ages (in our case the age bracket is even wider because it is 15 to 21), high levels of illiteracy, different native languages, different cultures and disparity in relation to crime committed. More than just the voluntary few hours allotted are therefore required for better results to be yielded.

A different classroom layout is usually utilised for social skills programmes. The methodology also differs from other academic oriented lessons however participants have got used to the non-formal methods utilised and cooperate during activities. Pictures are often utilised to overcome the language barrier of some foreign participants. Also when group work is intended the facilitator takes

language, culture and relationships into account and divides accordingly. Unlike our local situation foreigners stay on board and participate as much as the locals in these life skills programmes.

The psychology department of Neapolis University in Pafos also conducted research to support the education of young inmates in Cyprus prison. The aim was to examine the educational needs of young inmates in order to design an educational programme. Post graduate students' endeavour was to learn what young inmates think about the skills they intended to teach and whether they could help inmates pursue what they wanted in their life. Bernfeld et al. (2001) suggest that negotiating the curriculum with the learners enhances motivation so perhaps one of the practices running parallel with the programme should be discussing learning needs and preparing accordingly. It is easier however for an insider who is in constant contact with young offenders to adopt this approach.

Similarly the social skills programmes in Cyprus aim at assisting young offenders to express their feelings and thoughts. Subsequently many new skills are acquired during their participation in the programme mainly expressing one's emotions and the development of self-confidence and self-awareness. Wells (1989, p.227) stated that "numerous programmes for prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency are based on the premise that deviant and antisocial behaviours are products of devalued selves". Wells even stated that self-confidence along with other factors should be included in successful intervention programmes. It has also been communicated that these skills are immediately put into practice when they have family visits and even among inmates themselves.

However a more individualised approach was deemed necessary in order for inmates to be reintegrated successfully in society. In more resourceful countries like France the ratio of educators for every inmate is 2:1. Whilst the interviewee acknowledged that such schemes require substantial amount of financial resources he pointed out that if prisons manage to rehabilitate offenders the benefits will outweigh the costs since offenders will be able to make themselves employable and increase government revenues through taxation thus contribute towards society.

4.4.2 Development of a New Programme

Even though participants asked for more sessions and the new programme doubled in duration, much space has been allowed for participants to put their needs and suggestions forward so that they truly become partners in their own learning. They are keen to learn together with the youth worker therefore prospective methodologies were also discussed to increase the ownership of the programme. Discussions have also been given more prominence because it is believed that through these participants can be assisted to learn from each other and through reflective prompts even enhance their critical thinking.

Freire (2001, p.49) stated that “to know how to teach is to create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge rather than to be engaged simply in a game of transferring knowledge” and inspired by Freire this phrase was kept in mind and given priority in the new programme. The new programme does not

treat the practitioner as the 'banker' and the learners as the 'recipients' but considers them partners in this learning experience. In hindsight it can be said that this method sparked more interest but since the majority of the changes were immediately implemented few ideas were left for the renewed programme. It has however doubled in the number of sessions and there is a degree of continuity between one session and another.¹³

It was decided that an identification of aspirations and fears of embarking on the programme will be undertaken at the very onset. These reflections will be exposed for scrutiny by individuals themselves for the duration of the programme so that continuity is ensured. Another emergent need was that of setting rules. If these are set by participants themselves the chances of being abided by are greater and the possibility of the smoother running of the sessions is increased. Due to the fact that participants asked for more sessions regarding resistance and anger management, sessions were prepared to address these needs. A session on how to make a curriculum vitae and one's comportment during an interview were perceived to increase the employment probabilities of individuals thus easing one's reintegration and resettlement. A particular session aims at instilling the curiosity for discovering learning needs and these will be explored together utilising Freire's philosophy as the conceptual framework. Other topics addressed in previous programmes will be adopted again since feedback about these was positive however due to the possibility of having past participants in the programme again all prepared activities have been changed. Ideas for activities and energisers were taken from seminars attended and observations of

¹³ A plan of all the sessions of the renewed programme can be found in appendix B

practices from other countries however these have all been adapted for the context where the sessions will be conducted.

Chapter 5 – Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Limitations of the Action Research

Researchers face a multitude of difficulties when conducting a study in prison. However although the hindrances are numerable they are definitely not insurmountable. The Young Offenders' Unit which during the programme was within the Corradino Correctional facility is obviously a contained location and access is not easily granted. Besides for security reasons the programme and the resources had to be approved beforehand and sometimes approval for the latter was withheld. Consequently much thought had to be given to planning interesting and innovative sessions without the need to go through superfluous complications. However this factor limits the practitioner from providing truly motivating informal sessions.

Corradino Correctional facility houses young people from fifteen to twenty-one years. When the study was conducted there were seventeen inmates in all, nine of whom were under arrest. The fact that they were under arrest implies that they could be released any time and in fact out of the ten who embarked on the programme only five completed it and participated in the focus group. A foreigner who had embarked on the programme dropped out perhaps due to not being able to participate fully in the discussions. Even though everything was translated for the purpose of keeping him on board he still felt left out when participants discussed in a language he did not understand. However his

nonattendance could also be the result of a contagious disease he had contracted during the programme.

The flexibility of a practitioner in the prison context is much desired. This is due to the fact that inmates have a certain schedule which cannot be obstructed. Therefore the schedule must be discussed with prison officials and adhered to all the time. Due to the dynamic of the group an observer would have been of great assistance. Essentially both the practitioner who is doing the research and an observer who assists the researcher by passing on meaningful observations should be present for the sessions. This is due to the fact that while conducting a session certain group dynamics are very easily overlooked. However due to the restrictions in allowing access this was also not possible.

The concerns and wishes of the respondents were highlighted through a focus group so that a renewed programme reflecting the needs of inmates could be drawn. Perhaps one to one intensive interviews would have provided the researcher with more significant data however due to admittance purposes it was felt that it would be better to incorporate the focus group with the concluding session. A longitudinal study on the other hand would have provided the researcher with data regarding effectiveness of the sessions. However this also had to be ruled out due to time constraints. As an alternative the effectiveness was partly measured by the inmates' level of participation during the weekly sessions and through an interview with an ex-prisoner.

The practice was documented by means of a self-evaluative journal which also incorporated an analysis of every session conducted. However it was difficult for the practitioner to keep accurate and consistent observations of the entire session due to the many disruptions one encounters when working with such a group. The dynamic of the group also required that adjustments be made to the programme prepared.¹⁴ Flexibility and perseverance are required attributes when working in such a setting however with endurance and understanding rather satisfactory results can be achieved.

5.2 Service Development

The National Youth Policy (2010 – 2013) aims to ensure the reintegration of young people who experience contact with the justice system. It also states that the state recognises that ‘young people are often victims of crime and require the necessary support services’ (Policy Statement No. 3.10.1.4). One of the strategies proposed to address this need is a ‘rehabilitative and educational programme for young offenders’ (3.10.2.5). However rehabilitative programmes for young offenders must continuously be examined to see if they are meeting the young people’s needs. 75% of incarcerated individuals are re-offenders therefore whether the current rehabilitative and educational services provided are effective, ought to be given due consideration. The participatory action research embarked on demonstrates that practices which take on participants as partners in learning are more motivating and hence they are recommended. However different

¹⁴ Certain activities require a number of people to participate. Since the number of participants has dropped certain activities had to be restructured to suit the group size.

strategies should continuously be examined as offenders are a diverse group and new needs constantly emerge.

The service of a full time youth worker in prison is also advisable. Youth work is about establishing a relationship built on trust. When the bond is established, participation is facilitated. Besides practices such as the ones this action research entailed can yield better results if conducted by an insider. Reflections on previous actions that involve continuous self-evaluations enable self-development and pave the way for enhancement.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

Originally the study was embarked on since a practical project which benefitted both the practitioner as well as the participants was preferred over traditional dissertations which many times end up stowed away without bringing about any changes. An action research in fact makes immediate improvement in one's professional practice since it allows for simultaneous reflection and action. The needs of inmates were explored during the programme and immediate action was taken after reflecting on the action to provide yet another improved action. Therefore the prisoners' experiences and suggestions themselves maximised the relevance of the programme and transformed it into an emancipatory one.

Although a deficiency in critique and creativity was detected and this limited the participants' recommendations, the action research has developed the participants' reflective competences. Therefore generally speaking the most important outcomes of this study were achieved. Time will tell whether more desirable, positive outcomes will be achieved, however due to the limited timespan of this study measurement of success in that regard is not possible. Future retrospective studies which aim to discover the impact of such programmes on detainees are therefore recommended.

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Communication

Session 1

Introduction: Start by introducing yourself and explaining the role of a youth worker. I also explain briefly the programme that we would be following in the coming weeks and carry on with name game to learn participants' names.

Step 1: Introduce today's topic which is communication. Brainstorm what comes to mind when the word communication is heard. Ask them to draw a symbol to signify communication. Discuss these symbols highlighting the importance of listening.

Step 2: Discuss how rare it is nowadays to find someone who really listens. We hear the news but we don't listen. We hear someone giving instructions but we don't listen. The words Hear and Listen are written down on the chart. We hear because we have no choice but to listen requires that you make a choice.

Step 3: Five of them are given some instructions on cards. They have to ask for assistance without using verbal communication. A discussion ensues. We need to learn to listen to both the verbal communication as well as other forms of communication. Discuss the difficulties they encountered while doing this exercise.

Step 4: There are various ways of communicating. Use the four colours of permanent markers to communicate which colour is chosen. One volunteer

stands at one end and the facilitator at the other. The volunteer shows a colour to the last person in the row and this person has to send a message to the one in front of him to indicate the colour chosen. The first person in the row picks the colour chosen from the facilitator. The group can discuss again if their objective is not reached and if they feel that they need better communication.

Discuss if talking about feelings and emotions is difficult for them. How can it help them if they come to terms with their emotions and feelings? How disappointments of the past can get at them if they do not open up and deal with them with professionals or any other person they trust.

Step 5: The farmer from Mosta activity is conducted. Then process according to step six below.

Step 6: Explain how talking about other people on the other hand hurts feelings. Mention gossip and the damage it does. Discussion on how something can be interpreted in different ways by different people.

Self -Evaluation of Communication Session

Following the interviews with an ex prison inmate and another who never participated in the programme it was decided that the same topics will be utilised. However since it was unknown to me who the participants would be the activities were changed completely in case someone from the previous year would decide

to participate again. In fact by the third session two particular participants from last year showed up again.

The fact that it is important that participants attend all ten sessions and give feedback in focus group at the end of the sessions was explained to inmates however they were reminded that participation is purely voluntary and they would never be forced to attend sessions. In fact three of the inmates left the room when they were given an explanation of what the programme entails. I fully understand their scepticism as they are foreigners and perhaps felt that since participation was predominantly by local participants they would encounter difficulties fitting in. The recruitment letter was read to them and consent forms distributed.

I started the session with an ice breaker because I felt that participants were a little cynical. Participants were asked to arrange their chairs in a circle and to stand behind their chairs. They had to lean the chair forward and move to the right and catch their neighbour's chair when I clapped once and to the left when I clapped twice. When someone's chair fell they had to remove themselves and their chair from the circle. This proved to be a good start as they had a good laugh and immediately seemed eager to participate. Being enthusiastic about ice-breakers and involvement also helps pave the way and with such a group it is important that they feel comfortable enough before discussions. I tried to encourage three of them who were exceptionally quiet to participate however I understand that allowing time is many times the best solution.



