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Exploring the Relationship Between Education and Rehabilitation in the Prison Context

LORRAINE HIGGINS
National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Ireland

Abstract: *This article examines the relationship between education and rehabilitation within the prison context. It begins by exploring the concept of rehabilitation, examining if prison rehabilitation is possible or if it is what Pat Carlen describes as a "penal imaginary". Drawing on this idea, it considers how rehabilitation may act as a way of legitimising imprisonment and whether rehabilitation is in fact damaging and criminogenic. It then moves to explore other models of rehabilitation and imprisonment that may offer a more person-centred approach. Section two of the article begins by discussing understandings of adult education. It examines conflicting interpretations of education, settling on an understanding that is underpinned by principles of freedom. It then moves to explore how adult education is practised and understood within the prison context. Finally, this article analyses the relationship between prison education and prison rehabilitation, considering what kinds of education and rehabilitation may be conducive to supporting the holistic development of the person in prison.*

Keywords: *prison education, rehabilitation, adult education*

Introduction

In Ireland and Europe, education in prison is a human right. This right is enshrined in a variety of European and International documents including the *Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners* which states that "all prisoners shall have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality" (United Nations, 1990). Section 28 of the *European Prison Rules* (Council of Europe, 2006) acknowledges the right of every person in prison to be provided with "access to educational programmes which are as comprehensive as possible and which meet their individual needs while taking into account their aspirations", and, at a national level in Ireland, the *Prison Rules 2007* (The Government of Ireland, 2007, p. 72) affirms that "a broad and flexible programme of education shall be provided in each prison to meet the needs of prisoners". While these influential documents are crucial for the provision of education in prison, it is equally important to consider how these rights, therein, are interpreted and the consequences of such interpretations. Within Europe, there is a lack of consistency on how education is perceived and delivered and who is responsible for fulfilling this right (Costelloe & Warner, 2014; King, 2019). More worryingly, several authors have expressed concerns that in some instances prison education may be politically driven, defined by aims of recidivism and rehabilitation (Behan, 2014; Costelloe & Warner, 2008; O'Donnell & Cummins, 2014). While education may be conducive to supporting desistance and its capacity to aid the rehabilitation process is not a bad thing, such aims may be contrary to the philosophy of adult education as espoused by the Council of Europe's 1990 report on *Education in Prison*, if the model of rehabilitation we are speaking about does not

Correspondence: Lorraine Higgins, Email: lorraine.higgins.2018@mumail.ie

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reflect a similar ethos. Consequently, the purpose of this article is to bring prison education and prison rehabilitation into conversation with one another, exploring where their respective theories, concepts and philosophies converge and diverge. While this article predominantly focuses on the Irish context, much of what is discussed is relevant to other jurisdictions. This article is broken into three sections. Section one will begin by exploring the concept of rehabilitation: examining its definition, how it may be used to legitimise imprisonment, analysing its damaging and criminogenic potential as well as examining more liberty-centred and humanistic models of rehabilitation and imprisonment. Section two will then move to explore understandings of adult and prison education and examine the capacity for education within the prison context. Finally, section three will juxtapose prison education and rehabilitation and examine the lessons that can be learned from their respective insights.

Rehabilitation

What is Rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation is a much-contested and ambiguous concept within the field of criminology and can be understood as both a process and an outcome (McNeill & Graham, 2020; Vanstone, 2020). Mathiesen (2006) tells us that the word itself is of French and Latin origin, with "the French *re*, which means 'return' or 'repetition', and the Latin *habilis*, which means 'competent'" (p. 27), while Campbell (2010) defines rehabilitation as "the process of helping a person to readapt to society or to restore someone to a former position or rank" (p. 831). From the offset, both prove problematic if applied to criminal justice. The underlying assumption is that returning to, readapting to, or being restored to a prior social status is something that is both desirable and possible. However, Carlen (2013) maintains that this is often not the case. Imprisonment does not occur in a vacuum and the majority of people in prison come from the most impoverished sections of society (Smith et al., 2007). The experience of imprisonment often co-exists amongst factors such as educational disadvantage, health inequality, unemployment, addiction, family breakdown, and poverty, and people in prison tend to have little to which they can be advantageously habilitated (Carlen, 2013; Higgins & Bourke, 2017; IPRT, 2012). It therefore comes as little surprise that, where there are higher levels of income inequality, there are higher rates of imprisonment (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2007). This corresponds to research by O'Donnell et al., (2007) who found that the most deprived areas in Ireland had 149.5 prisoners per 10,000 population in comparison to 6.3 per 10,000 in the least deprived areas. In Ireland, such inequality is a result of the widening income gap between the rich and the poor (Sweeney, 2019). Sweeney (2019) also suggests that higher levels of inequality tend to result in the unequal distribution of economic and social resources resulting in "less socially cohesive societies" (p. 6). This inequality is evident in our prison systems, both in Ireland and abroad, which tends to see a high proportion of individuals who have experienced mental health problems, homelessness, addiction, and educational disadvantage (Fazel & Baillargeon, 2011; IPRT, 2012). Within the Irish context, individuals who have come through the care system, as well as people from the Travelling Community, also remain over-represented in our prison institutions (Carr & Mayock, 2019; IPRT, 2014). The reasons for the above are complex, and these experiences tend to intersect. While such experiences should not be confused with cause and effect, it is evident that state failings which result in heavier policing and punishment of the poor as well as a lack of legitimate opportunities and adequate services, has been shown to increase a person's likelihood of ending up in prison (Carr & Mayock, 2019; IPRT, 2012, 2014). All of this suggests that prisons act as recycling centres for the poor, reinforcing pre-existing disadvantage. Yet, the state, which fails "to respect, protect and fulfil human rights" (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2015, p. 7) seeks to legitimise imprisonment through aspirational aims of rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation as a Way of Legitimising Imprisonment

