



# The Learning Chronicles

The newsletter of the Australasian Corrections Education Association

*Edition 8, February 2024*

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## President's Report

**By ACEA President, Helen Farley**

Kia ora whānau,

I am filled with optimism as we embark on the journey that is 2024. This year holds tremendous potential for achieving significant milestones and fostering the exchange of best practices not only within our region but also with our colleagues in overseas jurisdictions. Reflecting on my interactions with our counterparts at the European Prison Education Association (EPEA) in 2023, it became evident that they face similar challenges and triumphs as our own prison educators. It is heartening to discover shared barriers, but equally inspiring are the transformative initiatives unfolding in various regions that hold valuable lessons for us.



In the spirit of collaborative learning, we aim to draw insights from the practices and groundbreaking research occurring across Australasia, offering a reciprocal exchange of knowledge with our international partners. The recently postponed conference, now scheduled for this year, aligns with the EPEA's events, allowing for a strategic and coordinated approach to knowledge dissemination.

As we continue to finalise administrative changes initiated in 2023, adapting to the evolving landscape brought about by the challenges of the COVID era has proven to be a more intricate task than anticipated. The reconfiguration of our bank account, email systems, and constitutional adjustments, among other modifications, has been prolonged due to staffing constraints and the logistical complexities of our office bearers not being physically co-located. Mundane tasks, such as invoice payments, have become unnecessarily complicated, akin to orchestrating an overseas wedding!

However, this approach is pivotal for establishing a robust foundation for future office bearers. Streamlining processes and implementing effective systems now will pave the way for the ACEA Executive and Advisory Council to focus on the crucial mission of advancing prison education and training.

Reflecting on the accomplishments of the past year, two notable achievements stand out. Firstly, ACEA has undergone a transformation, becoming more inclusive with the incorporation of diverse special interest representatives within our Advisory Council. A Māori representative, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative, a First Nations representative, a Lived Experience representative, and a Vocational Education representative have all contributed to our enriched and inclusive organisation. Secondly, through a series of engaging webinars and newsletters, we have established direct connections with over 1200 academics and professionals working in the field, actively participating in research, including studies addressing the well-being of prison educators.

With a plethora of activities on the horizon, this promises to be an exceptionally exciting year for ACEA, as we continue to champion inclusivity, collaborative learning, and the advancement of prison education on a global scale.

Noho ora mai,  
*Helen*

## First ACEA webinar for 2024

**By Helen Farley**

We are proud and excited to announce the first ACEA webinar for 2024! The webinar will be held on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 3pm NZDT, 1pm AEDT, 12pm AEST. Look for the time in your time zone [here](#). It is titled: [Innovative Solutions in Correctional Education and Employment: The Western Australian Model](#) and will be presented by **Dr Fiona McGregor**.

**Abstract:** Western Australia is, geographically, the single largest corrective services jurisdiction in the world. As such, it presents multiple challenges for delivery of education, employment and transitional services to a prisoner population spread throughout 17 prisons (and 1 privately run prison) and additional 7 work camps across 2.5 million square kilometres. Despite this, in the last 30 years, there has been considerable innovation in multiple areas of delivery. This webinar describes the Western Australian model of delivery, through its Education, Employment and Transitional Services (EETS) division, outlining the pathways for prisoner learners from assessment through to its national award-winning traineeships program and other new initiatives such as the Entry to General Education curriculum now owned by the Department of Justice WA's own RTO, ASETS and the Prisoner Employment Program (PEP). This webinar also describes our partnerships with employers and tertiary providers to enable wider access to education, training and employment pathways for people in custody.

**Presenter bio:** Dr Fiona McGregor is currently working as External Partnerships Coordinator for Education, Employment and Transitional Services (EETS) within the Department of Justice WA after completing her PhD which explored the relationship between engaging in adult basic skills learning in prison and desistance from crime, Fiona is passionate about the value prison education, training and employment bring to the desistance process and works to engage external partners to widen access to high quality learning, training and work experiences for people in custody in WA.

Fiona has over 30 years' experience in education (20 in prison education), originally as a secondary school English teacher and then a prison educator, manager, government adviser, consultant inspector and researcher. Initially specialising in juvenile and young adult male offender education in UK and Australian prisons, Fiona has developed a deep interest in women in prison and Indigenous Australians, who are the most incarcerated people on earth, and is committed to equity and inclusion.

When not at work, Fiona is generally an uber, feeding and banking service for 3 busy kids, their animals, and friends.



## Results of the ACEA elections

**From Helen Farley**

At the AGM held 14 December 2023, elections were held to fill vacant Executive Committee and Advisory Council positions. Executive Committee terms are staggered so that there is never a completely new Executive Committee. We felt that was important for continuity. Positions are for

two years. Advisory Council roles are for 1 year. We would like to welcome the following people either continuing in their roles or welcome those into new roles.

### **Executive Committee**

Helen Farley – *President*  
Stavroola Anderson – *Vice President*  
Stephen Seymour – *Secretary*  
Margaret Farmer – *Treasurer*  
Len Nielsen – *Financial Officer*  
Fiona McGregor – *Partnerships Office*  
Tarryn Jones – *Communications Office*  
Lorna Barrow – *Public Officer (not an elected position)*

### **Advisory Council**

Vacant (nomination pending) – *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representative*  
Nicola Guthrie-Smith – *Australian Capital Territory Representative*  
Vacant – *First Nations Representative*  
Ron Wilson – *Immediate Past President*  
Tatiana Harrison – *International Representative*  
Lukas Carey – *Lived Experience Representative*  
Moana Solomon – *Māori Representative*  
Dmitri Psiropoulos – *New South Wales Representative*  
Belinda Dawson – *New Zealand Representative*  
Samuel Woods – *Northern Territory Representative*  
Nicole Kennedy – *Queensland Representative*  
Jane Garner – *Research Representative*  
Carl Schneider – *South Australia Representative*  
Jacob Stevens – *Student Representative*  
Sarah Howe – *Tasmania Representative*  
Vacant – *Victoria Representative*  
Fazluz Zaman – *Vocational Education and Training Representative*  
Lisa Cross – *Western Australia Representative*  
Jocelyn Humbley – *Youth Justice Representative*

In the next issue, we will have some information about each of these office bearers, along with contact details so you can contact your local representative. In the meantime, email me ([president@acea.org.au](mailto:president@acea.org.au)) if you need to contact any of them).