Communication was included in the programme because it was perceived that inmates lack this particular skill. In fact as the photo above illustrates very few knew how to describe the word and they had to be guided when brainstorming the word. In fact I noticed that they don't listen to one another and immediately start talking among themselves when someone is talking. I believe that further improvement in this area is necessary therefore communication will be followed by two sessions of authentic dialogue when the programme is revised. Perhaps even if it is longer than ten weeks, if enough creative activities are included they will not tire of it.

I had to do away with the last activity as the discussion took longer than intended. However I feel that one should not disrupt the development of conversations. In conclusion I think that the session was appreciated and in many ways effective. In fact one of the guys who had not participated very much during the activities stayed on to self-disclose. I felt that I had won his trust so the first step to building a relationship with these young people was established.

Relationships – Getting to Know each other

Session 2

Introduction: Now that names have been learned a round robin to call out the names together with a name of a country starting with the same letter is done. As an introduction to getting to know each other the game ‘The sun shines’ is played. The statements used will aim at giving a better understanding of each other and assist the group to get to know each other better.

Step 1: Circle Time: *X'taħsbu li hija mportanti biex relazzjoni ta' ħbiberija tkun b'saħħitha?* (what do you think is important for a relationship to be strong and healthy?) The procedure used in authentic dialogue is used to give time for each participant to listen to other participants' views.

They are divided in groups of three and given a drawn ladder. They are asked to place the most basic characteristics like '*tista' tafdah*' (can be trusted) at the bottom and going on to place other characteristics which strengthen a relationship according to the order they consider as important. The characteristics are distributed but they are also invited to add to those characteristics if there are other things which they consider important in a relationship.

Step 2: After 15 minutes a circle is formed and each group presents his conclusions to others.

Step 3: You live together but can you really say that you know each other? The next exercise aims at assisting in the development of reflection skills and to help you get to know each other better. Reflection cards are placed in a bag. Each YP takes a prompt, reflects and answers in the most sincere way as possible.

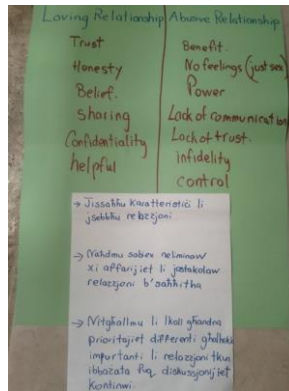
Step 4: Play a game to find out things about each other. Have everyone sit in a circle except one person who stays in the middle. The person in the middle says something that they would like to do (i.e. I would like to drive a Go Kart). All others who have done that have to get up and find an empty seat from someone who has got up. The person stuck without a seat is now in the middle.

Step 5: A discussion on why it is important to socialise and get to know others ensues. No man is an island and by developing social skills it will be easier to integrate in the community once inmates serve their sentence.

Self-Evaluation of Strengthening Relationships Session

An effort is made so that sessions are bridged together so participants were reminded about the previous session and asked for continuous reflection. I insisted on this following the feedback I received from an ex inmate who said that reflection on the sessions has helped him come to terms with his weaknesses. In fact inmates were asked to keep the sheet on which they wrote the characteristic which constitutes a loving relationship and an abusive relationship which they consider they owe. They were asked to keep the sheet and reflect on what they had written and even try to discover ways how they can improve. The

learning objectives of the session were also highlighted from the beginning so as to keep participants focused on these objectives.



One of the things participants always argue about is that the skills inside the prison are different from the skills they would need outside. They seem to forget that their conviction is temporary. Participation in the programme can reap benefits if it instils in offenders the motivation to seek new understanding and skills to make sensible choices for themselves. These choices will come in useful to life beyond the prison gates as well. However I try to keep their agendas in mind as much as possible because I believe that this is the first step to motivation.

For this second session participants seemed more willing to take on an active role. They were confident enough to make their point and the running of the session was even smoother than the previous session. This put me in a better position to think and throw reflective prompts. I tend to concentrate on keeping order and become confused on the steps of the session when they become rowdy so this is a limitation I have to work on because in such a setting disruption is the order of the day. I need to work on including more the foreigner as I tend to get carried away by activities and fail to translate. I also think that discussions and

activities are well balanced as the level of interest was high at all times. They even asked the warden if they could stay a bit longer when the session came to an end.

Self-Control

Session 3

Introduction: Self-control is discussed. Young people are asked what they think constitutes self-control. They will rate what they think their level of self-control is out of a score of 10. Sum up that better self-control is in fact associated with success in areas such as:

- Self-esteem
- Interpersonal skills
- Emotional responses

Step 1: Some time for young people to explore behaviours is given. The following prompts are read giving young people time to reflect on their weaknesses. One can lack self-control in various areas such as:

- Eating too much
- Drinking too much
- Using substances to alter state of the mind
- Spending too much
- Getting into fights
- Letting material acquisition rule the head
- Unprotected Sex

Step 2: Lack of self-control can have long term consequences. Discuss using the prompts which follow in the next page.

Step 3: Tape is stuck on the floor to form a straight line. Everybody stands on that line and they are asked to reposition themselves according to the size of the shoes, age, prison sentence. They cannot speak but have to use gestures to indicate where they should stand.

Step 4: Write the following on sticky notes which are stuck on someone's back. He has to go around asking questions to identify what is written on his back. The answers to these questions can only be yes or no. Self-control is required for this activity.

- I am the prime minister
- I am a dancer
- I am a wealthy man
- I am an orchestra director
- I am a TV Presenter
- I am a beggar
- I am a policeman
- I am a sexy lady

The following situations are discussed:

You are at the village feast together with some friends. You're having some drinks but you know that you have had more than enough. You feel that if you have more you will get drunk.....what do you do?

You're depressed because you have just been told off. A friend passes the same old joke. What do you do? Do you snap at him and let it out on him?

You are out with your girlfriend when another guy passes a remark. Do you ignore him or do you get into fights over silly remarks?

You've eaten enough but there's another burger left over by someone. Do you ask if anyone wants it and if not you take it, do you just eat it or do you tell yourself that you've had enough?

You're feeling depressed because things haven't been turning out too well for you lately. Someone offers you an illegal solution. Do you accept to alter the state of the mind or seek assistance?

You know that you have just got your pay cheque. The next pay is in two weeks' time. Do you plan how to spend your money or do you just buy anything you come across?

Self-Evaluation Self-Control Session

One of the major challenges anyone working in the prison setting will encounter is managing to instil commitment. Even though it was clearly explained from day one that whoever enrolls in the programme has to attend all sessions in order to be able to give feedback about it, inmates still lack the commitment to make it for all sessions. More cooperation with prison staff is needed in this regard. I think that if inmates are not asked to do other chores during the time of the session, it will be easier for them to stick to their commitments.

Since three of the inmates were asked to do other chores it was decided that we wait for the missing participants. I need to have more activities up my sleeve for when such circumstances arise. I had to improvise some activities which paved the way for the topic that was to be discussed. In fact participants could immediately identify the topic for discussion when they were asked what they thought that today's session was about.

A common factor that emerged in today's session was that they all admitted to having very poor self-control. I need to insist on having them listen to each other's views though during discussions as while discussing the prompts I prepared they tended to interrupt and failed to exhibit interest in what their fellow inmates were saying. I also tend to lose concentration when this happens and I feel I cannot empathise under such circumstances.

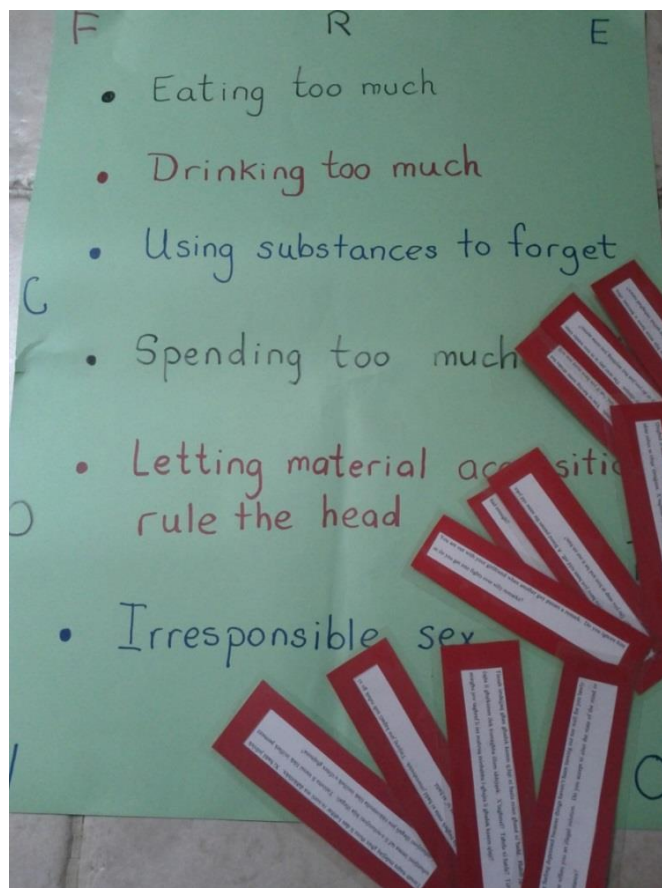
Sometimes I feel that when discussing issues like getting into fights and irresponsible sex they tend to boast about their failings instead of try to come to terms with them. Perhaps this fact is due to peer pressure which is noticeable in this setting. For this reason participants are encouraged to reflect in the silence of their room. According to feedback from an ex inmate during an interview, reflection ought to be encouraged as this is what has assisted him to think about his life and to get along with others. This is very important as it helps them form a sense of agency.

I feel that the activities were relevant as they gave me the opportunity to draw upon previous sessions as well as today's activities. For the standing in the line according to age, shoe size and prison sentence they were reminded about communication skills and to maintain self-control at all times. Besides it also assisted them to get to know each other better. The yes/no game also put their self-control at test. When they became jittery they were reminded to maintain control and the message was passed in a fun way. This might help them remember more the objectives of the session and according to ex inmate's feedback the fact that games were used helped to increase motivation for participation.

I need to stick to a smaller group because I tend to accept everyone who wants to join. I feel guilty denying them the opportunity to come for the sessions but on the other hand a large group is difficult to manage. By the third session two inmates who had attended last year's sessions asked if they could join the group

again and I hadn't the heart to refuse. Perhaps if these are conducted regularly the number in each group can be even at all times.

Drawing on ex-inmate's feedback I also made it a point to explain my absence for the following week. During the interview he had mentioned that inmates were very disappointed when I did not turn up one particular Wednesday. So I explained to inmates that I had to skip the following week's session and gave them the day when I would be available again to avoid disappointments.



Self-Esteem**Session 4**

Introduction: Speak about last week's session regarding self-control.

Participants are given time to reflect and speak about their experiences.

Introduce today's topic self-esteem.

Ice Breaking Activity: A young person is blindfolded and stands in the middle of a circle. Everybody starts moving clockwise like the minute hand of a clock.

When the word self-esteem is heard everybody has to freeze. The blindfolded person grabs somebody, feels him, guesses who the person is and says something nice about him.

Step 1: Self-esteem is discussed. It is difficult to identify the beautiful characteristics in others if you don't learn to love yourself first. Take good care of yourself and get involved.

Ways of building self-esteem.

Eat Healthy, exercise every day, do something you really enjoy doing every day, spend some time with people who are meaningful to you, have regular check-ups, change negative thoughts to positive ones.

