



HIPPO World Café in Luxembourg 13th of May 2011

During the World Café, the Hippo team discussed which structures, networks outside prison, prison staff's skills and also methods that can motivate inmates' to take part in educational offers and learning processes while in prison.

The idea behind these questions is that human beings can develop and learn during lifelong learning processes and that education processes (formal, informal, non-formal) need to be motivating and well planned and structured. All factors involved in the learning processes have to be considered, like structures, networks, staff skills and methods, and have to enable the learner (inmates) to successfully implement learning processes. This approach together with looking for good practice will provide the learner with motivating learning environment. This is an inclusive approach to learning.

The following results are a summary of the World Café discussions. The results also to a large extent sum up the discussions and impressions from the study visits of the Hippo learning partnership.

Structures

One conclusion from the discussions on structures it is important to work on the different levels of structures inside prison and to create

- a strategic plan for a learning environment in prison that also supports participation aspects and involves inmates
- an infrastructure that allows inmates to learn, also 'learning by doing' and that enables inmates to go through learning processes

A strategic plan or global concept should be clear, transparent, supported from outside and evaluated, and should express the cultural identity of the prison. The strategic plan should also be flexible and allow the structures to be adapted to the inmates' needs and to new tasks. All members of staff should be involved in the implementation of the strategic plan.

The structures of a prison should provide a learning environment for all actors, staff and inmates as well as partners from outside. This means that any situation in the prisoners' life is a learning situation. Motivated staff is necessary to have motivated inmates, and we need structures that make it easier to motivate inmates to take part in education. Participation is a key-factor for motivation and should be implemented inside the prison structures.

It is also important that the physical environment is suitable for education and learning. The organisation of prisons should take into account that prisons are also a structure for rehabilitation and should therefore be more oriented towards the needs of the inmates. Establishing systems to evaluate and assess inmates learning needs and wishes is important in this context.

Structures of a prison can also be divided in

- software structure, like aims, communication, participation of different groups of staff
- hardware structure, like payment of staff, inclusion of NGO's, payment of inmates



The structures of the prison should give prison staff the possibility to reflect on their daily work regularly. This is a measure that will contribute to keep a certain quality standard.

A prison structure should comprise these elements:

- job rotation in penitentiary institutions, e.g. civil servants that work inside and outside prison
- professional leadership and leaders with visions
- less hierarchical structures and more active involvement of all actors in prison
- mentors that assist inmates

Networks

The World Café discussions indicated that we have two levels of networks:

- official networks on an organizational level
- individual networks

Both are connected to each other, both can be informal and formal.

The sustainability of networks is important and must be ensured. Networks need to be official and institutionalized and as such be based on commitment through cooperation agreements or contracts. Networks should not only depend on informal or personal relationships and individual enthusiasm. Networks with the outside community should be based on formal structures and work on different levels with a strategic plan and/or within a legal framework. Individual enthusiasm is important but can also exist inside the formal structure. An 'open prison day' in closed prisons where e.g. employers are invited and the local community involved can function as a network 'marketing' instrument.

It is of great importance that the network partners have common visions and agree on values and norms.

Further needed elements of a network are:

- an ongoing evaluation process that enables to adapt changes in the network structures
- networks that fit the needs of the local area
- well functioning information and data transfer between the network partners
- actors from outside that are familiar with prison reality



An official network needs a good coordination and should include all relevant actors, like:

- Ministries of Justice, of Education, of Social Affairs and Labour
- Labour Office
- Welfare Offices
- Probation Services
- Schools
- NGO's
- Prison staff
- Other decision makers
- Local business

We need networks that support lifelong learning processes for all relevant actors like inmates, prison staff, and people from outside workings with offenders. We also need a better communication structure inside prison.

On the individual level, we need positive social networks for inmates inside prison:

- a transition manager as a key-person for the inmate that can also support the inmate building a new individual network.
- a transition manager who also support inmates' networks of peers and family. We might need also a virtual social network for inmates
- an inclusive approach to individual networks
- network structures that link inside and outside social networks of inmates

We have less experience how to assist and coach the offender to build up 'good' and 'non-criminal' social networks after release and acknowledge that this may be a challenge.

Skills of the prison staff

Another conclusion from the discussions on the skills that prison staff needs was that professional leadership in prison is important.

Important elements should be:

- professional staff with good communication skills which are regularly trained, in e.g. negotiation, self-reflection, giving professional feed-back, confronting
- awareness raising among prison staff about their role and about values and attitudes towards colleges and inmates
- discussion about the understanding of lifelong learning
- 'prison guards' as 'prison guides' who understand that they do pedagogical work
- training of a professional staff attitude characterized by the willingness to assist the inmate and professional consulting
- development of a human resource culture in prison



- prison staff needs to inform the inmates about what they educate, teach or do
- the staff needs to be informed about projects and courses in prison

Prison staff should understand their work as Learning Assistant Facilitator for inmates, who supports their (step by step) success, inspires their reflection and shows them their possibilities of development. Prison staff's attitude and prison staff's use of social skills are also important for an educational purpose.

Methods to motivate inmates to take part in education

Concerning the needed methods in prison, the World Café discussion shows that we need a positive approach to talents and knowledge, and development of a learning culture. This means a competence approach in the prison environment.

Methods and tools should be:

- skills assessment (validation of prior learning) that focuses on the inmate's resources rather than their deficits in the beginning of imprisonment
- need assessment
- the possibility to join classes during the whole day
- individual portfolios that are adapted to the inmates' learning process
- an integration coach or a learning assistant for inmates
- various methods and activities like portfolio working, group discussions, methods for (self) reflection, notebook or diary, etc.
- a "fair" in prison where all external and internal education providers present themselves with their offers

It is furthermore important to establish a perspective of cooperation and use the intrinsic motivation of inmates by asking for their dreams, visions and perspectives. A stable and professional relationship between staff and inmates will contribute to encourage the individual development of inmates. To this purpose it is important to establish a positive way of communicating and also that prison staff believe in education and learning for inmates.

Teachers that are specialized for adult education and for education with special needs is important. We also need two types of educational offers in prison; short term learning with quick win situations and a more long term learning process with the aim of successful integration in mind.