***ACEA is proudly sponsored by the Faculty of Law at the University of Canterbury.***



## Our conference is coming up! 15th Biennial International Australasian Corrections Education Association Conference: Broadening Horizons: Navigating A Chaotic World

*From Helen Farley*

**Tuesday 11 June - Thursday 13 June 2024**

The scope of this virtual conference reflects the dynamic landscape of corrections education in today's ever-changing world. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting societal norms, and unprecedented global challenges, corrections education plays a crucial role in empowering individuals to navigate through chaos and uncertainty. This theme invites exploration into innovative approaches, best practices, and emerging trends within corrections education, aiming to broaden horizons for both educators and learners alike.

It also reflects the pressing need to adapt corrections education in response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other societal disruptions. Amidst this chaos, there is a crucial emphasis on addressing the unique educational needs of diverse populations and indigenous overrepresentation, including Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.



### ***Topics under this theme could include:***

Creating and delivering education programs to help address the overrepresentation of Māori and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in corrections.

Youth empowerment in youth justice education.

Adapting education programs for incarcerated individuals to address emerging challenges such as digital literacy and online learning.

Incorporating cultural competency and diversity training into corrections education to promote inclusivity and equity.

Leveraging technology and distance learning platforms to expand access to education in remote or underserved corrections facilities.

Integrating vocational training and job readiness programs into corrections education to facilitate successful reintegration into society.

Addressing the impact of substance abuse and addiction on education outcomes within correctional settings.

Examining the role of restorative justice principles in shaping educational practices within correctional institutions.

Fostering collaboration between corrections educators, practitioners, and community stakeholders to enhance educational outcomes for justice-involved individuals.

Practitioner papers: What works?

### **Keynote speakers**

We have a number of exciting announcements to make about speakers. Here is our first tranche of speakers!

#### **Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Finnish Prisons *Pia Puolakka, Senior Specialist, Team Leader* Prison and Probation Service of Finland**

The Prison and Probation Service of Finland completed the Smart Prison project in 2018-2022. The intention of the project was to digitalize Finnish prisons and progress the development of new Artificial Intelligence (AI) based solutions for offender management and rehabilitation. Among these solutions are specific recommendation systems for sentence planning and managing release from sentence, as well as enhancing digital and AI literacy of prisoners, using Virtual Reality (VR) for rehabilitative purposes and training AI as prison work. The key projects we're currently leading include RISE AI: a feature for our new offender management system Roti to assist assessment, planning and service counseling of offenders and Aurora AI: the national AI program that offenders are testing for their release planning. Training AI as prison work is currently done in four prisons including a women's prison, and AI literacy of prisoners is enhanced by three free online courses provided by Helsinki University. VR programs for rehabilitative purposes are used by prison psychologists in their clinical work with prisoners. The purpose of this presentation is to describe experiences from these development projects: what we've learned and how do we proceed with these projects in the future. In my presentation I will also discuss the ethical questions of using AI based on the expert work done in defining the recommendations for the use of AI in corrections by the Council of Europe.



**Bio:** Pia Puolakka is the Project Manager of the Smart Prison Project, under the Criminal Sanctions Agency, within Finland's Central Administration Unit. Pia is a forensic psychologist with degrees from the University of Helsinki and Åbo Akademi. She has also done further studies at Aalto University in Artificial Intelligence and digitalisation for the purposes of designing the current Smart Prison Project.

#### **Rehabilitation, Recognition and Misrecognition *Fergus McNeill* University of Glasgow**

In this paper, I draw on findings from and experiences of a range of recent research projects to explore and challenge the nature of contemporary 'rehabilitation'. I first explore how and when rehabilitation communicates the misrecognition of criminalised people, thus representing a form of symbolic (state) violence. But then I examine examples of rehabilitative processes and practices that recognise not just the dignity and worth of criminalised people, but also their potential. I conclude by discussing the implications for how rehabilitation should be conceptualised and practiced so as to

promote dignity, respect and recognition. I end by discussing why this matters so much for the future of criminal justice, and for the role of education within it.

**Bio:** Fergus McNeill is Professor of Criminology and Social Work at the University of Glasgow where he works in the [Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research](#) and in Sociology. Prior to becoming an academic in 1998, Fergus worked for a decade in residential drug rehabilitation and as a criminal justice social worker. His many research projects and publications have examined institutions, cultures and practices of punishment and rehabilitation and their alternatives. Most recently, between 2017-21, Fergus led '[Distant Voices: Coming Home](#)', a major, multi-partner Economic and Social Research Council/Arts and Humanities Research Council project which explored re-integration after punishment through creative practices and research methods. His recent books include '[Reimagining Rehabilitation: Beyond the Individual](#)' (with Lol Burke and Steve Collett) and '[Pervasive Punishment: Making sense of mass supervision](#)' (the winner of the European Society of Criminology's 2021 Book Prize).



**How we fail children who offend and what to do about it: 'A Breakdown across the whole system' Professor Ian Lambie ONZM**

**Chief Science Advisor | Justice Sector  
University of Auckland**

**Bio:** Ian is Professor in Clinical Psychology at Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland, where he teaches clinical, forensic, child and adolescent psychology. His specialist clinical and research interests are in child and adolescent mental health, childhood trauma and youth justice, building on more than 30 years' experience working with children and adolescents and their families. Initially as a general and psychiatric nurse, then as a specialist clinical psychologist, he has worked with children and adolescents with severe conduct problems and trauma, in both family and criminal-justice settings, and was involved for 15 years in programmes for adolescents with harmful sexual behaviour and children who deliberately light fires. His academic position is an opportunity to build robust, applicable knowledge in these areas, including in training new forensic and clinical psychologists, and advising Fire & Emergency on child firefighters and Oranga Tamariki on child offenders. He was made an Honorary Fellow of the New Zealand Psychological Society for his services to Psychology in New Zealand in 2018. As Science Advisor for the Justice Sector two days a week, Ian works across the Ministry of Justice, Department of Corrections and Police, as well as maintaining links with the broader social sector including Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Health. In 2020, Ian was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to clinical psychology and youth justice.