Low self-esteem is often accompanied by lack of motivation. It may feel very hard to do anything. It will help you to feel better about yourself if you do something, even if it is a very small thing. You may want to keep a list of possibilities on hand for those times when you can't think of anything to do. Things like: cleaning out one drawer, washing your room, reading an article or a book you have been wanting to read, drawing a picture of a beautiful flower or a person you love, doing some crafts, asking if you can do some maintenance, sending someone a card, attending lessons you thought were boring or singing a few songs.

Step 2: Participants are encouraged to speak about their accomplishments even if it's as small as making someone happy. They are encouraged to think about the good feeling that washes over them when they manage to do something nice for someone else?

Step 3: Identify your beautiful characteristics. Make an origami cube. Write the characteristics in the space provided. Pair up and play the game. First chose a number and count while moving origami cube. Then you chose a colour and spell while moving the origami cube. Then chose another colour, open to reveal which characteristic the origami cube exhibits. According to characteristic revealed ask the question; do you think I am *****?

Step 4: Participants pair up. They are asked to take on a different role. Eg. Queen and king, man and car, husband and wife, man and dog, teacher and child, policeman and citizen, etc. They act out an improvised act and speak highly of

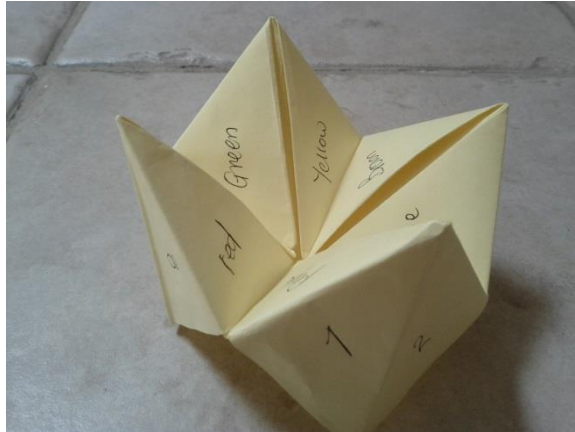
the other person. The aim is to assist the participants to focus on the positive aspects of people.

Conclusion: Seeking positive things is learnt just as we learn how to read and write. We tend to ignore that we live in a society and we need each other to succeed in life. By being positive and identifying the beautiful characteristics in others we will start getting positive feedback and this assists in the development of self-esteem.

Self-Evaluation Self-Esteem

Following the feedback of the programme's past participant when he stated that the programme has assisted him to reflect and think about his life I am stressing the importance of after session reflections a little more. So I always start the sessions by drawing back on past sessions and asking whether they want to share experiences. Self-expression still needs to be developed however.

I was sceptic about today's activity. This is due to the ex-participant's feedback too. He had commented about a particular activity that he considered childish and since I was using an origami cube for this activity I was not sure whether it was the right way to present the session.



They seemed to have enjoyed it although again I got mixed feedback. Although I ponder a lot about what methodology fits best it depends a lot on the preferences of the particular group attending sessions. Bernfeld et al. (2001) after all state that 'effective methods require structured engagement by staff in tasks which are readily accepted as relevant to individual offenders' needs'. I try to be as creative and innovative as possible as I keep in mind that similar programmes run in other institutions and therefore participants have to be motivated by original activities.

I noticed that it is very hard for the inmates to identify beautiful characteristics in others and look into each other's eyes to speak about each other's positive characteristics. They all used the same adjective which was kind and this was the adjective used by the first participant. However they enjoyed being blindfolded and having a guess at who the person they touch is. The interviewee had after all mentioned that these kinds of activities has helped the inmates to develop a bond and made life easier for the duration of the prison sentence.

I am getting the feeling that this ten week programme should serve more to get the overall impression of which skills need to be taught. Therefore this should be

the first phase of the programme. The second phase should then start when these skills are identified. It should entail the level of the skills to be attained and the development of more activities to strengthen these skills. However it is up to inmates to provide such feedback during the focus group.

Resiliency/ Dealing with Failures

Session 5

Introduction: Brainstorm the word Resilience. Everybody writes on a piece of paper what the word resilience means to him. These are all placed in the middle and read one by one. The real explanation of it is read last. *“Il-Kapaċita’ li tqum u tkompli b’ħajtek bħala persuna preparata aktar biex tilqa’ l-isfidi li toffri l-ħajja’* (The capability of bouncing back from negative experience as a more resilient person capable of rising for challenges.)

Step 1: The fact that we all have big dreams and ending up in prison surely wasn’t what they hoped for before it happened is discussed. However achieving goals is often a matter of surviving setbacks and any bad experiences can be translated into knowledge for doing better in the future. Therefore achieving goals can be made feasible by learning from past failures. We cannot eradicate the past but we can surely learn from it and avoid repeating mistakes.

Step 2: Young people are asked to find a comfortable position for a retrospective journey into the past. They are asked to relax and clear their minds. The

following is read; leave behind all negative feelings, breathe in and out. Imagine you are in a garden, by the sea or any other ambience you feel serene in. It's summer so let us pretend we are by the sea. Lie down and feel the softness of the sand beneath you. Feel the sun warming up your body. Hear the waves gently crushing against the shore. Taste the salty sea spray. Feel the grains of the soft sand. You have these senses you should be grateful for. Relax and think about your past. Think about your first day at school. Think about your classmates, your teachers, your guardians. Think about the people who have hurt you. Forgive them. Don't let them ruin the peace you have discovered. Think about the choices you have made. Consider other options. Imagine that you have to choose between two paths. One leads to prison, the other to a healthy happy lifestyle. Stand there and think of the consequences if you take the path that leads to prison. Start walking on the other path. You find education, a good job, love, respect, experiences and opportunities. Life is beautiful. Experience the beauty of this lifestyle. Breathe in, breathe out. You are back on the beach. Feel the beauty of the things around you and carry this beautiful feeling with you throughout the day.

Step 2: They say that it is easier said than done. Hereunder are some guidelines on how one can succeed.

1. Set clear goals.
2. Break what you want to achieve into small steps.
3. Persist to achieve step 1 and celebrate when you achieve it.
4. Continue with the next step and then the next until the ultimate goal is reached.
5. Never give up.

Ice Breaking Game: To teach perseverance the knot game is played. Young people are asked to cross hands and grab someone else's hands. It is important that no one holds the hand of the same person. They are then given time to get untangled. They must persevere.

Step 4: Participants are encouraged to think about their individual failures. Now they are encouraged to think how they can turn that failure into a learning experience and translate it into something positive. Whoever wants to share the experience is allowed time to do so. Next they are asked to chart their life. They are asked to think back as far as they can and draw a line graph to represent their life. They are asked to consider the highest points and the lowest points using the horizontal axis for the age and the vertical levels of points. They can mark the moments of despair, moments of glory and where they are now with highlighter. After they have drawn it they share what it means to them with the group.

Step 5: Now they are asked to think of a character they would choose to be if they had the chance. Everyone will think of a character and give reasons. Eg. A character in a book I would choose would be the priest of The Power and the Glory because he had loads of weaknesses but never gave in. He was known as the Whiskey priest on the run in Mexico in the 1930's. He manages all the same to carry out his duties and perform acts of grace.

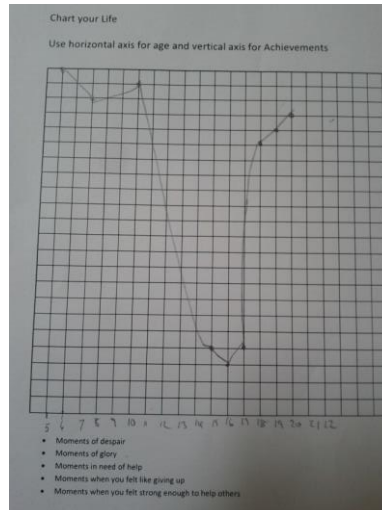
Step 6: End the session by playing the game Giants, dwarfs and wizards. The giants eat the dwarfs, the dwarfs eat the wizards and the wizards eat the giants

just as in real life if we are not resilient we will be swallowed by life's challenges instead of facing them.

Self-Evaluation – Resilience/ Dealing with Failures

Assisting inmates to develop self-awareness is at the core of the programme's aim. Therefore I am always starting sessions by asking participants to reflect upon the past week and narrate experiences of how the previous session has helped them deal with newly encountered circumstances. I believe that much more training is however needed as one session for every topic is bringing about little difference.

The session entailed a little more talking from my side than usual and I confirmed how ineffectual this is when working with such a group. They are doers and when inactive they become disruptive. The former strategy of using activities and games to get them to reflect is much more effective. The trip into the past caused uneasiness however when asked to chart their life they completed the task with enthusiasm and the reflection upon their lives was successful.



The steps for becoming resilient and deal with failures were presented in Maltese. It was a pleasure to learn that two participants who had been present for last year's sessions still had the steps I provided them with last year and could remember them by heart. They said that they still had the cards I had provided them with last year and realised that I was talking about the same thing even though these were given to them in English. It proves that the sessions do not always fall on deaf ears. I also had the opportunity to draw on ex-inmate's experience when he talked about difficulties encountered by him to find employment and ended up OD. Therefore possible solutions were discussed.

→ Tkun taf fejn trid tasal
 → Aqşam f'passi żgħir
 → Ippersisti sakemm tiġwadanja
 l-ewwel pass u ccelebraha
 → Kumpli bil-pass li jmiss imbagħis
 il-pass ta' wara sakemm tiffi
 it-target tiegħek
 → Qatt tagħta qalbek.

I have confirmed the validity of Glasser's (1998) choice theory when an inmate spoke about how he feels he was internally motivated to become who he is and assumes full responsibility for the choices that he made. He exhibited no determination whatsoever to change his way of life and this fact is even more food for thought that professionals' stance to fix others may be totally ineffectual. Inmates are in fact continuously reminded that feedback from them will assist greatly in the development of a programme which truly meets their needs.

Ending the day's session with a fun energiser assists greatly in increasing motivation. Participants leave the room in an agreeable mood and look forward to attending the next session. Motivation is the primary challenge in such a context.

Dignity

Session 6

Introduction: Instead of introducing the day's topic play 'Hangman' so that they themselves will find out. A discussion about each participant's understanding of the term ensues until 'expecting esteem and respect' is reached.

Step 1: The facilitator holds cards of different roles and the participants act according to who the facilitator is representing. Eg. If the facilitator is the queen

she asks the participants how they will act towards her while she walks about in the room. A discussion ensues. The queen expects respect and gets it. So do the prime Minister, president and the director. However everybody deserves respect and if we want to be respected we have to learn to respect others.

Step 2: Some magazines are scattered on the floor. Participants tear out pictures, articles or whatever they want which they think tells something about them. They can even make a collage of things that helps them to say more about themselves. Have each person share something that makes them different from anyone in the group, like; 'I am one of six kids' or 'in grade six I won a prize'.

Step 3: In order for participants to learn how important each individual's role in society is the game that follows is played. A spool of string or wool is needed for this game. Participants are asked to stand in a circle. Facilitator holds on to the end of the string and throws the spool to one of the young people to catch. They then choose a question from 1-20 to answer. A list of 10 sample questions is given below. Holding the string the spool is thrown to someone else. Eventually this creates a web. The facilitator comments that all played a part in creating this unique web and if one person was gone it would look different. Therefore we are all important in this great web of life and therefore everyone deserves respect.