Sykes (1956) maintains that "few problems in modern criminology are more perplexing than the role of imprisonment in reforming the adult criminal" (p. 257). Yet, despite this, O'Donnell (2016) highlights that prison mission statements tend to be driven towards aims of rehabilitation. For example, the mission statement of the Irish Prison Service (2021) is to provide "safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities" while the Northern Irish Prison Service (n.d.) state that their overall aim "is to improve public safety by reducing the risk of re-offending through the management and rehabilitation of offenders in custody". We now must consider how such aims may work to legitimise imprisonment by aspiring to achieve 'safer communities' and 'public safety' through rehabilitation.

While public safety is a worthwhile goal, McNeill (2009) brings our attention to its potential pitfalls. In promising to protect the public we are confirming that a threat exists and in doing so instil and justify fear (McNeill, 2009). This helps to maintain an 'us' and 'them' mentality leading people to believe that prison is necessary to combat such risks. When prisons promise to 'crackdown on crime' through rehabilitation programmes, the goal is not to support the person in prison but rather to meet societal and political pressures (Mathiesen, 2006). Yet, a blind eye is often turned to such endeavours, and we are led to believe that rehabilitation programmes that target criminogenic risks, while ignoring the wider social and political causes of crime, can act as a "magic bullet" solution (Carlen, 2004, p. 260). In doing so, prison is not only legitimised by its rehabilitative ideology, but it serves to divert our attention away from the wider causes of crime that occur beyond the prison walls. Such approaches may help to ease society's conscience, however, by placing society's needs and desires ahead of those in prison we are only serving to ostracize and alienate people in prison further. The consequence of which often results in people leaving prison more damaged than when they went in (Costelloe, 2014; Muñoz, 2009).

Prison Rehabilitation as Damaging and Criminogenic?

It seems ironic that rehabilitation remains a key aim of imprisonment despite the abundance of research indicating that prison is inherently damaging and criminogenic (Mathiesen, 2006; O'Donnell, 2016). According to Ryan & Sim (2016), the prison is a place of subordination, rather than rehabilitation, and tends to be characterised by violence, intimidation and trauma. Gresham Sykes (2007) who coined the phrase 'pains of imprisonment' describes how the five pains caused by imprisonment (i.e. loss of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy and security) lead to the destruction of the individual's sense of belonging and self-worth.

O'Donnell (2016) attempts to formulate a definition for the aim of imprisonment that challenges false ideals, such as rehabilitation, stating that, "the aim of imprisonment is to reconstitute the prisoner's spatiotemporal world without causing avoidable collateral damage" (p. 39). In a time when rehabilitation places such emphasis on 'what works?', we are forced to consider "what hurts?" (Liebling & Maruna, 2005, p. 20). While it is wholeheartedly acknowledged that there are many forms of rehabilitative practices that are doing tremendous work, it is argued that rehabilitative practices that ignore the wider social and cultural context of crime have the potential to do more harm than good. Such efforts are often referred to as "personal rehabilitation" (McNeill & Graham, 2020, p. 1) or the "correctional model of rehabilitation" (Robinson & Raynor, 2006, p. 336) and are arguably the most commonly implemented and understood models of rehabilitation. These models tend to adopt a top-down, medicalised and deficit based approach, and can result in what Crewe (2011) has coined as tightness, depth and weight.