***Audience***

The audience for this virtual conference encompasses a diverse range of professionals and stakeholders involved in corrections education across Australasia and around the world. This includes educators, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, frontline workers, program coordinators, and community stakeholders. Additionally, individuals with a vested interest in the intersection of education and corrections, such as representatives from government agencies, non-profit organisations, and advocacy groups, are encouraged to participate. The virtual format of the conference offers accessibility to a wide audience, including those from remote or underserved areas. Participants share a common goal of advancing the field of corrections education, exploring innovative approaches, and addressing the challenges posed by today's complex and rapidly evolving world. By engaging in collaborative discussions, sharing best practices, and exchanging insights, attendees contribute to a collective effort to enhance educational outcomes and promote positive change within corrections.

***Submit a paper!***

Are you passionate about advancing educational opportunities within correctional settings, whether juvenile or adult? Do you believe in the power of education to transform lives? If so, we invite you to submit a paper! This conference provides a platform for researchers, practitioners, and educators to share innovative ideas, evidence-based practices, and promising initiatives in the field of corrections education. Whether you're conducting groundbreaking research, implementing effective educational programs, or advocating for policy change, your contributions are invaluable in shaping the future of corrections education. Join us in our mission to create more equitable and inclusive opportunities for incarcerated learners. Submit your paper to the ACEA Conference and be a part of this important conversation.

***Practitioner papers***

Practitioner papers provide a much-needed platform for sharing real-world experiences, innovative strategies, and practical insights that can inform and inspire corrections professionals. Whether you're a frontline worker or a program coordinator, your firsthand knowledge and expertise are invaluable for sharing practice. By submitting a paper, you have the opportunity to contribute to a collective learning environment, where fellow practitioners can benefit from your successes, learn from your challenges, and gain new perspectives on navigating the complexities of our ever-changing world. Your unique experiences and practical solutions have the power to shape the future of corrections education and empower us to broaden our horizons in response to challenges. Join us in elevating the conversation and making a tangible difference.

**Practitioner Papers:** If you are submitting a practitioner paper, ensure that it focuses on practical experiences, innovative strategies, and insights relevant to corrections professionals. Highlight real-world examples and solutions that can inform and inspire fellow practitioners.

***Submission instructions***

Your abstract should be up to 250 words and should clearly summarise the key points of your proposed paper.



Write in clear, concise language, avoiding unnecessary jargon. Clearly state the purpose of your paper, the methods used (if applicable), key findings or insights, and the implications for corrections education practice.

Email your abstract to: [abstracts@acea.org.au](mailto:abstracts@acea.org.au). Provide:

- Your name,
- Contact information,
- Affiliation (if applicable), and
- Any co-authors' details.

### ***Paper formats***

Paper presentations will typically be 20 minutes long (15 minutes + 5 minutes questions.)

Alternative formats will be considered. If you have a proposal for an alternative format, email: [president@acea.org.au](mailto:president@acea.org.au). Panel discussions, extended papers, and workshops will also be considered.

Ensure that your abstract is submitted before **Friday 16 April 2024** 12 midnight AEST. *Late submissions may not be considered.*

### ***Process***

Your abstract will undergo a review process by experts who will assess its relevance to the conference theme, clarity, originality, and contribution to the field of corrections education.

You will receive notification regarding the acceptance of your abstract. If accepted, you will receive further instructions on preparing your paper for presentation at the conference. There is a discounted rate for registration at the conference if your paper is accepted.

We look forward to receiving your abstract and your valuable contribution to the conference. Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us.

For further information, contact [president@acea.org.au](mailto:president@acea.org.au).

### ***We need you!***

We need some more willing helpers and creative thinkers!

There are some ways you can help us out:

***Join the ACEA Conference Sub-committee:*** If you are interested in helping shape the 2024 conference, join the Sub-committee. Many hands make light work! If you are interested, email me: [president@acea.org.au](mailto:president@acea.org.au).

***Give us feedback:*** We asked for your feedback at the time but now you've had time to reflect, is there anything else you'd like to tell us? We have a lot of great feedback – mostly good, some constructive suggestions, and some stuff people didn't think worked so well. That's something we can really work with!

The 2024 conference will be here before we know it and want to make it as relevant as we can! You can read about some of the feedback from the conference later in the newsletter. Please join us! Keep an eye on our [conference website](#)!

## ACEA Training and Education Champion of the Year

Every year, we accept nominations from the states, territories and jurisdictions for the coveted ACEA Training and Education Champion of the Year. Last year, Cassie Tasker of Education, Employment and Transitional Services | Rehabilitation & Reintegration | Corrective Services, Department of Justice Western Australia was the worthy recipient. Nominations are open again and must be received by **Friday 23 August 2024 at 11:59pm**.

### **Purpose**

To recognise exceptional educators, trainers, administrators or co-ordinators in prisons, community corrections and youth justice settings in Australasia. These people will exemplify outstanding professional knowledge, skills and practice.

### **Categories**

*Corrections Training and Education Champion of the Year:  
The Bob Semmens Award*



In 1992, following discussions between correctional education specialists across the globe, Bob Semmens was instrumental in founding the organisation which later became ACEA. This award recognises exceptional training and education champions in prison and community corrections settings.

*Youth Justice Training and Education Champion of the Year: The Ray Chavez Award*

Ray Chavez was a long serving President of ACEA between 2013 and 2019. During his presidency, Ray facilitated greater recognition and more active engagement of youth justice educators in the association. This award recognises exceptional training and education champions in the youth justice space.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible, applicants must be:

- A current trainer, educator, administrator or coordinator in prisons, community corrections or youth justice settings; *or* in employment, regular contracting, or regular volunteering with a school, registered training organisation, education provider or post-secondary education provider operating within a secure justice setting.
- Involved in the delivery of education and/or training in a secure adult or youth justice setting within the 12 months prior to nomination.
- Involved with the provision of education and/or training which has led to recognised outcomes, qualifications or statements of attainment which align with the Australian Qualifications Training Framework and/or Australian Curriculum or their equivalents in other jurisdictions.
- A financial member of ACEA.

### ***The Submission***

The submission should be no more than **500 words** or a **10-minute video** and *may* include the following:

Evidence of a well-developed **education philosophy**, which could include:

The principles and beliefs that underpin their development and delivery of education programs and engagement with learners in secure justice settings.

How and why that education philosophy promotes and facilitates positive engagement and outcomes for their students.

Evidence of incorporating the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori or other First Nations learners.

Evidence of high standards of **professional knowledge and understanding**, which could include:

Extensive knowledge and understanding of the standards, curriculum, content, and strategies associated with the educational programs delivered in secure justice settings.