1. If you had a time machine that would work only once, what point in the future or in history would you visit?
2. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

3. If your house was burning down, what three objects would you try and save?
4. If you could talk to any one person now living, who would it be and why?
5. If you HAD to give up one of your senses (hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting) which would it be and why?
6. If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
7. Do you have a pet? If not, what sort of pet would you like?
8. Name a gift you will never forget?
9. Name one thing you really like about yourself.
10. What's your favourite thing to do in the summer?
http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf

Step 4: Participants are divided into two groups. They will work on presenting a sort of a mind map to represent things that constitute respect and on the other side things that create lack of respect. One of them then presents the findings to the rest of the group.

Self-Evaluation – Dignity

A variety of methodologies are being utilised with the aim of keeping the inmates interested. Still the number of participants keeps decreasing from one week to another. This is partly due to the fact that at YOURS inmates are usually given short term sentences. Besides out of the 17 inmates 9 were still under arrest so a stable group is never guaranteed in this section. The ones who are released are however provided with my contact details and invited to get in touch to provide feedback if they want.

When they complain about treatment in prison I immediately make them aware of my limitations as I don't want to have them believe that I can change anything other than the content of the 10 week programme or its methodology. I try to exhibit the empowering effect providing feedback entails however.

Drawing on past experience I have noticed that instead of expecting to be respected by being courteous and respectful themselves they use strength and masculinity to earn esteem. When I picked the topic dignity I had this fact in mind. By being respectful one stands a better chance of earning respect from superiors. However during discussions I can't help noticing the hostility towards superiors so I feel that more needs to be done in this regard.

The activity in step 1 was perhaps a little too abstract for them and it took them quite long to realise what I was getting at. Basically the message was that we need to respect others regardless of their status in society. However different treatment needs to be kept in mind. The example of meeting with the prime minister was utilised. One taps on a friends' shoulder but wouldn't do this to the prime minister. The message was passed on loud and clear when I noticed that they were off the mark at what I was getting at and the activity omitted. Instead we passed on to the web activity immediately. Perhaps instructions need to be made clearer next time round.

The mind map of characteristics that constitute respect and others that constitute lack of respect created the space for them to discuss and conclude session in a way that brought together the aims of the activities. Even though the aims of the sessions are reached I am noticing that when it comes to putting in practice the skills we talk about inmates are encountering difficulties. It seems that in a prison setting such skills cannot be put into practice due to other people's attitudes. Nevertheless I encourage them to use the skills to foster a better attitude among themselves and hopefully outside the prison gates. I recognise my limitations and being a once a week visitor there, limits my capacity of bringing about all the changes I deem necessary.

Acceptance

Session 7

Introduction: Lead the group to discuss topic regarding Acceptance. Why do we lack acceptance? Lead the group to discuss whether it is perhaps the fear of the unknown which leads us to be more unaccepting.

Step 1: Give each person a card. Ask them to write questions to test the level of acceptance of the group. They are encouraged to be creative and come up with questions themselves however the questions below can be utilised if the group is at a loss what to write. Pile all the cards face down in the middle of the group and let them draw one and answer.

- Your attitude with a black person is the same as that with a white?
- Would you employ a drug addict if you are in the employer's position?
- Have you ever bullied someone because he/she was different at school?
How do you feel about that now?
- Do you hang out only with likewise peers?
- How do you feel if a disabled person wants to join you for a night on in the weekend?
- Do you feel comfortable walking side by side with an elderly?

Each question is discussed and everyone is allowed to have his say sticking to the dialogue rules of speaking only when marker is in hand.

Step 2: They are asked to rate the level of acceptance over 10 that they felt that the group has. The results are discussed.

Step 3: The group is asked to form a circle while a volunteer is left outside and another inside. Hands are raised to let the person inside the circle in and out as required but the group does not assist the person on the outside to catch the person who was originally on the inside. When the person who was originally on the inside is caught another two volunteers are asked to do the same.

Step 4: When everyone has had his turn divide the group in two. Those who were assisted on one side and those were not on the other. A discussion on feelings when assisted and accepted and when not ensues.

Step 5: Present the lyrics of the song Firework by Kate Perry. They are invited to sing if they want to but most importantly the lyrics of the song are discussed. The video is also discussed. Accepting oneself helps us deal with weaknesses. Acceptance is the theme of the song.

Step 6: As closure so that the session will not end on a sensitive note a lively activity is conducted. Group stands in a circle. Group has to count from 1 to 10 with individuals calling out a number. If the same number is called out by 2 people the group has to start again. This continues until 10 is reached.

Self-Evaluation of Acceptance

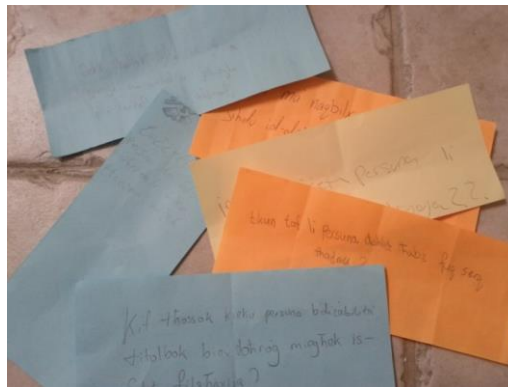
Dealing with disappointment is one of the challenges one has to deal with when working with such a group. Inmates ask eagerly when the next session is but then need encouragement to attend when you turn up. It would be interesting to explore whether one of the repercussions of discipline and obedience is in fact apathy. At least this is one of the things they often claim. I feel it is important for them to know my limitations. Since I continually ask for their feedback I feel it is important for them to understand that the changes I can bring about are those made to the programme I conduct.

Some interesting questions emerged in the first activity. Participants were asked to write questions to test each other's level of acceptance. The examples given served to place them in the right track. It was also interesting to observe that

most of the questions they prepared were relevant to their particular situations.

The questions follow:

- Do you accept an ex-drug addict?
- Would you employ an ex-drug addict?
- Would you employ an ex-prisoner?
- If your daughter falls in love and gets pregnant out of wed lock would you accept her?
- Would you accept a person of a different culture to work for you?
- How would you feel if a person with special needs asks you to go out with you on a Saturday night?



A discussion on other marginalised groups ensued and after they rated their level of acceptance. I believe that the overall rate was quite high. Perhaps posing a few critical questions rather than just accepting their self-rating would have helped them to think more deeply. The questions I posed served the purpose of reinforcing their stance and I sincerely don't believe that they assisted the development of self-awareness. Perhaps this would have been an excellent opportunity to utilise the questions I prepared beforehand and included other aspects of acceptance and not just the aspects relevant to their situation. I get the feeling that they are a little self-centred at times. They expect a lot from others and give little in return. I can suggest a session about altruism to be included in the programme to try and tackle this issue.

I would also prepare beforehand the questions which follow after the game in step 3 even if it's just 'talk to us about your feelings when you were excluded'. This is because I notice that participants tend to ignore the objective of the activity even though aims were clearly set beforehand.

I am trying to take into account the feedback provided as much as possible and this fact is appreciated. Following the feedback from participant who was going to embark on the programme for the first time a song by Kate Perry was used. The lyrics and the video were discussed. Basically its message is self-acceptance. They were then invited to pick phrases from the lyrics and they were made aware of the positive messages songs can convey.

Time Management

Session 8

Introduction: Ask participants; 'your house is on fire, but you are safe. You have 30 seconds to run through the house and collect three items that you want saved. What would you grab? Why? After they have done this a discussion on priorities is facilitated.

Step 1: Explain what Forum Theatre is. Two volunteers are asked to think of a situation where time is wasted. They act it out in 5 steps. All other participants can freeze the situation, discuss or ask for clarification.

Step 2: Participants are given a questionnaire of how they spend their time. Each and every one of these is discussed and they are guided to learn to plan and use their time better.

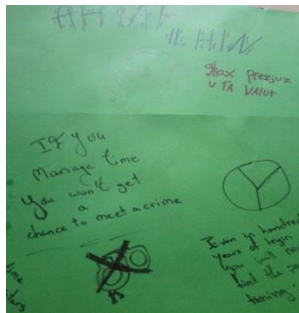
Step 3: Boredom is discussed. When we are bored we tend to think about ways and means of how we can have some adventures. If these are sensible adventures they are no harm but we must avoid adventures that get us into trouble. Discuss the saying 'Idle hands are the devil's workshop'.

Step 4: Present song Time by Pink Floyd. Everyone picks a couple or words or a phrase from the song and make a slogan in favour of making good use of one's time.

Step 5: To conclude ask participants to divide in two. One participant stays seated while the other standing right behind him. The one who is seated communicates with his eyes with another seated participant and they change seats. The standing person has to hold the person so he does not leave the seat. Explain this game in terms of protecting and giving due importance to our priorities.

Self-Evaluation – Time Management

The group I work with is very insightful and perhaps I tend to underestimate them at times. We tend to believe that all inmates would have a low level of education but in fact one would be surprised by the practical intelligence they exhibit. Even their exceptional creativity leaves me in awe many times. The drawings and slogans below represent a message to young people regarding time management. The one below exhibits a hand grabbing a clock with a message to make good use of time and the one below is a slogan which exhibits that if time is well organised the chance of getting into trouble is reduced.



I need to work on maintaining my concentration when someone becomes disruptive. Working in such a setting entails continuous disruption so one must be prepared and resistant to continuous interruptions. Even though I have tried setting rules for participants not to come and go as they please, I still get some who come late and ask to leave early and perhaps even ask to be excused to smoke a cigarette during the session. This fact disrupts the concentration of the other participants as well so a great effort is necessary if I want the programme to benefit them.

The steps of the forum theatre need to be prepared by the facilitator beforehand as I don't think I made myself clear enough. More than a forum theatre I got

inmates trying to guess what the actors were doing. I have given them some background on the objectives of forum theatre but perhaps they were not clear enough. I wanted the group to create representations of its reality and give the whole group the opportunity to read what they saw. I also feel that they still have a long way to go when it comes to listening to each other and not interrupting one another. Even though there were just five of them today it was still very difficult for them to listen to what they each had to say.

Making use of music and a CD player also sparked their interest a little more. It is however very difficult to find the music that pleases all. I had some who were very excited about Pink Floyd but another who asked me to do away with the playing. Perhaps including them to decide on the choice of music would have helped but then I was not sure whether the lyrics of their choice would fit the objectives. The track time provided the right lyrics to fit today's session about Time Management and phrases from the song opened up further discussion.

The strategy of drawing on past sessions and integrating with current sessions is helping participants remember what has been done in previous weeks. Besides being relevant to the activities because certain skills come in useful in many contexts, it is assisting the participants to remember what is being done during the programme. Thus they will be able to provide feedback based on the whole programme and not just the last few sessions.

Self-Efficacy/ Talents**Session 9**

Introduction: Have each person share their best and worst trying to exclude the prison sentence so it does not get boring. This is a good ice-breaker to get feedback concerning participants' life and also to be able to pick on the participants' strengths and draw back on them as necessary.

Step 1: Participants are provided with sticky notes. They are asked to write down three things which they feel that they are good at and another that they are absolutely not good at. Therefore in all they will have 3 truths and a lie. They stick these on their chest and move around to identify each other's lie. For every guess they collect a signature on another sticky note. A discussion ensues starting from the person who has collected most signatures.

Step 2: Amalgamate last week's session about time management and how boredom might lead to deviant behavior. Integrate also the first activity and the second to exhibit that each and every person has talents and they must work at developing those talents because it gives a good feeling to create things or practice a favorite activity.