The metaphors of tightness, depth, and weight are used to explain the ever present, but invisible, penal control that grips those within the prison walls (Crewe, 2011; Crewe & Ievins, 2021). Influenced by Sykes, Crewe (2011, p. 509) uses "the pains of indeterminacy, the pains of psychological assessment and the pains of self-government" to analyse the harmful effects of

imprisonment on the psyche. The pains of indeterminacy refer to the lack of certainty and consistency within the prison regime. The prison is a "world where arbitrariness rules, the bureaucracy where logic takes an implacable form but makes little sense" (O'Donnell, 2015, p. 37) and where changes can happen "with the stroke of a pen" (Crewe, 2011, p. 518). Crewe (2011) identified the "fog of uncertainty" that people on indeterminate sentences faced concerning their sentence management and requirements for release (p. 514). The lack of clarity around how decisions were made and what was required led to feelings of confusion and insecurity, as was evident from Carter (cited in Crewe, 2011, p. 514):

> I went for the R and R course and they asked me all these questions and they said, 'well, you haven't got enough defects to do the course, we don't feel that you'll benefit from it'. They said to me, 'that's as good as a pass.' [But] my parole papers come back and it says 'you haven't done enough courses'.

The above statement highlights the bureaucracy and box ticking that is evidently present within the rehabilitation process. It also highlights how decisions are made with a lack of reason and rationale, and with little to no consideration of the consequences for those in prison.

The pains of psychological assessment are another very real pain of the rehabilitation process. Crewe (2011) uses this term to describe the invasion and control of psychological assessments that strip a person of their identity categorising them into labels of risk or psychological assessment. Such an approach is dehumanising and oppressive. However, psychological assessments carry weight and there is often little choice but to tolerate it even if it contradicts one's self-perceptions (Crewe, 2011). In Ireland, clinical and actuarial risk assessments are provided to the Parole Board by The Probation Service and The Psychology Service to determine if those serving life sentences are suitable for release (Griffin & Healy, 2019). These methods reduce a person to appropriate risk categories, ignoring the subjectivity of the individual. Clinical assessments require "carving up complex identities into abstract units to meet the requirements of the 'information system'" (Crewe, 2011, p. 515), while actuarial methods are a calculated prediction of the risk of offending based on specific predictors, for example, age, gender, and substance use (American Psychological Association, 2020). Crewe (2011) identifies several problems with such methods, stating that they fail to capture the multidimensional and subjective nature of the person in prison. It is also interesting to note that the social context of the individual, which is continuously ignored by such a rehabilitative endeavour, only appears to be relevant in terms of its criminogenic risk.

The pains of psychological assessment can also be understood in relation to "coerced correction" (McNeill, 2012, p. 6). Crewe (2009) describes how Prison Service psychologists expressed their concerns over the volume of ideologically driven rehabilitation programmes with unrealistic expectations. Such courses tend to offer little scope for personal reflection and while they may not be deemed mandatory, failure to participate can be viewed as an act of non-compliance (Crewe, 2009). Coercing individuals into partaking in such individualised programmes can serve to further alienate those in prison, reducing them to mere objects of control.

The final pain described by Crewe (2011) is the pain of self-government. This pain refers to the invisible but ever-present panoptic gaze that regulates and monitors the prison population. Crewe (2011) identifies how a physical presence is not necessary to cause pain. The use of incentivised regimes, drug testing, and psychological assessments means that constant surveillance is no longer necessary for control. Those in prison are at the mercy of the institution in ways that allegedly hands back freedom and control of sentence management. However, Crewe (2011) maintains that this freedom is an illusion only serving to enhance compliance. If you want to get out of prison it is no longer sufficient to merely 'keep the head down', individuals must be seen to be taking responsibility if they want to progress, for "when push comes to shove, they're the ones that do your reports' (Isaac, cited in Crewe, 2011, p. 519)

Other Models of Rehabilitation and Prison

As mentioned, rehabilitation is a complex concept and can mean very different things within different contexts. So far, this article has explored more traditional authoritarian understandings of rehabilitation that tend to adopt a top-down approach premised on risk and crime reduction. However, it is also accepted that other forms of rehabilitation, which recognise the person in prison as a social being, exist. One such example is the "humanistic and liberty-centred" model proposed by Rotman (1986, pp. 1025-1026). Unlike rehabilitation efforts mentioned previously, this "anthropocentric" approach is not underpinned by disciplinary objectives but rather prioritises the rights and needs of the person in prison (Rotman, 1986, p. 1026). The rights-based model values what it means to be *inside* prison, as well as preparing the person for life on release. This is an important departure from the types of rehabilitation previously discussed which tend to fixate on lowering recidivism rates and social control. As stated in the Whitaker Report (1985), rehabilitation programmes should not be legitimised by their ability to rehabilitate and reduce reoffending, instead, a rights-based approach acknowledges the links between social deprivation and crime and draws attention to the states obligation to provide rehabilitation (Robinson, 2008). Such efforts should aim to mitigate the damage caused by imprisonment and help to ensure that the person is no worse off than when they were committed (Rotman, 1986).