Extensive knowledge and understanding of the barriers and support that exist in relation to developing and delivery education generally, and their educational program specifically, to learners with diverse life experiences and learning needs within secure justice settings.

A discussion of how professional knowledge and understanding has resulted in enhanced educational programming and/or delivery to incarcerated learners.

Extensive knowledge of what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori or other First Nations learners need to thrive.

Evidence of high standards of **professional practice**, which could include:

Evidence of the capacity to develop programs and/or resources which are appropriate for delivery and include innovative approaches to address the challenges of providing education to learners, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori or other First Nations learners.

Evidence of the capacity to develop programs and/or resources which reflect and are responsive to the complex life experiences and learning needs of learners.

How their professional practice has resulted in enhanced educational and/or vocational outcomes for students in the short and long term.

Evidence of high standards of **professional engagement**, which could include:

Evidence of a willingness and capacity to engage and work collaboratively with a wide range of individuals and organisations from diverse disciplines and sectors, who provide concurrent services to their learners.

Evidence of a willingness to engage with and design learning interventions to accommodate the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Māori or other First Nations learners.

How professional engagement with peers and students has resulted in enhanced educational programming and/or delivery, as well as enhanced educational and/or vocational outcomes for learners.

Evidence of high standards of **professional development**, which could include:

A pattern of continual engagement in professional development in order to enhance knowledge and skills specifically relating to the delivery of appropriate and relevant education to learners with diverse life experiences and learning needs.

A capacity to adapt education design and provision in relation to short-term and long-term changes in justice and/or education policies, procedures and priorities, as well as changes in learner cohorts.

Continual engagement in professional development that has resulted in the maintenance or improvement of educational programming and/or delivery within the secure justice setting, as well as educational and/or vocational outcomes for learners over an extended period of time.

Our aim is to recognise the fantastic work our educators and education administrators do. Too often that work is overlooked. We look forward to receiving your submissions!

The recipients of the Bob Semmens and Ray Chavez Awards will be asked to present a webinar at the next ACEA AGM on **Thursday 21 November 2024**.

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## Corrections Training and Education Champion of the Year: The Bob Semmens Award 2023 Cassie Tasker, Campus Manager Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison

**From Lisa Cross**

Cassie Tasker is the Campus Manager at Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison. She has exceptional coordinating ability with a 'can do attitude.' She leads the education team to provide accredited training through the WA prison-based RTO, ASETS and provides multiple education opportunities to a mainly First Nations cohort based in this outback town. She develops programs that are innovative and address the challenges in providing education to learners, especially First Nations learners. These programmes reflect their complex life experiences and learning needs.



In 2022, the first art gallery in a Western Australian custodial facility opened at the Eastern Goldfield Regional Prison (EGRP). Palya Walkaly-Walkalya, is one of just a handful of prison art galleries. Artworks created by men and women in custody at EGRP are displayed in the gallery. Cassie manages the art production which supplies this gallery. Her focus is to support prisoners to tell their stories through art. She provides a safe place for art making, sharing stories and culture and ensures prisoners have adequate art supplies to create the artworks. Cassie works collaboratively between prisoners, EGRP gallery committee and staff and is crucial in the supply of gallery stock and sales



opportunities for prisoners. Art forms a conduit to traditional education for many reluctant learners by helping to break down barriers to the classroom. Cassie looks for opportunities to engage her learners in accredited training such as Certificate II in Visual Arts and Adult Basic Education. She is currently reviewing the traineeships on offer in EGRP and works closely with the prison administration. Previously, these only focused on hospitality, but now there will be prisoner workplaces in reception, canteen, woodwork and metalwork workshops to host traineeships. They will boost traineeship numbers from three to 25. She used the 2022 Australia Training Awards 'Apprenticeship Employer Award,' to motivate the prison administration to work in a collaborative way to improve training outcomes.

Cassie believes 'the arts' helps bring prisoners into the Education Centre and once engaged they select other interest areas. She recently worked with stakeholders to deliver an outstanding result. Six First Nations prisoners created a bilingual cover of the Paul Kelly song 'How to Make Gravy.' An ABC musician/presenter spent days at the prison to workshop this song. The result was a bilingual version with lyrics in English and a translation to predominantly Pitjantjatjara, a Western desert language. The cover is representative of many of the dialects spoken in the lands surrounding EGRP. The prisoners rehearsed and translated the song in a small studio inside the prison. The prison's music resources are not only a way for prisoners to refine their musical skills, but also an incentive to participate in education and rehabilitation programs. Cassie ensured that the prisoners were able to work on their English literacy skills while helping translate the Paul Kelly song into the Pitjantjatjara language. The [bilingual cover was recorded live](#) in one take in the courtyard of EGRP Education Campus on 21st December 2022. Cassie is enthusiastic about providing artistic and educational opportunities, building confidence amongst the prisoners encouraging them to tell their stories.

### ACEA Aotearoa New Zealand Educator of the Year: Lee Tyson

***From Helen Farley and Nancy Crouchley, Ara Poutama Aotearoa***

At ACEA, our aim is to support educators, trainers, volunteers, researchers and other interested parties associated with the delivery of education and training to people in secure justice settings, to provide quality accredited and non-accredited education in correctional and youth justice institutions. To promote the value of quality education and training of people in prison in Australasian correctional and youth justice settings to state and federal authorities. To advocate for education and training as part of the effective rehabilitation programmes that foster reintegration and increase desistance.

We do this because frontline educators play a pivotal role in the rehabilitation and transformation of people within prison settings. Their presence and dedication are of utmost importance as they provide a beacon of hope and opportunities. By offering vocational training, they equip people with essential skills and knowledge that can break the cycle of reoffending upon release, leading to a reduction in recidivism rates.

Beyond the academic aspect, frontline educators also serve as mentors and sources of inspiration, fostering a positive and nurturing environment that encourages personal growth and development. Their tireless efforts not only empower people with education but also instil a sense of dignity and



purpose, reminding them that they are capable of change and a meaningful life beyond their confinement.

The impact of frontline educators extends beyond the prison walls, as they contribute to creating safer communities by nurturing transformed individuals who can positively contribute to society upon reintegration. Their unwavering commitment to education and rehabilitation makes them indispensable in the quest for a more just and compassionate criminal justice system.



Rolleston Prison Carpentry Instructor Lee Tyson has been named 2023 Corrections' Training and Education Champion of the Year by ACEA. Lee was nominated for the award by Practice Manager Education and Training for Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Department of Corrections New Zealand) Sherie Lucke. She said she was highly impressed by his dedication to those he trained while at Corrections.