Step 3: Play the game where a person sits on a chair and makes a statement about his talents. Eg. I can draw. All those who identify with the person must sit on his lap. The person makes another statement and can only move back to his place

when no other person identifies with him and no one sits on his lap. When this happens someone else takes the seat.

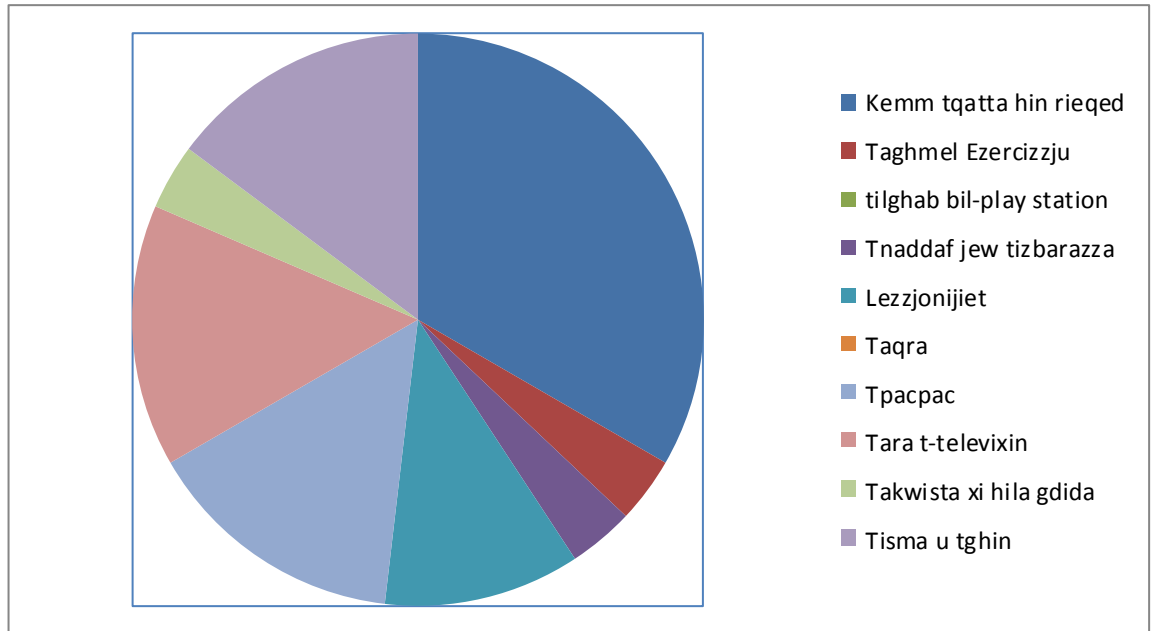
Step 4: The facilitator encourages participants to utilise the week speaking about each other's talents and challenges participants to try and increase their repertoire or improve the already identified talents.

Self-Evaluation – Self-Efficacy/Talents

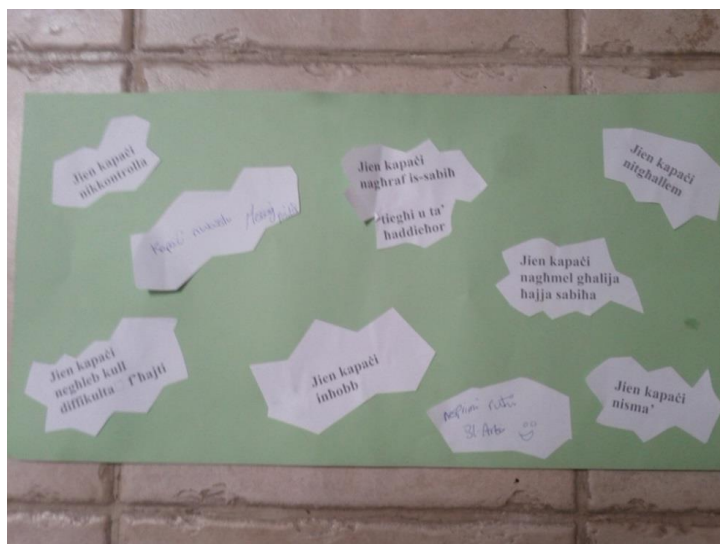
Today I felt that CCF staff is cooperating and recognising the importance of education to inmates as the wardens on duty took the time to call two of the participants who were working in another section to attend for the session instead. Another inmate who was assembling toys also stopped to attend for the session even though he later explained that he worked as he was in dire need of money. I therefore feel that the programme is in some way appreciated both by inmates as well as staff.

The use of the graph to exhibit how inmates are using their time substantiated the arguments of step 2. They were encouraged to widen the green shade by developing their talents more. It was easier to draw on their talents because today's session was the ninth session and hence quite a lot has been learnt about their individual capabilities. I could have helped them bring out their talents in

the open more by insisting that the truths and the lie for the first activity be solely about their talents. This would have helped them stay more focused on the topic.



Another activity which was not listed on the plan was used. The idea behind it was to include other capabilities which can be utilised also inside the prison gates. It has been argued often by inmates that the skills that they are learning cannot be put into practice while they are still serving the sentence. During this experience I have seen the validity of their arguments. Behind the gates they need to develop a kind of harshness which assists them to be accepted by other inmates. This same harshness will put them at a disadvantage if used in society after the sentence is served. This has been discussed often.



Perhaps by the end of the ten week programme a modification to the energisers becomes necessary. This is because of the reduction in the number of participants. The energisers on the plans were meant to be done with a group of eight to ten but when the number has gone down to five their effect is not the same. However the facilitator can never be sure what the number of attendees will be if attendance remains voluntary. Therefore flexibility and a wide repertoire of energisers are required to maximise the results of such programmes.

Participation

Session 10

Introduction: Thinking and acting lead to self-improvement. During the ten weeks young people have been led to improve their thinking skills and got to know themselves and each other better. Some possible ways of keeping

themselves occupied with pro-social activities in order to avoid recidivism have been explored. We have mentioned the English saying which goes 'idle hands are the devil's workshop' hence being active and participative is perhaps one way of staying away from trouble with the law. In this session therefore participation in society will be discussed

Step 1: Facilitate a discussion of young people's involvement in voluntary organisations or practising of hobbies. Allow each and every one to speak about his involvement.

Step 2: Present existing different voluntary organisations which meet different appeals. These can be animal welfare, religious, feast amateurs, support groups, political and even opportunities for them to learn, develop various skills and even participate in international youth exchanges.

Step 3: Divide the group in two. Share the resources and ask them to come up with a slogan in favour of participation.

Conclusion of the Programme

A 45 minute focus group where inmates can give feedback whether they found the programme worthwhile and whether they would like to change anything be it

topics, content, activities and anything they would like to comment about is conducted so that a better programme based on the needs of the inmates is drawn next time round.

Self- Evaluation – Participation

I must admit that I was enfolded by the generic stereotype that inmates are usually not participative in society. In fact most of the session's participants are involved in some way or other. Essentially even though they are involved they still lack the required commitment and at times honour other priorities. A discussion regarding the importance of commitment ensued however I must admit that involvement in voluntary organisations did not appeal to them. Nonetheless when asked to come up with a slogan to entice youth become participative members in society they still exhibited that participation brings about unity and connects members of a society.



Underestimation of inmates' capabilities is one thing people working in the field need to be cautious about. Young inmates' ability to think deeply is one of the most surprising factors encountered during my experience at CCF. This attribute will surely be one of the things I will attempt to exploit further. Self-awareness is

not always lacking however the circumstances and the opportunities young inmates' are left with are many times the result of them ending up locked behind bars. Perhaps they do not always exhibit the will to change their paths but lack of choices would leave even the most law-abiding people no option but to consider unconventional options.

Examining Different Perspectives

Session 11

Introduction: The aim of this session is to encourage inmates to examine the other side of the coin. They tend to ask for things at times and fail to recognise other people's responsibilities or limitations. This session will hopefully assist them to develop a better understanding of other people's roles.

Step 1: Ask the question; *'Kieku kont id-direttur tal-ħabs x'mizuri dixxiplinari iggib fil-ħabs biex tilhaq iktar l-għanijiet tiegħek?'* (What disciplinary measures would you have taken to reach your objectives had you been the prison director?)

A 15 minute discussion ensues.

Step 2 Booklets are distributed and young inmates are given time to reflect upon the reasons why they should not go back to prison. They are allowed to discuss and record in the previously prepared booklets. These are then read to each other.

Energiser: Participants stand in a line. A name of a country is called. The next inmate has to think of a name of a country that starts with the last letter of the country mentioned before. E.g. Tenerife, Egypt, Turkey, Yemen, New York, Kenya, Amerika, Awstralja, Armenja, Algerija, Alaaska, Albanija etc. Everytime a participant is able to come up with a country he can make a step forward. The one who reaches the finishing line first is the winner.

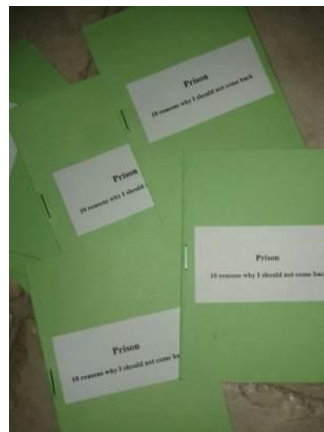
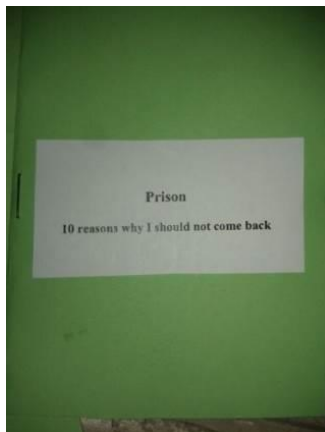
Self-Evaluation – Examining Different Perspectives

Following the outcomes of other sessions the need to examine the other side of the coin was felt. This session was therefore added to the 10 sessions. The aim was to assist inmates reflect on the duties and responsibilities of prison officials and also the director. A few changes were made to the prepared session plan and instead of a discussion it was decided that a role play will be utilised. These changes were applied because I felt that the group was not in the mood for a discussion.

The role play gave me a better understanding of how inmates are affected by the rough approach of some officials. After this session I confirmed the need of similar sessions and training of prison officials if the system aims at being reformative rather than punitive. Inmates themselves have exhibited effective approaches and I believe that they themselves are the best teachers of what works.

I have also tried to use more intelligent, mind challenging games as energisers however I must allow for some good laughs as well as some gave positive feedback on so called 'childish' games. I have noticed however that the competitive aspect always makes a game more popular so I will try to include more competitive games.

To conclude the programme the underneath booklets were distributed and young offenders were asked to identify ten reasons why they should not come back to prison and invited to look at the booklet occasionally when they are out of prison. I believe that if they do the exercise they will remind themselves of the benefits of staying on the conventional path.



Aspirations and Contributions

Session 1

Introduction: The content of the programme is exposed and its aim is explained to participants. Assess the participants' level of interest in embarking on the programme. They rate their eagerness to participate on a 1 to 10 rating. Everyone gives his opinion so that comments can be referred to when in step 3.

Step1: Participants introduce themselves and say something about themselves. These few minutes aim at getting to know the group thus a relationship can be built.

Step 2: A4 coloured paper are used for this activity. Participants are asked to trace their hands and their feet on separate paper. They cut along the outline. On the feet they write what their expectations from participating in the programme are. On the hands they write what their contributions to the group, to the other inmates and to society in general are.

