

Case HIPPO / Else Joutsu and Heikki Takkunen / Finland

Introduction: In the targetgroup in our case is a group of typical inmate students in the prevocational level. One perhaps the most important learning needs are the skills to become an effective and cooperative team member in a working team or in a study group. The detection of these learning needs can be made by specialists (study counselor of prison, prison teacher, psychologist, officer who makes sentence planning etc.). These needs can become perceived from the study or work history of an inmate or from their inability to join in the mainstream study groups in prisons.

Description of study group: In this case there is a group of prisoners in prevocational level of their studies. They are eight students and their learning environment is an open prison. Three of them have been either in the uppersecondary education or have been working in the open labourmarket. In this group is also some so-called normal prisoners. They participate to this prevocational learning group because they are in need of some activities and somehow they can't work in the prison's activities. We call this subgroup as *able ones*; in principle they know and manage the structure of a purposeful action.

Five of the students are unexperienced or "green" according to *goal oriented lecal activities* – we can think that they are one kind handicapped; they don't own that mental structure that is necessary in work or the vocational studies. We call this subgroup *goal invalids or aimless* and this invalidity prevents their ways to the vocational education or even working in prisons not to mention in the free society. This is the fast growing subgroup in our prisons.

The dynamic of this study group: The dynamic / atmosphere of whole group is tense because some are capable to challenging teamwork and some are not. They all have one common problem: **which** could be my *goal oriented lecal activities*. *The able ones* have the problems to find meaning or purpose to their energy investment and the *goal invalids* have also this problem but also the problem of methods – how to keep any activity in the preconditioned frame. The preconditions can be self defined, defined by the teacher or by whole group together. When the *goal invalids* meet challenge in their learning and they should step ahead from their comfort zone and start to work on the learning issue they easily try to sabotage whole learning situation. In this moment the teacher is in a "hot seat"; should he/she try the authoritative methods even some sanctions or punishments or should he/she try to be nice one and let the whole group interrupt the learning activity and start some pleasuring activities, for instance playing computer games.

Our pedagogic philosophy: The choice we prefer is the freirean pedagogical theory and philosophy. This is the moment of reflection - analysing what happens just now. Asking the group: "why you try to interrupt learning activities is this typical choice you make in learning situation... what are the consequences of this choice ... what are your motivations just now etc.". The freirean teacher knows that if they don't learn the structure of the goal oriented activity their ways to the vocational education and to free labourmarket will be closed. The freirean teacher also knows that the goals must come from themselves not from the teacher or from the prison administrators. The critical knowhow is the ability to use above-mentioned *reflective groupwork / groupanalysing* and *generative theme* searching process together with the the group.

- ⇒ Freirean principles in the prevocational prison education means negotiations between the buyer of the education (= prison administration and the ministry of education) and the school institution and the teacher and the learners. Official curriculum for the prevocational education defines the main frames but usually these frames are so broad that the learners and the teacher can together develop the concrete goals for lessons and methods for reaching these goals.

Learning should happen in the real context. It means that learning environment must intrinsically be *goal oriented activity* - not for instance just being busy (hobbying) or traditional school where the teacher lectures facts to passive students. No banking education, says Paulo Freire.

The first big problem is **searching the common generative theme** that motivates all learners to train their own willpower, resilience, brain systems. The common generative theme makes possible to learn also social skills because working in the common theme means communication and collective problemsolving. We think that in the beginning of the learning period it is important to search common curriculum (learning plan). The teacher should make this together with learning group so that everyone could experience themselves as "sitting in the drivers seat instead of sitting in the passengers seat".

Inside of the learning period there exists many lessons and there is need to find some generative theme for every single lesson.

One example: (Written by Else Joutsu)

Ceramic workshop instruction: 8 student in the group and one trainer

according the learning plan in ceramic studies the focus is to learn and practice some handcraft techniques of ceramics and get to know ceramic process.

in this workshop we had decided to make a tea- / coffee cup by hand (The freirean generative theme was to make some present for close relatives)

this theme had been decided together after long and varying discussions

the whole learning plan is based on the students' wishes and wills so that this learning unit and the orders for that are based on students' interests

all the students participated in planning and teaching but some of them did not make the cup

the teaching methods were: demonstrations, lecturing, explaining, questioning and making trials

most of the students were quite restless and were making questions all the time during the teaching most of them could not concentrate and were disturbing others

as the trainer I had to interrupt teaching many times and remind students of our common theme and ask the students if they still are willing to make/ learn this task

most of the time the studying period was quite chaotic

when the students started to work with the task, the situation became even more chaotic

they were not capable to use same tools and same materials with others and even working in the

same room with others was very difficult

by means of individual guidance they managed a bit better

anyway through big efforts all the cups got done

Reflectiondiscussion: next day we had the reflectiondiscussion as usual, students are used to that discussion goes: **1.** What was done? **2.** Which were the goals and why the task was done? **3.** What was my role and how did I managed? **4.** What was best and worse in my working? **5.** Did I learn something new? **6.** What was my own effect to the whole learningprocess?

in all 6 parts everybody talks and listens to others.

I write down all the comments (positive and negativ ones) and check that I have uderstood all correctly

after that there is one more discussion cycle where the conclusions and corrective propoasals are made

in this case the reflectiondiscussion was very hard and difficult, most of them were somehow ashamed and they did not "remember" their own working and behaviour

freirean mainpriciples,that I will adapt in my teaching are: **1.** Subjectivity / objectivity **2.** Dialogy **3.** Generative themes **4.** Praxis (Working and talking) **5.** To code and deconstructing of the codes **6.** To become aware **7.** Recognizing own attitudes **8.** Reasoning/ synthesising **9.** Assist the change process

in this case it was very hard to try to follow these freirean principles, but however it was worthwhile. We succeeded to catch to the biggest generative theme: what should everyone learn to keep goal oriented activity on going.

Conclusions: We have in Finland good possibilities for prevocational education for prisoners with special needs (= the aimless ones or goal invalids). The ministry of education is financing this education – so it is no costs for prisons.

- Our problems = challenges are the the contents (including teaching methods) of this education. We have not made any deeper analysis about the educational needs of inmates and connect the prevocational education to intrinsic part of vocational or some other learning path. In the next project (RISE) we hope that we could do this analysing and method development together.
- Our curriculum in prevocational education of inmates could be ½ year long. Challenge is to plan the moduls (steps to vocational or general academic studies) so that each modul (step) gives enough challenges for every learner and the path (stairs) are so planned that each learner works most of the time in his proximal development zone instead of hanging around in his comfort zone just

enjoining oneself. This makes big preconditions to the content of lessons, teaching methods and to learning environments in prisons –also high quality requires enough resources for teaching and training.

- The teaching methods based on Paolo Freires critical theory are worth of trying, especially when trying to find new ways of teaching *basic skills* and detecting the *learningneeds* of the inmate students.

- Freirean theory/ pedagogy together with theory of action psychology (Vygotsky, Leontjev, Dewey) and not to mention modern criminology and reseach of offenders transformation /change process (Maruna, Ward, Giordano) gives good basis in planning education for this kind special group.

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