'One of the things that stood out for me was Lee's "follow through,"' she recalls. 'When prisoners were being transferred through the COVID lockdowns, Lee would go the extra mile and make sure that the men were able to see their courses through.'

'A lot of people don't get to finish courses or qualifications when they move facilities,' she says. 'Lee works to ensure as many men as possible can continue their work. This award is so well deserved.'

Lee himself said he didn't really understand the significance of the award until he started looking into it.

'It's only now starting to sink in,' he says while holding his award.

'We tell the men all the time to celebrate their achievements, but here I was downplaying it.'

After talking with some friends and looking into past recipients, including Sir Graham Lowe, he realised he needed to practice what he preached and enjoy the success.

'I so appreciate it – thank you for being a great team and thank you for the nomination.'

Prison Director Colin Williamson said that Rolleston Construction Yards are an amazing initiative, but it's only that way because of people like Lee who go above and beyond to make it what it is.

'Instructors like Lee are the reason we've had two qualified Licenced Building Practitioners, completed 150 homes and had hundreds of men leaving prison with a wide range of skills and qualifications. We are grateful to have Lee help develop these yards into the incredible practical learning space it is today.'

President of ACEA Dr Helen Farley, who came to Rolleston Construction Yards to present the award, said that frontline educators play a pivotal role in the rehabilitation and transformation of people serving sentences in prison.

‘The impact of these educators extends beyond the prison walls – their unwavering commitment to education and rehabilitation makes them indispensable in the quest for a more just and compassionate criminal justice system.’

She said the ACEA Executive Committee who select the recipient were unanimous in their decision to award Lee this year.

‘Lee’s reputation precedes him, and we know that Lee is one of Ara Poutama Aotearoa’s best. Thank you for your tireless mahi.’

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### Light relief



This picture was created by Len Nielsen in response to ‘Helen’s Otter Pilot’ attending all of our meetings. Helen forgot to mention that it was an AI transcription agent to help take the minutes! This looks way more entertaining though!

## The ACEA Research Special Interest Group

*From Helen Farley*

One of the things we want to focus on is the formation of Special Interest Groups to allow those interested in particular topics to swap ideas about practice and to effectively network. The first of these groups to be formed is the **Research Special Interest Group**.

There has been a few meetings of interested parties to take a first look at a research agenda. We thought about some prominent studies and how we could take them further.

We have already worked with Dr Jayson Ware of the University of Canterbury to look at burnout amongst frontline educators and we expect to see some results from this research soon.



Another idea that we had was to look at the impacts of education and training (and employment) on incarcerated learners in our respective jurisdictions. We would use the same methodologies across jurisdictions to enable meaningful comparisons. Ideally, we would look across different cohorts of learners, particularly Indigenous cohorts who are often underserved in the carceral environment.

We will be looking at partnerships with jurisdictions mediated through our Advisory Board Members, but also with interested academics and external providers of education and technologies. We will seek external funding to conduct the research.

To be a member of the Research SIG you will need to be a [member of ACEA](#). If you are interested in joining us, email: [president@acea.org.au](mailto:president@acea.org.au).

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## Looking for reviewers passionate about prison education

*From Helen Farley*

The [Journal of Prison Education Research](#) is a leading publication in the field of prison education and research, dedicated to promoting the cause of prison education and advocating for the importance of education in the prison system. As a result, the journal is seeking the support of academics to contribute as reviewers in its mission to disseminate the latest research and best practices in the field.

We are calling on academics who are passionate about prison education to nominate themselves as reviewers for JPER. As a reviewer, you will play a critical role in ensuring that the quality of the journal remains high, and that the latest research and best practices are disseminated to the wider academic community. Your expertise and knowledge of the field will be instrumental in helping to guide the direction of the journal and to promote the cause of prison education.

Becoming a reviewer for JPER is an excellent opportunity for academics to contribute to the field and to enhance their own professional profile. As a reviewer, you will have the opportunity to engage with the latest research and best practices in the field, to provide feedback to authors, and to help shape the direction of the journal. Furthermore, your involvement with the journal will provide you with a platform to share your own research and ideas with a wider audience.



The process of reviewing is an excellent opportunity to develop critical skills, to refine your knowledge of the field, and to contribute to the wider academic community. Reviewing also provides an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary exchange, as you will engage with scholars from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds who are working on related issues.

If you are interested, please email me ([president@acea.org.au](mailto:president@acea.org.au)) with your reviewing interests and affiliation. Happy to chat!

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### Summary of the arts review project

**From Ruth McFarlane, DWRM**

*DWRM and Critics W/rite, in collaboration, have developed and run a critical thinking and arts appreciation project, delivered to students in prison in England. We have now produced a publication of all the students' work which we hope to share more widely. We also hope to secure funding to run the course again and to promote the educational achievements of our students in prison.*

[DWRM](#) (Doing What Really Matters) are a UK-based social enterprise with a vision of opening up education, employment, and engagement to cultivate an inclusive society, where the value of prison experience drives collective transformation. Based on our personal experiences of the Criminal Justice System, we bring together expertise and evidence with our commitment to inclusion as the catalyst for this change. We seek to create accessible higher education opportunities for people in prison and to facilitate learning communities of excellence which will help to reduce the isolation of prison-based study.



In the Catskill Mountains in the US. Permissions were obtained from all photo subjects!

In partnership with DWRM, Dr Katie Reid, for the Student Success and Access Department at SOAS ([School of Oriental and African Studies](#)), University of London, delivered a short study course, *Critics W/rite the Arts: the Future Has a Memory*, for students in prison during 2022 and 2023. This version

was based on an existing course forming part of SOAS' Outreach programme (led by Renata Albuquerque) to introduce people to university study. There was no fee for students to participate in this course as the funding was provided by the SOAS Outreach team.

Through UK-based creative arts appreciation, Critics W/rite opens avenues for critical thinking and writing, as well as supporting the development of each student's unique ongoing critical practice, voice, and, crucially, their point of view. The aim is to foster meaningful exchanges with a range of artworks in focus and what they bring forward for the students, but also to consider some of the less accessible spaces through which artworks must move – spaces and creative economies still dominated by a privileged few. All the artworks we consider – written, in the visual arts, and in film – are made by artists who are themselves underrepresented or who have been marginalised in some way by the creative fields they produce in and the avenues their work must move through.