Concepts of freedom and trust are central to a rights-based model of rehabilitation. Rotman (1986) dismisses rehabilitation efforts that individualise responsibility and impose treatments that fail to recognise the person as a human and relational being. The Whitaker Report (1985) emphasises the importance of choice in the rehabilitative endeavour and calls for supports and services that are "facilitative, not coercive" (p. 92). This view is similarly supported by the Council of Europe (1990) which states that "genuine rehabilitation…can only take place in a context of freedom of choice, where they can explore their feelings and experiences, and can define for themselves 'where they are at'" (p. 42). Rotman (1986) proposes that, through voluntary dialogue and self-reflection, rehabilitation can help to nurture a sense of social responsibility and enable the person to recognise their place in the world. However, in an environment that often decimates the individual's sense of societal belonging, it is challenging to see how such an awakening can be realised. This sentiment is similarly expressed by Auty & Liebling (2020) who highlight the importance of prison dynamics in the rehabilitative process. It is therefore important to consider how a prison environment that is conducive to rehabilitation can be achieved.

Just as there is not one type of rehabilitation, so too is there not just one type of prison. While this article does not offer the scope to provide an in-depth analysis of the various types of penal systems, it does seek to provide an insight into what kinds of prisons may help to support rehabilitation. In doing so it is accepted that prisons differ in terms of relationships, architecture, ethos, and purpose, all of which matter in how imprisonment, and indeed rehabilitation, is experienced (Liebling, 2020). According to Liebling (2020), it is the moral climate, or the interpersonal relationships and treatment of people in prison that matters most. Liebling (2020) states that long-term change and positive outcomes are best supported in prisons where "staff professionalism, humanity, help and assistance, and clarity and organisation are higher" (p. 197). In particular, Liebling (2020) emphasises the importance of prison officers, which carry out the dual role of custodian and carer, in supporting a rehabilitative regime, a view that is also expressed in the Whitaker Report (1985).

Perhaps one of the most striking examples of a more humane and potentially rehabilitative penal system can be seen in what is often coined as "Scandinavian exceptionalism" (Pratt, 2008, p. 119). While this term has stirred considerable debate, particularly amongst Nordic researchers (Todd-Kvam & Ugelvik, 2020) lessons can be learned from what Pratt (2008) describes as a more humane and welfare orientated prison system. This view is supported by Warner (2021) who found the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland and Norway to have resisted

the same "punitive turn" as their Anglo-American counterparts (Warner, 2021). While there were some varying findings within the different jurisdictions Warner (2021) concludes that:

> Nordic countries have remained very restrained in their use of imprisonment, have adhered to high standards of humanity and human rights in the way people are treated in prison, and have largely maintained socially-inclusive approaches in responding to those who commit crime. (p. 127)

Warner (2021) uses three criteria to explore the levels of punitiveness within the Nordic system. These are: the scale of imprisonment, the depth, or quality of imprisonment, and the perception of the person in prison. Using these criteria, he highlights areas of good practice within the Nordic system including the use of open prisons, smaller prisons with lower population sizes, significant out-of-cell time (12-14 hours), higher use of single-cell accommodation, and appropriate sanitation facilities. The Nordic systems also placed an emphasis on human rights, with people in prison regarded as citizens. It was acknowledged that many of those in prison were there due to wider social and structural circumstances and consequently it was recognized that prison should be viewed as a last resort. These findings put forward by Warner (2021) echo much of what is suggested in the Whitaker Report (1985) and provide an example of how prison regimes can reconcile care and custody and resist severe punitive measures that may only serve to damage the person in prison and hinder the rehabilitative process.

Adult and Prison Education

Exploring Adult Education

As with rehabilitation, there are many ways of understanding and experiencing adult education. In its *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education,* UNESCO (2003) makes a good attempt at providing a broad and all-encompassing definition for adult education, describing it as:

> The entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development.