Step 3: Each participant discusses these and then these are kept by the facilitator to use as necessary in the course of the programme.

Step 4: Describe how the main objective of the sessions is for participants to become partners in learning and to explore what they need to learn. Participants are invited to become critical and try to identify what works. It is important that

they understand that their input is vital as they need to take control of their own learning.

Energiser: Sun/ Sunblock game is played. The aim of it is to identify our learning needs and protect ourselves from what hinders us to develop our thinking.

Setting Rules

Session 2

Introduction: The fact that all institutions have rules is discussed. Schools have rules. Students must wear uniforms, be punctual, eat only during breaks. Paceville has rules as no one is allowed to roam the street with glass bottles in hand. Streets have rules; parking, signs, etc. In order for the group to function in the best way possible we must have rules. However they are invited to make their own rules.

Step 1: Brainstorm what rules they would like to apply to the group. Some important things that must emerge are; never to talk about issues disclosed in group, smoking time to be discussed, they either join group from the beginning or miss the session altogether, dialogue rules to be observed.

Step 2: The suggestions are kept so that the rules are listed and a copy given to participants during the following session. Like this they can be referred to when necessary.

Step 3: A dialogue session is conducted. The prompt to be utilised for this session is; let us talk about an event that has made an impact on our lives. Participants can only speak when they get hold of the marker and thus listening to one another is guaranteed. The benefit of taking turns when talking is highlighted.

Energiser: One participant sits on a chair and makes a statement about a rule which he wishes. All those who agree will sit on him. The one sitting down has to try and find a rule which no one else agrees with so that no one will sit on him and then it will be another participant's turn to think of rules.

Resistance

Session 3

Introduction: Discuss emergent results of focus group where participants had asked that they do not feel prepared to go out in the community and they need help with regards to substance misuse.

Step 1: Ask for a volunteer to mime the act below while facilitator reads: On the day of release you are preparing to go back in the community. You pack your bags and you are feeling happy. You come to the gate and stand at the door. You look around you and feel lost. You cross the road and meet the family at the other side. You are all so happy. It feels good to be free. Savour the moment. Time passes and you start getting used to the feeling. Your facial expression starts to change. You don't reflect anymore. You are not controlling yourself

and you start getting into fights. You go out and you drink a lot ...you are kicked out by bouncers one Saturday evening and you are lying on the floor. A pusher passes by and offers you crack (cocaine). You reach out..... (stop and let the participant improvise)

Step 2: The above situation is discussed. Participants are encouraged to think critically of what the feelings of the person could be and how situations can be avoided and how to realise that a situation is getting out of hand.

Step 3: Thinking needs to be nourished. We need to teach ourselves how to stop, think, reflect, examine other possibilities, see other people's perspectives.....Discuss

Energiser: Explain that the energiser that follows requires concentration and its aim is for them to nourish their concentration. They are asked to stand in a circle. They need to think and concentrate in order to learn the numbers in French. Then they need to say the numbers and write them with their feet. Next they have to say them and use their bodies to shape the numbers.

Step 4: Discuss the above activity and whether they considered it difficult to concentrate on the different tasks. Encourage them to start thinking deeply and asking themselves questions to encourage the development of a critical self.

Anger Management

Session 4

Introduction: Link this session with the previous one. Participants must understand that the programme is a learning process and thinking and reflection must be continuously applied in order for the programme to be beneficial.

Step 1: Participants are invited to reflect upon moments, people or situations that have made them angry. Following the dialogue session's regulations they are invited to disclose. Facilitator will listen and empathise however will not comment at this stage.

Step 2: Participants are invited to pair up with another who has shared a story which he feels he can identify with. Peer to peer assistance is thus encouraged and all participants are also encouraged to think about the best way to help others in similar situations.

Step 3: Now they are invited to stop and think about the times that they might have hurt others and how this might have made the other party feel. Discuss.

Step 4: Steam needs to be let off. Some people chose some kind of adrenaline sports to let off steam and others perhaps have other kinds of hobbies. Discuss what helps you let out anger.

Energiser: Sit in a circle on the floor. Participants are invited to look at the ground. At the count of three they lift their eyes up and mark someone. If two participants happen to be looking in each other's eyes they will let out a loud shout to let off steam. Karaoke is done if access of lap top is possible. (Avici Hey Brother)

Getting to Know each other

Session 5

Introduction: You have been together a number of days, months and possibly years but how well do you know each other? Discuss

Step 1: Introduce yourself in 3 minutes and give us a piece of information which you know that we do not know. You can choose from:

- Something embarrassing that happened recently
- A snippet from your past (song, poem, dance, game, whatever)

Step 2: Place sticky notes with numbers on them on the floor e.g. 1/1, 2/2, 3/3, 4/4 etc. Participants are invited to pick one and introduce their partners in two minutes to the rest of the group. The aim is to test if they have listened to each other and create awareness if they haven't.

Step 3: The 'find someone who' game is played. Distribute the bingo list. The aim is for participants to get the sheet signed by different people. The signed bingo is then discussed.

Step 4: A discussion about the feelings and the dynamic of the activities ensues. Participants are invited to identify the learning outcomes from their own point of view. My own perspective is that when we get to know each other on a personal level we can help each other grow. Ask what they think about this.

Strengthening Relationships

Session 6

Introduction: As always the session starts with a discussion of the previous week's session. Participants have been together for quite a while. However during this session they will examine what level the relationship with others has reached.

Step 1: Coloured paper and pens or pencils are passed around. They all take a paper and the facilitator explains how the A4 paper will be divided. When they write their names at the top right hand corner they all throw it in the middle of the room.

Step 2: Next they are asked to pick a different one and draw the face of the person to whom it belongs. When they are ready they throw the paper back on the floor.

Step 3: They are asked to pick yet another paper and pair up with the person whose name appears on the paper. They are asked to write down the hobbies of

that person on the bottom left hand side and learn something new about the person they are paired with and write it on the bottom left hand side.

Step 4: They will keep the paper and sit in a circle again. They will discuss their feelings regarding the activity and they will speak about the person they got to know better through the activity. When everyone has had his turn the papers are thrown back on the floor face up.

Step 5: They are invited to take a paper and write a positive message to the person to whom the paper belongs. Everyone is invited to find own sheet, read the messages and comment.

Strengthening Relationships

Session 7

Ice breaker: In pairs participants are asked to label themselves A and B. A leads and B mirrors. Then they switch and neither leads so they need to work together. Build a relationship with each other. See what theme arises from this exercise.

Step 1: Ask participants to describe and talk about the dynamic of the group they worked in. What came out of the exercise?

Step 2: To compliment the discussion in step 1 and to develop it further use the following prompts:

- Have you ever been in an abusive/oppressive relationship?
- Have you ever been the abuser in a relationship?

- How does it feel when a couple are not on equal grounds?
- What are the benefits of leading together and engaging in joint decision making?
- How can you make relationships work?

Step 3: You live together but can you really say that you know each other? The next exercise aims at assisting the development of reflective skills and to assist participants to get to know each other better. Reflection cards are placed in a bag. Each YP takes a prompt, reflects and answers in the most sincere way as possible.

Step 4: A round robin so as to allow the time for participants to reflect on the activity and give their comments. Below are some prompts that can be utilised:

Nightmare experienced most, Title I want to win, Experienced high, First kiss, Weirdest dream, Highly admired person, Greatest Adventure, Something I feel proud of.

Energiser: Divide into pairs and put one hand behind your back, with a flat palm against your back. Your other hand is like a sword. The objective is to touch your partner's flat palm without letting them touch yours.

Communication

Session 8

Introduction: A few minutes are dedicated to discuss last week's session. In order to truly communicate we must listen intently to the other party and express ourselves (use video). Communication can take many forms; it can be one to

one, one to many (like when addressing an audience or during an interview) or it can happen when reading a book.

Step 1: Discuss salient necessities when communicating. Mention posture, eye contact, non-verbal cues, empathy, etc. Give concrete examples and ask participants to reflect on their level of comfort when speaking to someone who observes effective communication strategies.

Step 2: Forum Theatre has been utilised in the past but perhaps participants did not really understand what its purpose is. We will act out an interview with someone who has applied for a waiter. I will use the questions that follow and participants can stop the act to give suggestions to the interviewee.

1. Personal Information (name, age, city, hobbies)
2. Academic Background and Present (school, certificates, presently educating oneself)
3. Why have you applied for this job?
4. Why should I employ you? What do you have to offer?

Step 3: Participants can have their turns at interviews. It is hoped that through their own interventions during the interview they become aware of cues they must pay attention to. Circle time is utilised so that participants discuss some salient things they need to work on.

Energiser: Ask everyone to form a birthday line starting with the youngest, and they must organise in order of day, month and year (without talking). They must then organise themselves according to weight, height, shoe size and length of thumb.

Communication

Session 9

Ice Breaker: Stand in a circle and everybody holds hands. The facilitator starts to pass a squeeze of the hand. Facilitator can change the rhythm and the direction.

Introduction: A few minutes are spent discussing last week's session.

Step 1: The following prompts are asked so participants will be given food for thought:

- Reflect on the past week. Have you tried to utilise the skills gained during our last session?
- How did it feel?
- Was there anything you felt good about and would like to share?
- Drawing on this experience what do you think are the benefits of developing your communication skills?

Step 2: Discuss if talking about feelings and emotions is difficult. How can coming to terms with emotions and feelings help? How can disappointments of the past be destructive if kept within? What is the level of comfort of sharing with professionals or other trustworthy people?

Step 3: Explain how talking about other people on the other hand hurts feelings. Mention gossip and the damage it does. How something can be interpreted in different forms by different people. Finally end the session by doing the Farmer from Mosta activity.

Energiser: In small groups of 6 participants make objects with their bodies. Example; clock, jeans, tree, snake, spaghetti. They are not to talk while doing this and instructions are given written on a piece of paper.

Making a CV

Session 10

Introduction: After having the Forum theatre where a simulation of an interview gave participants more confidence to present themselves in the best way participants will learn to make their own CV and thus prepare for resettlement.

Step 1: Participants are given a specimen of a Europass CV. An explanation is given where necessary. Participants are then assisted to make their own CV discussing educational attainment and experience as they go along.

Step 2: Each CV is checked and discussed for improvement. The final result is checked by them so that each CV is typed and printed and presented to participants during the session that follows. They can then distribute as necessary when they are released.

Energiser: Play the game employed/ unemployed/job hunting. When the word employed is called out two people form a house and one settles inside. When unemployed is called 2 people form a house and no one settles inside. When job hunting is called out everyone must roam the room.

Step 3: Discuss the benefits of employment and share feelings regarding their concerns for the future if any.

Discovering Learning Needs

Session 11

Introduction: Give participants a little background of the Freire Philosophy. Discuss Pedagogy of the Oppressed so as to put them a little in the picture. The idea is to encourage participants to take control of their learning.

Step 1: Participants are asked to reflect on their learning needs. The learning needs of participants are listed on a flip chart. A discussion on suggested methodology ensues. If participants seem blocked stop the activity and go to step 2. Resume to this step after.

Step 2: In order for participants to be more reflective they need to be assisted with some prompts. Ask the following:

- Why do you think you are asked about your learning needs?
- Did you manage to discover new things about yourself today?
- What do you feel good about today?
- What hindered you from reflecting on your learning needs?
- What can you do to identify your needs more?