Katie, a creative arts and literature academic and editor, developed the materials for Critics W/rite; she is also the co-founder and current editorial director of the inclusive and collaborative online magazine and reviews platform, [Africa In Words](#), the site and space that inspired the basis for the course. The students were sent a printed study pack and DVD of 'Galleries' containing a choice of visual art, poetry, and short films to pursue for their weekly independent writing practice. Practical kickstarters and skills-based workshop sessions were also built in, as well as short introductory inclusively focused lectures and articles that they, as 'critics-in-process,' could draw on. From the weekly Critics' Gallery virtual walk-through, students chose a piece of artwork as their focus in a series of low-key writing and thinking assignments. These built up to a final piece of critical reviews writing, where we also engaged in collaborative editorial processes, with Katie as their editor and 'critical friend' as we went, bringing together the skills these new critics wanted to marshal to explore key debates raised by the works themselves.

We have now compiled the students' writing into a magazine style print publication. This offers students the opportunity to see their work, at whatever stage it was at, collectively, and as relevant, shareable, and publishable.

We now wish to share this more widely to showcase what the students have written and to seek funding to run more Critics W/rite iterations and other courses of this nature.

We hope that you will feel able to support this project and maybe even share it across your networks. You might even like to be involved with future iterations of the course.

Please do contact us, via Ruth ([Info@dwrn.org.uk](mailto:Info@dwrn.org.uk)) if you have any questions about the project or about what we are proposing to do next. We would love to hear from you and to have a discussion!



Art by Jayde Farrell

## Call for art engages men at Invercargill Prison

**From Ara Poutama Aotearoa. This article is reprinted with permission and originally appeared [here](#).**

A call for new artwork to adorn the Invercargill Prison Health Centre wall has inspired artists from across the prison.

‘Men in the prison were invited to create something for the health centre for a prize of chocolate,’ says Health Centre Manager Cassie Carstensen. ‘All submissions are considered a donation to the Health Centre and all submissions will be showcased.’

‘We have had a number of submissions and I am floored by the talent,’ she says. ‘The competition closed on 20 February and was hard to judge!’ Cassie sought judging from the prison’s senior leadership team, health, and custodial staff.



The artworks created a lot of conversation with tāne coming to the unit proud to see their work on the walls. This has inspired more budding artists keen to join in on the next competition. Art creation is an important activity in prisons, helping not just as a release for their creativity within this environment but it also aids with people’s mental health. It can help to boost confidence and make us feel more engaged and resilient. Besides these benefits, art engagement also alleviates anxiety, depression, and stress, providing a healthy emotional outlet for anger, stress, sadness, anxiety, and other emotions that can be difficult for people to control.

‘It’s also important for people coming to the Health Centre to come to a positive, bright environment. The art can help set a tone for the environment and gives people something to look at and talk about while they wait.’

In addition to entries from tāne in the prison, it inspired staff as well, with a custodial colleague also donating artworks he created to the health centre. He contributed some beautiful and iconic photographs of the local area.

‘This is a real treat for tāne coming to the Health Centre, especially if they are local,’ says Cassie. ‘They are really enjoying the art and the pictures of places they know.’



Art by Stanley

**Reprinted with permission from [Paper Chained](#).**



### Artists wanted for 2024 Sydney exhibition

*From Damian Linnane*

[Paper Chained](#) is excited to announce we are in the early stages of organising an art exhibition that will showcase the artworks of current and former prisoners around Australia, and also worldwide. We believe this will be the first exhibition of this kind in Australia's history. The exhibition will be held in Sydney at Boom Gate Gallery from **May 1st till May 31st, 2024**. We are currently accepting applications from artists in custody, as well as formerly incarcerated artists, who would like to participate.

In order to display your art in the exhibition, you will need to send us original artworks, not photos or photocopies. Once the exhibition is over, we can post artworks back to you or your family at our expense, or hold on to them until your release. While no contributor is expected to do this, you may also donate works to Paper Chained to help continue funding our magazine.

Artworks can be in any style, including drawings, paintings, or sculptures. Where possible, please try and post art to us in a way that does not fold the artwork. If you can't order A4 or A3 envelopes or postage tubes on buy-up, you may be able to obtain them with the help of welfare or inmate request forms. If you are outside prison and are sending us a painting, please ensure it has a hanging system we can attach hooks to.

If you are interested in participating, please get in touch with us by our regular postal or email address to discuss what kind of artworks you would like to display. Unfortunately, there will only be so much space available at the exhibition, so we will not be able to accept work from all applicants. Please get in touch as soon as you can to make sure you don't miss out on one of our available spots.

**Postal address:** Paper Chained, PO Box 2073, Dangar NSW 2309, Australia

**Email address:** [damien.linnane@crcnsw.org.au](mailto:damien.linnane@crcnsw.org.au)

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### Music project in Scottish criminal justice system

*From Arts Access Aotearoa. This article originally appeared [here](#)*

Between 2017 and 2021, a Scottish project called [Distant Voices – Coming Home](#) explored crime, punishment and reintegration through song-writing and other creative methods. It was funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council and led by Fergus McNeill, Professor of Criminology and Social Work, Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research, at the University of Glasgow.





Louis Abbot at Vox Liminis  
Credit Sandy Butler

In the project, musicians worked in prisons and communities to support song-writing sessions involving people within or affected by the criminal justice system, including those working in it.

The effects were often profound for both the participants and the institutions that hosted them, and the songs also reached and connected with diverse audiences via live performances and radio airplay.

Established as an independent charity in 2013, Vox Liminis was the practice partner and host of the project. It also involved three universities and was supported by the Scottish Prison Service.

Vox Liminis continues the project's work, and its staff have extensive experience of community development and creative practice, as well as contacts in the Scottish music scene.

Fergus responds to three questions asked by Arts Access Aotearoa.

## 1. What do you think the role of music and song-writing is for people in the criminal justice system?

Actually, we set up Distant Voices less as a creative means of rehabilitating people in the justice system and more as an attempt to change how they were understood and received by their communities.

Basically, we wanted to use music as a means of encouraging hospitality rather than hostility towards returning citizens. And so our emphasis was on sharing the songs as much as making them; and on gathering all the learning we could along the way.