Here adult education is described as something that can be both formal and informal, an add on or a catch-up, aimed at achieving qualifications, or simply education for education's sake. UNESCO (2003) goes on to describe associated aims and principles of adult education which acknowledge the importance of the social and cultural context of the adult student, emphasising the importance of social justice, respect, diversity, relationships, critical thinking, cultural appreciation, the lived experience, personal and social development, active participation, and social responsibility. Arguably, what is most significant is its statement that adult education "should recognize that every adult, by virtue of his or her experience of life, is the vehicle of a culture which enables him or her to play the role of both learner and teacher in the educational process in which he or she participates". In this way UNESCO's (2003) explanation of adult education moves beyond what Freire (2017) describes at the "banking concept of education", reconciling the "student-teacher contradiction", and in doing so acknowledges the value of a holistic approach that is open to uncertainty, experimentation and freedom (p. 45).

When speaking of education, it is imperative to consider what it means to speak of education educationally (Biesta, 2020). Biesta & Säfström (2011) state that "to speak for education in an educational manner means to express an interest in freedom, and more specifically,

an interest in the freedom of the other; the freedom of the child, the freedom of the pupil, the freedom of the student" (p. 540). If education is to be the practice of freedom, then education must be a reciprocal and participatory process for both the student and the teacher (Freire, 2017; hooks, 1994). It should recognise learners as "whole beings with complex lives" and not simply "seekers after compartmentalised bits of knowledge" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). Engagement must be genuine and voluntary with Brookfield & Holst (2011) describing compulsory adult education as an "oxymoron" (p. 20). Emancipatory education rejects a prescribed curriculum and instead encourages teachers and students to engage in the co-creation of knowledge (Freire, 2017; hooks, 1994; Brookfield & Holst, 2011). Lindeman (cited in Knowles et al., 2012, p. 38) expresses a similar view stating that the knowledge and experience of the teacher and student are "exchangeable at par". If this does not happen Lindeman (1945) warns us that students will simply not engage. Thus, liberatory adult education requires the teacher to be both humble and brave. Freedom requires an openness to unpredictability and uncertainty, and educators must be willing to unleash control as well as eliminating certainties about what this freedom might look like (Todd, 2011).

Jarvis (2010) raises concerns about current attitudes that prioritise adult education for work and not the personal development of the student. While employment is a worthwhile endeavour of adult education, it should not be its sole purpose. Valuing adult education primarily as an instrument for economic gain (Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Knowles et al., 2012) serves to reinforce social inequalities and instil ideologies of individualism and competition (Kromydas, 2017). When we reduce our understanding of education to a function of society we limit its possibilities (Sidorkin, 2011). Instead, adult education is a collective endeavour that should seek to create a consciousness-raising, dialogical space where widely held ideologies can be critically explored (Brookfield & Holst, 2011). Brookfield (2001) defines ideologies as "broadly accepted sets of values, beliefs, myths, explanations, and justifications that appear self-evidently true, empirically accurate, personally relevant, and morally desirable to a majority of the populace, but that actually work to maintain an unjust social and political order" (p. 14). Thus, adult education is education "for use" (Lindeman, 1944, p. 116) and aims to interrupt such ideologies. However, this is not always a simple process, with Mezirow (1994) reminding us of our deep-seated resistance to change. Consequently, adult education is a "daring challenge" (Lindeman, 1944, p. 116) and if this challenge is to be accepted we must ensure that it draws on and offers meaning to the learners lives (Mezirow, 1994). This may be possible if we do what Lindeman (1944) suggests and use the past to interrogate the present. Such a perspective will help us to discover how we got to our current state of being. In this way it is future-orientated (Lindeman, 1944) with these insights revealing, as well as forcing us to confront, taken for granted assumptions that reinforce inequality and privilege, enabling us to strive for a more inclusive and just future.

Adult Education in the Prison Context

The Council of Europe (1990) states that prison education should adopt an adult education philosophy. Whilst prison education is not necessarily a panacea for the damaging effects of prison (Muñoz, 2009), an adult education approach can help to alleviate the "abnormal situation of imprisonment" (Council of Europe, 1990, p. 13). Acknowledging this, The Council of Europe (1990) emphasises the importance of drawing on life experiences and the promotion of active participation by learners. Education offered in prison must be experiential, participatory, and not "suffering from narration sickness" (Freire, 2017, p. 45). Offering this type of education can be transformative and can help to facilitate a change in the learner's perceptions of self, others, and the world. This view is supported by Costelloe & Warner (2014) who contend that offering prison education based on an adult education philosophy can help to promote critical and creative thinking, leading to the holistic development of the person. If this is to happen, it is crucial that prison education is *person* and not *prisoner* focused.