Energiser: The energiser below might be considered irrelevant by some so it needs to be explained in terms of relaxing and changing the pensive mode into a cheerful one. Young people are reminded that participation is voluntary. The fact that some enjoy such activities while others find them childish is in this

manner taken in consideration. Group forms a circle and one person stays in the middle. One of 3 instructions are given by the person in the middle after doing a blind round.

Elephant ears – Person in the middle acts like a trunk and the ones on the sides like elephant ears.

House and smoker – Persons on the side form a house while the person in the middle smokes.

Toaster- Person in the middle jumps up and down and the ones on the side with arched arms. Whoever makes a mistake becomes the person in the middle.

Different Perspectives

Session 12

Introduction: When our stereotypes are challenged we many times discover that we were wrong in our judgements. Discuss experiences you have had.

Step 1: Things are looked at from different perspectives and that is why continuous dialogue is important. We must never judge according to our common sense knowledge. A half full bottle is placed in the middle of the circle. Participants are invited to describe what they see.

Step 2: Participants are invited to give meanings to the bottle in the middle. One by one they go to the middle, pick the bottle and do an improvisation pretending that the bottle is something else. (Eg. The bottle becomes a shaver). The aim is that they are encouraged to become re creators of the world and agents of change so refer again to Freire's philosophy of education.

Step 3: Participants are assigned a role according to the role drawn. The different roles include; 3 carefree young people, a priest, a parent, a businessman, a drug dealer and a mayor. They are asked to discuss an activity that is going to be organised in the village square. They need to discuss this from different perspectives. Practitioner acts as an observer and commentator.

Step 4: Processing utilising these prompts as a guideline; how did you feel in your role? What were some of the difficulties encountered? Do you think each person discussed the activity from his perspective? Choose the role you want to take and put your views forward.

Dignity

Session 13

Introduction: Instead of introducing the day's topic play game where letters of the word dignity are scattered around the room. They will find the letters and bring them together to form the word. A discussion about each participant's understanding of the term ensues until 'expecting esteem and respect' is reached.

Step 1: Discuss oppressor\oppressed stance. Draw a huge figure of a person and a small figure and ask participants to suggest who these 2 persons might represent. Eg. manager/worker, politician/citizen, prisoner/warden. Discuss how oppression sometimes takes place.

Step 2: A discussion about the dangers of stripping oneself of dignity ensues. What makes the above on the same level? We are all on the same level and we expect esteem and we are only passing on a message that we are as much human as others around us.

Step 3: Have each person share something that makes them different from anyone in the group, like; 'I am one of six kids' or 'in grade six I won a prize'. Let each sentence start with: I am special because.....It can be done in the form of the sun shines game.

Step 4: In order for participants to learn how they must believe that they are special and how they must believe in their capabilities the activity that follows is done. Have all participants stand in a circle. One volunteer stands in the middle. He closes his eyes and keeps legs and knees rigid. He will fall gently and wait to be held.

Step 4: Participants are divided into two groups. They will work on presenting a sort of a mind map to represent things that constitute respect and on the other side things that create lack of respect. One of them then presents the findings to the rest of the group.

Step 5: For closure participants are encouraged to narrate any experiences they could have had when they felt that they exhibited lack of respect towards someone and vice versa.

Resilience/ Dealing with Failures

Session 14

Introduction: Brainstorm the word Resilience. Everybody writes on a piece of paper what the word resilience means to him. These are all placed in the middle and then everybody is invited to pick one, read and give his view whether a good explanation is given. The real explanation of it is read last. *‘Il-Kapacita’ li tqum u tkompli b’hajtek bhala persuna preparata aktar biex tilqa’ l-isfidi li toffri l-hajja.’* (The capability of bouncing back from negative experiences as a person who is more prepared to meet life’s challenges).

Step 1: Start by explaining that we all have big dreams and ending up in prison surely wasn’t what they hoped for before it happened. However achieving goals is often a matter of surviving setbacks and any bad experiences can be translated into knowledge for doing better in the future. Therefore achieving goals can be made feasible by learning from past failures. We cannot eradicate the past but we can surely learn from it and avoid repeating mistakes. We can even recycle mistakes into opportunities.

Step 2: They say that it is easier said than done. Discuss how we can make it possible. Perhaps the most important step to start from is to make a choice. (Speak about experiences of ex-offenders, eg. Omar and Timo. One started his own business and is fully resettled the other managed to obtain three degrees during his conviction)

Ice Breaking Game: To teach perseverance the knot game is played. Young people are asked to cross hands and grab someone else's hands. It is important that no one holds the hand of the same person. They are then given time to get untangled. They must persevere.

Step 4: Participants are encouraged to think about their individual failures. Now they are encouraged to think how they can turn that failure into a learning experience and translate it into something positive. Draw two bins and write mistakes in one and recycled outcome in the other. Reflection during the time until we meet again is encouraged.

Step 5: Stick the phrase '*Jien kapaçi nqum bhala persuna preparata biex nilqa' l-isfidi tal-hajja*' (I am capable of bouncing back from this experience and meet life's challenges) where participants can see it. Someone starts reading one word and another continues. Only one word at a time is read and if two people say the same word at the same time it is started from scratch until the whole phrase is read by different people.

Self Control

Session 15

Introduction: Self-Control is the foundation for resilience and success in other areas. Therefore self-control is discussed. Young people are asked what they think constitutes self-control. They will rate what they think their level of self-

control is out of a score of 10. Sum up that better self control is in fact associated with success in areas such as:

- Self-esteem
- Interpersonal skills
- Emotional responses

Step 1: Participants are invited to explore behaviours. The following prompts are read giving young people time to reflect on their weaknesses. One can lack self-control in various areas and experience different repercussions such as:

Eating too much	Spending too much
Letting heart rule head	Having unprotected sex
Letting material acquisition rule the head	Imbalance between work and
leisure Using substances to alter state of the mind	Getting into fights

Step 2: Lack of self-control can have long term consequences. Discuss.

Step 3: Simulation of family lunch time. A good actor is assigned the role of the impossible kid. Two of them are parents who try to control their patience. Siblings feel that their impossible brother is advantaged because the parents try to accommodate him. The facilitator sits at table as a sibling too. After 15 minutes lunch time simulation the feelings are discussed.

Step 4: Some possible ways of maintaining self-control are discussed. Then the following energiser which requires self-control is played. Members pair back to back. On the count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in

the eyes, and then try to remain solemn and serious. The first to smile, speak or laugh must sit down. All who remain standing then take a new partner and the activity continues until only one person has not smiled or laughed. The ones who are out can disrupt.

Self-Esteem

Session 16

Introduction: Participants are given time to reflect and speak about their experiences in relation to the previous week's session. The topic is introduced by dramatizing looking confidently at a mirror. Participants guess the topic to be discussed.

Step 1: A relationship between substance misuse and low self-esteem has long been established. The relevance of this statement is discussed.

Step 2: Brainstorm what participants think enhances self-esteem. Some points to be brought up are; eat healthy, exercise every day, do something you really enjoy doing every day, spend some time with people who are meaningful to you, have regular check-ups, change negative thoughts to positive ones.

Step 3: Self-esteem is discussed. It is difficult to identify the beautiful characteristics in others if one does not learn to love himself therefore participants are invited to think about their beautiful characteristics. Others are invited to remind them.

Step 4: Low self-esteem is often accompanied by lack of motivation. It may feel very hard to do anything. It will help you to feel better about yourself if you do something, even if it is a very small thing. You may want to keep a list of possibilities on hand for those times when you can't think of anything to do. Things like: cleaning out one drawer, washing your room, reading an article or a book you have been wanting to read, drawing a picture of a beautiful flower or a person you love, doing some crafts, asking if you can do some maintenance, sending someone a card, attending lessons you thought were boring or singing a few songs. Participants are encouraged to make a list of things that enhance self-esteem.

Step 5: The word-association game is played. It is another great focusing exercise to get participants to think, listen and pay attention. Participants stand up in a circle. The first holds a ball in his hands. He tosses the ball to another in the circle, while saying the first word that comes to mind... for example, "flower". The participant who catches the ball then says the first word that comes to mind, for example, "garden." They continue tossing the ball and making word associations.

Step 6: Just as the words called out were associated, lack of self-esteem can be associated to negative viewing of oneself. Feedback is many times provided according to the way one presents himself. Learning to love yourself is emphasized but it does not mean that we do not try to improve improve.

Admiration and love from others will follow. It is important that our self-esteem is nourished.

Time Management

Session 17

Introduction: The first few minutes are spent reflecting on the previous session and discussing any outcomes since then. Each participant has time to reflect on a typical day outside prison and another inside.

Step 1: Participants are asked to describe how a typical day is spent. Probably time is utilised less constructively behind bars and this fact will be brought to light. With a lot of free time in one's hands the probability of wasting time becomes greater.

Step 2: Time management presentation where the moral is that time awaits no one is conducted. Participants are invited to give their comments. Draw upon verses from the play inmates wrote 'We wasted time and now the time wastes us'. How can such statement be disproved?

Step 3: Discuss how the day can be planned. Participants are invited to identify their priorities. Remind them about the fruit bowl activity conducted in previous years.

Step 4: Participants are told that they are in their house when fire breaks out. They will take three things with them. What will they be? The fact that we all have different priorities but that some are common is discussed.

Step 5: To conclude ask participants to divide in two. One participant stays seated while the other standing right behind him. The one who is seated communicates with his eyes with another seated participant and they change seats. The standing person has to hold the person so he does not leave the seat. This game is explained in terms of the importance of protecting and giving due importance to priorities.

Talents

Session 18

Introduction: Each participant will share with the group an experience that boosted his morale and another that was a downer. The prison sentence will be excluded so that it does not get boring. This is a good ice-breaker to get feedback concerning participants' life and also to be able to pick on the participants' experiences and draw back on them as necessary later on in the session.

Step 1: Participants are provided with coloured paper and scissors, make a tie and divide into four parts. They are asked to write down three things which they feel that they are good at and another that they are absolutely not good at all at. Therefore in all they will have 3 truths and a lie. They wear the tie on their chest and move around to identify each other's lie. They collect a signature next to

what the other person thinks the lie is. A discussion ensues regarding whether participants know about each other's talents enough.

Step 2: A discussion on whether each individual's talents are used enough ensues. Then A4 paper is distributed. These are folded in two? On one side of the paper participants are asked to write what they have done for a living so far? On the other side they write what the talent discussed above is? A discussion on whether they are using their talents to earn a living ensues.

Step 3: If talents are used for making a living out of them work would be more enjoyable. Discuss the saying; 'find something you enjoy doing and you won't have to work one single day in your life'.

Energiser: One participant will have one of these titles stuck on his back. He will have to go around asking questions to identify clues that will help them find out who he is. The answers to his questions can only be yes or no. Examples; painter, dancer, singer, footballer, gamer, counsellor, cook, decorator, model.

Step 4: Everybody will have his turn to do final remarks about today's session; his impressions, thoughts, inspirations, etc.

Acceptance

Session 19

Ice breaker: Ask participants to think about their favorite animal. They are to write 3 adjectives which describe the animal that they have in mind best. Then they are asked to write their name in front of these adjectives. They will take turns to read what they have written to the rest of the group.

Step 1: Divide the room in two. On one wall write agree on the opposite disagree. Read the statements below and participants stand in the room according to the position they want to take. For every statement read, a discussion on their position ensues.

- Your attitude with a black person is the same as that with a white.
- You would employ a drug addict if you are in the employer's position.
- You will bully anyone who is different.
- I like to hang out with likewise peers.
- I don't mind a disabled person clubbing with my group on a Saturday night.
- I don't think age matters. Old people can be interesting and fun.