That said, it was always obvious to us that the song-writing workshops (we call them Vox Sessions) created unique spaces in which justice-affected people were able to explore their experiences, to express themselves in new and powerful ways, to experience community with one another in the process, and to communicate with others beyond the justice system through the songs they wrote.

Our Research Associate, Phil Crockett Thomas led the analysis of what we learned in and from the Vox Sessions. She came to see songs as ‘problem-solving devices:’ the songwriting and sharing enabled people to address some of the harms that punishment was doing to them and their relationships.

We’ve written a couple of papers on that theme, which you can read on the [Vox Liminis website](#).

## **2. How committed is the Scottish Prison Service to ensuring quality arts programmes in prisons?**

There’s a long and fascinating history of arts and artists in Scottish prisons, dating back at least to 1973, when the famous ‘Special Unit’ was set up at HMP Barlinnie to house some of those who were described as Scotland’s most dangerous and disruptive prisoners.

At that time, Scottish prisons were violent places. There were riots, rooftop protests and hostage-takings by some prisoners, and there was brutality and violence from some prison staff too.

In that context, the Special Unit tried to do something radically different by creating a kind of self-governed therapeutic community. Art and artists were central to that initiative, and several of the residents became successful writers and artists.

The Special Unit was closed in 1994 but by then the Scottish Prison Service had changed in many ways – though, of course, the state-sanctioned violence of imprisonment itself endures.

I think it’s fair to say there is increased recognition of the value of arts activities in prison – whether as diversion from the pains of imprisonment, as self-expression for its own sake (and as a human right), or with more rehabilitative intentions. That said, it’s always a struggle to secure funding for arts initiatives, and there’s tendency to prioritise more formal and vocational education.

When we started piloting Distant Voices, the Scottish Prison Service was very supportive, not just in facilitating access but also in providing some funding. And some of the staff in the prisons where we worked became real supporters of and champions for the work. A few were brave enough to join in the Vox Sessions and write songs themselves.

## **3. Tell us more about Vox Liminis and its projects.**

Distant Voices ended with an online festival in 2021, where we also launched our podcast series [The Art of Bridging](#). That’s also been used in a set of [learning resources](#) we’ve published more recently.

However, the work of [Vox Liminis](#) goes on, within and beyond Scottish prisons.

Our [In Tune](#) project helps imprisoned parents connect with their young children (and sometimes partners) by making music together. For example, the project can help the parent in prison to co-write and record a song that can become part of their child’s bedtime routine: the song can be present even when the parent can’t be.

Given all that we learned about the challenges and possibilities of reintegration from Distant Voices, I think our Unbound community is especially important. Indeed, [Unbound](#) lies at the heart of the ongoing creative community of Vox Liminis.

We’re a community of people with diverse experience of the criminal justice system: former and serving prisoners (on home leave, or communicating via email-a-prisoner); people on community sentences; their families; and artists, academics and people who work in the criminal justice system.

We use our creativity and experiences to make a positive change for people in the criminal justice system.

We gather on a Tuesday evening in Glasgow's East End, eat a meal and write songs together. But more importantly perhaps, we co-create community and experience the solidarity so often denied to justice-affected people.

One beautiful expression of that comes in the form of a song called Waiting for the Daylight. We wrote it together as we came out of a COVID-19 lockdown. You [can hear that song and read the story behind it](#).

Of course, there are lots of other arts organisations and artists doing great things in Scottish prisons. We have a kind of umbrella organisation called Justice in Arts Scotland. You can [find out more from the Justice in Arts Scotland website](#).

***Just a reminder that Fergus McNeill will be a keynote speaker at our conference this year!***

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### Why prisoners in Sweden can no longer study at university

***From Charlotte West. This article is reprinted with permission and originally appeared [here](#).***

Those involved with criminal justice reform in the United States understandably gaze across the Atlantic with envy.

With an approach more often focused on rehabilitation than punishment, the Nordic countries beat most of the rest of the world on almost all metrics, ranging from incarceration rates to recidivism. Earlier this year, California governor Gavin Newsom drew inspiration from 'the Norwegian model' in his [plans for transforming San Quentin](#) – the state's oldest prison and home to its death row – into a centre of rehabilitation.

But it's easy to [put the Nordic countries up on a pedestal](#) – and to lump them all together. You might be surprised to learn that in Swedish prisons, for example, university-level education was eliminated in 2019.

Approximately 30 people per year were enrolled in higher education prior to that decision. Since then, there have been [no academic opportunities available to incarcerated people](#) who already have a high school diploma.

That's different from Sweden's Nordic neighbours. The [2014 Norwegian Education Act guarantees prisoners](#) access to education. People incarcerated at some Finnish prisons can enrol in [online classes in high-demand fields](#) such as artificial intelligence, and in Denmark, [incarcerated people at some prisons](#) can earn college credit alongside outside students who visit the prison.

As of 2022, there were approximately [6,150 people incarcerated in Swedish prisons](#), according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention.





Svartsjö is a minimum-security men's prison on the outskirts of Stockholm. Incarcerated students there can earn up to a high school diploma through the Swedish prison service's network of learning centres.

### ***Educating those who have had the fewest opportunities***

The shift away from higher education in prison was a pragmatic decision, rather than a political one.

Lena Broo, an adult education expert at the Swedish prison service, told Open Campus that about half of the prison population has less than a grade-school education and officials decided to concentrate their resources on giving those who have had the fewest opportunities the best chance of success once they got out. That means incarcerated people in Sweden can earn up to a high-school diploma while inside.

'To have any kind of chance in today's job market, the minimum requirement is basically a high school education,' Broo wrote in an email. 'That's what Kriminalvården [The Swedish Prison and Probation Service] is focusing on.'

The prison service has a system-wide network of 'learning centres.' The curriculum is the same as that offered through the municipal adult education system, known as Komvux.

The instructional model is hybrid; incarcerated students take computer-based classes offered across the system, but each of the approximately 45 prisons in the country has at least one teacher who provides in-person tutoring. Offering the classes through the agency's secure network allows students to transfer between facilities without interrupting their education.

Svartsjö, a minimum-security men's prison outside of Stockholm, is very different from the US prisons portrayed on TV – there is no body scanner, the perimeter is a single chain link fence and the



modular housing units are the same classic red associated with Swedish summer houses. During the day, the incarcerated men can leave the premises to work in the nearby wood workshop or to run the prison's farm.

Svartsjö history teacher Henrik Busk teaches incarcerated students all over the country through the learning centre network. He said that prisoners need to be productively engaged at least six hours a day, whether that be in education, work, or treatment.