Imprisonment is the manifestation of control, while adult education can be understood as the practice of freedom. Such a disparity makes it difficult to conceive how genuine adult education is possible within the constraints of the prison. Offering education in prison is "inherently complex" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 5). Prison is intrinsically damaging - depersonalising, institutionalising and desocialising the individual. For education to operate in such an oppressive environment creates challenges for prison teachers and students (Muñoz, 2009). O'Donnell & Cummins (2014) highlight the challenges that prison teachers face in maintaining their professional integrity while not succumbing to the coercive and controlling aims of the prison establishment. For this to be possible prison education "must respect the integrity and freedom of choice of the student" (Council of Europe, 1990. p. 13). This freedom should not be restricted to the choice to participate but relates to the freedom of expression, the freedom to critically think, the freedom to interact, the freedom to participate and the freedom to speak freely (Council of Europe, 1990; O'Donnell & Cummins, 2014). While the prison is often premised on risk and control, an adult education ethos fosters past, present, and future potential, providing a space where autonomy is welcomed and encouraged.

Prison education should be a process that is relevant to life *inside* and outside of the prison regime (Costelloe, 2014; O'Donnell & Cummins, 2014). For this to be possible, the Council of Europe (1990) recommends that people in prison are provided with a broad, diverse, and flexible curriculum that takes into consideration their knowledge, skills, and experiences as well as their social and cultural context. Education should look beyond traditional forms of teaching and learning, often limited by outcomes and outputs, and embrace experimentation, critique and reflection. One such way this might be possible is through the creative arts. This was highlighted by a participant in O'Donnell's (2012, p. 13) review of the NCAD Art Programme in Portlaoise Prison, Ireland, who stated:

> I think you were giving them the keys to the door to their own personal space. It doesn't matter if you can't leave the cell. When you create art, it is an unlimited world, it is massive. Especially if you are there for a long time. You have given the keys to this magical place. When you are painting, you are gone, you are out of there. That is probably the most subversive and dangerous thing about it; there is no control.

The above reflection alludes to the freedom of education. Although the door may be locked, the mind is free. Education acts as a form of escape. It enables the person to escape the "daily drudge" (Behan, 2014, p. 23) of the prison routine and allows the person to shed their prison identity and become a student.

The Relationship Between Education and Rehabilitation

Prison Education and Rehabilitation: Mutually Exclusive or Mutually Compatible?

So far, we have explored rehabilitation and education as individual concepts, examining their definitions as well as exploring how they operate inside and outside the prison walls. This section will now explore how these concepts relate to each other within the prison context.

While an emancipatory adult education ethos acknowledges the person as an expert in their own life, this approach is often contrary to traditional models of rehabilitation. As previously mentioned, a correctional model of rehabilitation tends to adopt a top-down approach, which places the rehabilitation practitioner as the expert, to whom the person in prison must listen and learn. A participant in Crewe's (2009) research affirmed the problematic nature of this stating:

> If you want to make an impact on people's lives you need to talk to them about what they need and they want…An awful lot of the people in the general prison population are people who have been assaulted by society and have been alienated from it…I would say if you want to redress that, rehabilitate…Find

out where they are at. What has been missing. Why the system has failed…

From this statement, it is clear that if rehabilitation is to become possible practitioners must reject a medicalised approach where the "expert" prescribes treatment for individual deficiencies. Instead, they must come to know the person under their care as a social being and develop a person-centred, humanistic approach as espoused by Rotman (1986) and the Whitaker Report (1985). Problems of imprisonment will not be solved until practitioners look beyond what they *think* is needed and instead *ask* what is needed (Lyon, 2014). While education and rehabilitation may be seen as two separate endeavours, both can take insight and inspiration from principles of dialogue, humanisation and the lived experience as embraced by educationalists and criminologists alike who advocate for such values in their relevant disciplines (Freire, 2017; hooks, 1994; Lindeman, 1944; Maruna, 2012; Mezirow, 1994; Rotman, 1986; Whitaker Report, 1985). Such insights may help to break down barriers and contradictions and allow for pathways beyond prison to be realised.