Step 2: Discuss the level of acceptance and what they feel least acceptant of before going to the next activity.

Step 3: The majority cross hands and stay facing 2 participants who also join hands. The two want to pass to the other side but the others keep blocking their way. After a few seconds they take a seat and the following prompts are utilized to generate a discussion about feelings of rejection.

- How do you feel that you were in the minority?

- Do you feel that you had less chances of succeeding?
- Do we see this happening in real life?
- (Addressing others) How did you feel that you managed to block their way?
- Did you stop to think about their feelings?
- Does looking down on others boost your self-esteem?

Step 4: Everyone will stand up in a circle. They should all be facing in, looking at each other. Toss a ball or bean bag to a person and have him say what they think is the most important learning concept of today. They then toss the ball to someone and that person explains what he thinks is the most important concept. Continue the exercise until everyone has had his turn.

Altruism through Participation

Session 20

Introduction: No man is an island. We live in a society and we must all strive to make things work. We will discuss how altruism and active participation can bring us closer to our community.

Step 1: A Team building activity so that participants experience the joy of working in a group is conducted. Each of the two groups is given a box of straws not flexible straws and a box of paperclips. Each group builds a tower. Build the structure as a group and the tallest, strongest, longest, most creative, most functional, etc., wins.

Step 2: The activity is discussed. The discussion includes the dynamic of the group, teamwork and situational leadership skills used as well as how different roles are needed to accomplish different tasks.

Step 3: Give participants a blank piece of puzzle (cut up a sheet of coloured paper). Each person writes on the piece one skill which they contribute to the group. The puzzle is then assembled to show that everyone contributes to the whole.

Step 4: Discuss opportunities for young people to participate in different areas according to their inclinations. Some of the projects by the youth agency will be mentioned. An English saying goes 'Idle hands are the devil's workshop' hence being active and participative is one way of staying away from trouble with the law. Besides in giving one receives and participants are encouraged to reflect whether they have ever experienced this kind of joy.

Step 5: The group is divided in two. The resources are shared and participants are asked to come up with a slogan in favour of participation.

Consent Form

Name of Researcher: Josette Camilleri

Address:

Phone No:

Title of dissertation: Getting out Smarter to face Life's Challenges; An Action Reserach with Young Offenders in Prison

Statement of purpose of the study: To Reflect upon a practice with the aim of improving it and make it more relevant to young offenders' needs. Young offenders are taken on as partners to try and identify what works.

Methods of data collection: Participatory Action Research, Interviews, Focus Group

Use made of the information: For dissertation purposes only.

Guarantees:

I will abide by the following conditions:

- (i) Your real name will not be used in the study.
- (ii) You are free to quit from the study at any point and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all records and information collected will be destroyed.
- (iii) There will be no deception in the data collection process.
- (iv) The interview will be audiorecorded.
- (v) The recording will be destroyed 2 to 3 years after the interview takes place.

- (vi) A copy of the research will be handed to you through a CD.

I agree to the conditions:

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I agree to the conditions:

Researcher's Name : Josette Camilleri

Researcher's Signature: _____

Tutor's Name: Prof. Marilyn Clark

Tutor's signature _____

Date: 10th July 2013

Address

10th July 2013

Information Letter

I am a university student and I would be carrying out research for my dissertation including a ten week programme with inmates at the Young Offenders' Unit. The participatory Action Research is in part fulfilment for the MA in Youth and Community Studies. The title of my dissertation is: 'Getting out Smarter to face Life's Challenges; An Action Research with Young Offenders in Prison'. The purpose of this study is to reflect upon a practice with the aim of improving it and presenting a revised programme which reflects more the needs of the young offenders.

I would like to ask you whether you would like to participate in this study through your participation in the ten week programme and a focus group at the end to give feedback about the programme. The focus group will be audio recorded and the recording will be destroyed five years after the interview takes place. Your participation in this study is purely voluntary.

Thank you for considering my request. In case you have any query or difficulty, please do not hesitate to discuss it.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher's Signature

Tutor's Signature

10 ta' Lulju 2013

Ittra ta' Informazzjoni

Jiena studenta universitarja li qeghda nagħmel Action Research għat-tezi tiegħi li tinkludi programm ta' għaxar gimgħat ma' residenti fis-sezzjoni YOURS għewwa l-faċilitajiet korrettivi ta' Kordin. Ir-riċerka hija parti mill-MA f'Youth and Community Studies. L-isem ta' din it-tezi huwa: Getting out Smarter to face Life's Challenges; An Action Research with Young Offenders in Prison. L-għan ta' dan l-istudju hu li ssir riflessjoni fuq il-prattika kurrenti b'hekk jiġi revedut programm u iehor li jirrifletti iktar il-bzonnijiet tal-parteciċipanti jkun offrut.

Nixtieq insaqsik jekk tixtieqx tiehu sehem f'dan l-istudju permezz tal-parteciċipazzjoni tiegħek fi programm ta' għaxar gimgħat kif ukoll fil-focus grupp. Dan tal-aħħar se jiġi rrekordjat u jiffoka fuq il-perspettivi tiegħek rigward dan il-programm. Ir-recording tal-focus grupp jiġi mhassar hames snin wara li jkun sar. Il-kunfidenzjalita` hija mharsa. Dan ifisser li ismek u d-dettalji personali tiegħek mhux ser jiġu identifikati fil-kitba tat-tezi tiegħi u lanqas permezz ta' diskors ma' persuni oħra. Il-parteciċipazzjoni tiegħek f'dan il-programm hija kompletament volontarja.

Grazzi talli qed tikkonsidra din it-talba. F'każ li jkollok xi mistoqsijiet jew diffikultajiet, tista' tikkuntatjani biex niddisku.

Dejjem tiegħek,

Firma tar-riċerkatur

Firma tas-supervisor

Questions for Interview with Ex-Offender

1. What were your perceptions of the programme when you first heard of it?
2. Why did you decide to embark on the ten week programme?
3. Would you redo it if given the chance?
4. Do you remember any of the sessions conducted?
5. Speak to me about the relevance of the programme to your personal development.
6. Do you think that the programme has assisted in some way in your reintegration and resettlement?
7. Give concrete examples and refer to the topics of the programme.
8. Do you think that the energisers were relevant to the topics?
9. Do you think that the sessions were too long? How long do you think the sessions should be?
10. Do you think that the group was too large? What is the ideal number in your opinion?
11. Are there any rules you would have liked to set for the group?
12. Do you think that such a programme should be ongoing?
13. Are there any skills which were not included in the programme that you deem necessary for success with your life beyond the prison gates?
14. What would you change about the programme both in terms of content as well as its conduction?
15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Questions for interview with inmate before Programme started

1. Do you think that your time in prison is being utilised well?
2. How would you like to have your day organised?
3. Have you ever heard of life skills programmes?
4. What do you think such programmes entail?
5. What are the skills that you think will come in useful beyond these gates?
6. What would you like to learn during this period behind bars?
7. How would you like to learn what you just mentioned?
8. By whom would you like to be taught these skills?
9. What do you think is the ideal duration of each session?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Focus group questions in English

1. What do you think about the content of the programme you have just participated in?
2. Is there anything you have liked to see included?
3. Is there anything you consider superfluous?
4. What changes would you like to see in this programme?
5. Which activities left a positive impact on you most?
6. Do you think that two hours for every session were enough or do you think the sessions were too long? What is the ideal duration of the programme?
7. Do you think that the programme was beneficial in terms of acquisition of skills which help you deal with life's challenges?
8. Is there a particular skill that the programme has assisted you to acquire?
9. Would you like to have similar programmes in the future?
10. What is your fear regarding when time is done?

Mistoqsijiet tal-focus grupp bil-Malti

1. X'taħseb dwar il-kontenut tal-programm li għadkom kif ipparteċipajtu fih?
2. Hemm xi haġa li xtaqtu taraw inkluzi?
3. Hemm xi haġa li tikkunsidraw zejda?
4. Kieku kellkom tbidlu xi haġa xi tbidlu mill-programm ta' għaxar ġimgħat li għadna kemm għamilna flimkien?

5. Liema kienu l-attivitajiet li l-aktar hallew impatt pozittiv fuqkom?
6. Taħsbu li sagħtejn għal kull sezzjoni kienu bizzejjed jew taħsbu li sagħtejn twal wisq? Kif tarawh it-tul tal-programm?
7. Taħseb li l-programm kien ta' beneficiċċju biex jgħinkom takwistaw hiliet li jgħinukom tilqgħu iktar l-isfidi tal-ħajja?
8. Hemm xi hila partikolari li l-programm għenkom takwistaw?
9. Tixtiequ taraw programmi oħra simili fil-futur? Tistgħu ssemmu xi programmi oħra li tixtiequ taraw jigu implimentat?
10. X'inhuma l-akbar bezgħat tagħkom għal meta tiskontaw is-sentenza?

Interview with Someone who conducts social skills Programmes in Prison

1. Speak to me about the young offenders' section
2. What is the most common offence for which inmates were convicted?
3. How is young inmates' time organised? How do they spend their day generally?
4. Do you think that the prison is a correctional facility or a punitive one?
Speak to me about this.
5. What educational programmes are available in prison?
6. What does the social skills programme conducted in prison entail?
7. Is there a limit in number of young offenders that can attend?
8. What is the methodology utilised?
9. Are these programmes conducted by volunteers or Prison officials? What is their profession?
10. Do you think it is feasible to be a prison official and an educator at the same time?
11. Are these programmes ongoing or temporary?
12. Is attendance to this programme compulsory?
13. Do inmates benefit from any privileges if they attend lessons?
14. Is learning measured in any way?
15. What is the participation rate?
16. What was the programme based on? (Who decided what it should entail)
17. How do you think the skills gained come in useful beyond the prison gates?
18. Do you think such programmes help reduce the recidivism rate?

19. Can you give concrete examples?

20. What in your opinion can be done to improve the recidivism rate?

21. Would you like to add anything else?

Mistoqsijiet għall-Intervista ma' Uffiċjal il-Habs

1. X'inhuma l-etajiet taz-zgħazagh ġewwa l-YOURS?
2. X'kien in-numru ta' persuni ġol-ħabs meta jien bdejt il-programm u kemm minnhom kienu għadhom taħt arrest?
3. Kemm ikunu twal bejn wiehed u ieħor is-sentenzi?
4. Kemm trid tkun twila s-sentenza biex iz-zgħazagh ikunu jistgħu jagħmlu korsijiet barra l-ħabs?
5. Ġewwa l-ħabs taħseb li hemm korsijiet edukattivi bizzejjed?
6. Trejning tal-istaff jezisti?
7. X'tip ta' skills taħseb li hemm bzonn ikollhom il-gwardjani?
8. Taħseb li gwardjan jista' jkun ukoll edukatur?
9. Tixtieq izzid xi ħaġa oħra ma' dak li għedna?

Questions for Interview with Local Prison Official

1. What are the exact ages of young people in the young offenders' section?
2. What was the number of offenders at YOURS when programme started and how many of those were still under arrest?
3. What is the average length of young people's conviction?
4. How long does their prison sentence have to be in order for them to be able to take up some educational courses outside the prison?
5. Are enough educational opportunities available to young people in prison?
6. Is training for staff existent?
7. What skills do you think prison guards need?

8. Do you think a guard can also be an educator?
9. Would you like to add anything else?