While authoritative forms of rehabilitation often focus on fixing the person and/or making them 'fit back in', liberty-centred models of adult education and rehabilitation provides the person in prison with the opportunity to express themselves, to question and to disagree. This emancipatory approach encourages the individual to consider the "bigger picture of the structures that shape both the square peg and the round hole" (McNeill, 2017) . This process can be compared to what Freire (2017, p. 142) describes as the "unveiling of the world and of themselves". Both models strive to eradicate taken-for-granted assumptions, encourage critical reflection, thus creating opportunities for the person to "re-conceptualise their place in society" (Costelloe, 2014, p. 30). A similar analysis is presented by Behan (2014, p. 21) who states that an adult education approach and an anthropocentric model of rehabilitation "do not over emphasise or pathologize individual activity but seek to understand actions in wider social, political and economic contexts". Furthermore, both models acknowledge the importance of individual choice, emphasising the paradoxical and pathologizing nature of coercing the person in prison to engage in education or rehabilitation.

Recommendation 3 of the *Council of Europe Recommendations on Prison Education*, arguably underpins all 17 and 18 recommendations in both the Council of Europe's (1990) document and King's (2019) review. Recommendation 3 states that "education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context". This recognition of the whole person is crucial. It acknowledges the person in prison, first and foremost, as a human being, as well as acknowledging the array of identities each person may hold in society, such as student, father, son, mother, daughter, as well as a citizen with rights and needs. This is contrary to correctional rehabilitation narratives which tend to perceive the person in prison as a broken human, with one identity – namely, criminal; whose status as a citizen with rights and needs is questioned as a result of their incarceration (Crewe, 2011). Maruna & LeBel (2012, p. 76) highlight how such identifies can lead to a Pygmalion effect and instead suggest that people are more likely to change their lives for the better when those around them believe in them and recognise their capacity to change. Such a view is affirmed by Rotman (1986, p. 1026) who states that "the humanistic model of rehabilitation affirms the concept of prison inmates as possessors of rights" which in turn "generates feeling of self-worth…and favours the possibility of self-command and responsible action within society". Thus, when we stop viewing the person in prison through a deficit lens and instead recognise their humanity and citizenship, change can become possible. This view is further emphasized by Carlen (2013) who states that people in prison respond better to supports provided by staff who recognize them as citizens with rights and not 'offenders' and 'future risks'.

Evidence of a humanistic approach can also be found within prison education. In research carried out by Carrigan (2013, p. 239), we hear the narratives of eighteen adult learners from the Irish education units of Mountjoy Prison, St. Patrick's Institution and Limerick Prison. In this research, one student stated:

> At the end of the day when you come up here they don't treat you like you're a prisoner. They just treat you like you're normal…I get treated with respect when I come up here so. You're not treated like a child; you get treated like an adult.

What is crucial about this quote is that, within the prison's education unit, imprisonment does not define the person. It is a place where students are empowered to feel "normal", respected and "like an adult", a place where the person's potential is recognised and harnessed. The impact of such an approach was noted by Crewe (2009) and Behan (2014) who found that people in prison described the education unit as being distinct from the prison. This is in keeping with the Council of Europe's *Education in Prison* (1990, p. 18) which states that prison educators should:

> See those in their classes as adults involved in normal adult education activities… the past criminal behaviour of the students should be kept in the background, so that the normal atmosphere, interactions, and processes of adult education can flourish**.**

Education in prison is not a means to an end, but an end in itself (Costelloe, 2014). Education recognises the power of the process. Adult education is not solely valued in terms of its outcomes and outputs, but rather in terms of its transformative and emancipatory potential. Costelloe & Warner (2014, p. 238) tell us that "the way prison education is conceived and how the person in prison is perceived are two sides of the same coin". This article suggests that this statement can be further extended to rehabilitation, and it could be said that: the way *prison rehabilitation* is conceived and how the person is prison is perceived are two sides of the same coin. Consequently, education and rehabilitation efforts may be seen as compatible endeavours when they adopt an approach that prioritises the person and not the 'offender'.

Lessons to be Learned from Liberty-Centred Models of Education and Rehabilitation

The above analysis has explored distinctions and similarities between prison education and rehabilitation. It is often claimed that the purpose of education in prison is to promote rehabilitation and reduce reoffending (Costelloe & Warner, 2014; Warner, 2007) however, as this article demonstrates, it is imperative that we consider what type of rehabilitation we are talking about when considering such a claim. Although the benefits of reducing reoffending, for both society *and* the person in prison, cannot be argued, it should not be deemed as the sole objective of prison education or rehabilitation (Mulcahy, 2018; Rotman, 1986; Warner, 2007). Warner (2007) contends that justifying prison education by placing prominence on reoffending and recidivism rates is a narrow perspective. While Rotman (1986) expresses a similar sentiment in relation to rehabilitation. As discussed, prison, and certain forms of rehabilitation, are criminogenic and to justify the impact and value of prison education and rehabilitation against reoffending rates is naïve and does not take into consideration the many pains of imprisonment. A view which is echoed within the Whitaker Report (1985, p. 90) which identifies the prison as the "greatest single obstacle to the personal development of prisoners, and to reducing the conviction rate".

Prison education is often legitimised by its rehabilitative potential and the never-ending obsession with 'what works' continues to play a key role in how prison education is valued (Costelloe & Warner, 2014; Duguid, 2000). Research conducted by Duguid et al. (1998), which sought to measure the transformative potential of education using rates of recidivism, emphasised the complexity of the individual. They affirmed that while it may be possible to say that education could improve post release chances, such chances are also influenced by the individual's social and cultural contexts as well as their pre and post release experiences (Duguid et al., 1998). This analysis is crucial. Yet, just as correctional rehabilitation efforts tend to ignore the complexities surrounding imprisonment and reintegration, so too does it ignore such complexities when assessing 'what works' (Duguid, 2000). Duguid (2000, p. 60) ascertains

that "the most obvious lesson we can learn is that theories do not have to be true or even reasonably true to be powerful". This is important. Education and rehabilitation are often placed as competing endeavours (Duguid, 2000). When correctional rehabilitation validates its legitimacy based on low recidivism rates, it may cause prison authorities to question the value of prison education and indeed other, more holistic forms, of rehabilitation. Evidence of this was highlighted by Duguid (2000, p. 59) when the prison education programme he was involved in was "done in" by a more cost and time effective cognitive skills programme which promised to diagnose deficits and prescribe individual treatment. Despite the lack of substantial evidence, prison authorities were allured by its aim to tackle criminogenic risk and the capacity for such programmes to be delivered by prison staff. Ironically, it was later found that this cognitive programme was ineffective in reducing reoffending (Duguid, 2000). Yet the damage had been done and resulted in offence-focused programmes, which served to reduce the person to their criminogenic risk, to take influence in Canada and wider Europe (Costelloe & Warner, 2014).

There are many lessons to be learned from the above experience. Perhaps what is most crucial, and has been consistently addressed throughout this article, is the need to view the individual in prison as a citizen with rights and needs, a person with strengths and weaknesses, and a human being with multiple identities. A person's imprisonment should not define them. Labels such as 'felon', 'offender', 'convict', 'criminal', and 'prisoner' have the potential to further damage and ostracise those in prison. If prison education and rehabilitation focus on labels of criminality and aims of reoffending, there is the danger that the holistic benefits of both will be lost. In doing so, the potential for authentic transformation and change may become impossible (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). Prison education and rehabilitation should not be valued solely on their potential to reduce criminogenic risk and reoffending. Instead, we must recognise their potential, both outside *and* inside the prison, as processes that have the potential to enable the person in prison to realise their potential, interrogate their place in the world and experience freedom.

Conclusion

There remains no consensus of how education and rehabilitation should be experienced and practised within the prison institution. As discussed in this article, many theorists in both education and criminology provide us with different roles and purposes of each endeavour. In the introduction of this article, it was stated that education is enshrined as a human right at an international, European and national level, for example in the *Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners* (United Nations, 1990), the *European Prison Rules* (Council of Europe, 2006), and the *Prison Rules 2007* (The Government of Ireland). However, while these documents also refer both directly (i.e., the *European Prison Rules* and the *Prison Rules 2007)* and indirectly (i.e., *the Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners)* to rehabilitation the ambiguity and lack of consensus of what is meant by rehabilitation undermines its efforts and can have damaging consequences for people in prison. Just as Behan (2021) emphasises that prison education is a right and not a privilege, the same can be said for rehabilitation. With this in mind, neither education nor rehabilitation should be co-opted into aims ascribed by punitive penal policies and must adopt an approach that is parallel to that of liberatory models of adult education (Brookfield & Holst, 2011; Freire, 2017; hooks, 1994; Knowles et al., 2012; Lindeman, 1944) and person-centred models of rehabilitation (Mulcahy, 2018; Rotman, 1986; Whitaker Report, 1985). Such models embody principles of freedom, humanisation and the lived experience and have the potential to limit the pains of imprisonment and allow the person in prison to realise a more positive future.

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Lorraine Higgins is a second-year PhD student in Maynooth University. Her research aims to bring the fields of education and criminology into conversation with one another and gain an insight into the experience of prison education in Ireland and how this experience relates to theories and processes of reintegration, rehabilitation, and desistance.

Lorraine is a Home Economics teacher, teaching in Cork Prison and the Dillon's Cross Project, in Ireland. She has also worked as a Core Skills Instructor in HMP Addiewell in Scotland.