He said that one of the biggest challenges the system is dealing with right now is the [increasing criminality](#) of young people, many of whom are from immigrant families.

'Most feel that Swedish society isn't open to them,' Busk said of the growing number of young people in Swedish prisons.

The Swedish government has in recent years adopted more tough-on-crime policies, such as lowering the age for a life sentence and gang enhancements, in response to [an increase in shootings and gang violence](#).

These policies have led to a steady growth in the prison population, following [a low in the mid-2010s](#) when the country even started to close prisons. The resulting overcrowding has made it difficult to meet the needs of everyone who should be enrolled in education.

Prisoners who enter the system before they are 21 are prioritised for in-person instruction, Broo said.

### ***Nine university degrees***

Svartsjö is very different from the maximum security prisons like Kumla where Ricard Nilsson served almost 20 years of a life sentence.

Nilsson was released in 2019 – so he benefited from access to higher education offerings before they were eliminated. While incarcerated, Nilsson earned nine degrees and certificates, including a master's of law. As a result of his education, he was admitted to the Swedish Union of Journalists while he was still incarcerated.

Nilsson was able to enrol in a sociology programme at Örebro University shortly after he was incarcerated in 2000. Both outside students and professors visited the prison for some of the lectures. By 2005, online classes were starting to become more common, Nilsson told Open Campus.

He was allowed to access his online classes and use university email while staff at the learning centre looked over his shoulder. He said that when he took his last courses in the late 2010s he was only given computer access 10 minutes at a time to respond to emails, download course materials and upload assignments. Then he completed his assignments on a secure, offline computer.

Up until around 2019, incarcerated individuals like Nilsson were allowed to enrol in regular university classes if they were accepted to the degree programme. Some faculty were willing to make exceptions for requirements like attending lectures.

But over the years, higher education institutions were less able to accommodate individual incarcerated students, Broo said. As universities shifted more and more of their instruction online, it became nearly impossible for students to enrol without more direct internet access.



Ricard Nilsson earned nine university degrees and certificates in prison between 2000 and 2019, when he was released.

Because of security concerns, a staff member had to sit with the student and watch the screen the entire time that a student was online. In 2018, the prison service suspended all supervised online learning. 'We don't have the staff for that today,' Broo said, in light of the increasing prison population.

Now, the only higher education that he's aware is happening in Swedish prisons is if a professor is willing to do an independent study via snail mail, Nilsson said.

It's unclear why Swedish universities aren't offering formal prison education programmes despite the fact that some of them, such as Uppsala University, have a long history of teaching incarcerated students that dates back at least until the 1970s.

Officials at the prison service have indicated they aren't opposed to higher education opportunities if the logistics can be worked out.

Nilsson is critical of Sweden's shift. His experience of education inside served as a role model for others. 'They are forgetting about the normative aspects of people being inspired by others who do positive things,' he said.



Art by 'Tiny'

## Am I an incorrigible optimist? Guilty as charged

*From Wim Ipers. This article is reprinted with permission and originally appeared [here](#).*

Be patient. Very patient. Rome wasn't built in one day. Prisons will not be 'unbuilt' in one decade.

### Short bio

I graduated as a translator and interpreter and worked as a teacher in adult basic education for Ligo Brusselleer since 1998. I am also an award-winning self-made playwright and theater director, specialising in setting up hyperdiverse grassroots-level co-creative theatre productions. I have now acquired 25 years of expertise in working in prison and with people in prison, in both an education and a cultural context.

### My story

Humankind seems to be blessed and/or cursed with chronic short-term memory failure. We easily forget and thus stumble into our next catastrophe before we know it. Or just as readily storm headfirst into new adventures and uncharted territory, forgetting we repeatedly crashed off our bikes and into trees. For a species that has produced Mozart, Marie Curie, Nadal, Einstein, Jeanine De Bique, and Shakespeare ... to name a few, it would be daft to say we're a freak of nature. For a species that just as inevitably produced Stalin, Thatcher, Pol Pot, and Bloody Mary, it would be stupid to claim we're at the pinnacle of creation, the best universe has ever produced.



Helen, Wim, and Dr Anne Pike at the EPEA Conference in Norway

But haven't we progressed at all in that short span we've been here? I do think the answer to that has to be 'yes.' Hans Roslings thoroughly researched the book 'Factfulness,' which states that the proportion of the world population living in extreme poverty has almost halved in the last 20 years. Worldwide, 30-year-old women are closing the gap with their male counterparts in the number of years spent in school: on average, 9 years to 6 years only 25 years ago. Unfortunately, in my area of expertise, prison education, stats continue to look very bleak indeed: the global prison population is increasing (8million in 2002 to 11.5million today), a 50% increase in incarcerated women since 2000, underfunding of justice is getting worse, suicide rates are growing ...

Then why am I still teaching and trying to co-create theatre plays in Brussels' prisons after 25 years? Because I am an incorrigible optimist? Guilty as charged.

But also because, on a small scale, I have witnessed several changes for the better. Moving to the new prison in Haren took us from the dark Middle Ages straight into the 21st century, with modern infrastructure and equipment and no overcrowding (yet!). Prison directors and staff are finally genuinely trying to put a humane approach into practice daily. A new job has even been created to that end: prison counsellor. Specific training for prison counsellors, however, is still embryonic. They are all too often thrown in the deep end.

Well-trained Flemish and French-speaking public officers go out of their way to guarantee basic human rights in all the fields that we take for granted outside prison walls: education, sports, mental

health, culture, and drug counselling ... True; we are still far from the best pupils in class, but we seem to have finally turned the corner.

As one of the most inspiring ways to speed up these fledgling improvements is going abroad searching for best practices, I was lucky enough to accompany a large Belgian delegation to the bi-annual EPEA conference in June in Tønsberg, Norway. I visited the world's best prisons in Bergen and Bastoy, listened to inspirational keynote speakers, exchanged best practices with fellow prison teachers worldwide, and was lucky enough to do a workshop on incorporating drama techniques in prison classes. I was able to share some of the insights and techniques that were developed by Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre pioneer and founder of Theatre of the Oppressed.

The Norwegian trip has renewed my enthusiasm and given me a sense of international support and solidarity. Yes, you're doing ok. Of course, you can do better. But no, you're not on your own.

The way I see it, the future of adult learning in prison hinges on three key challenges:

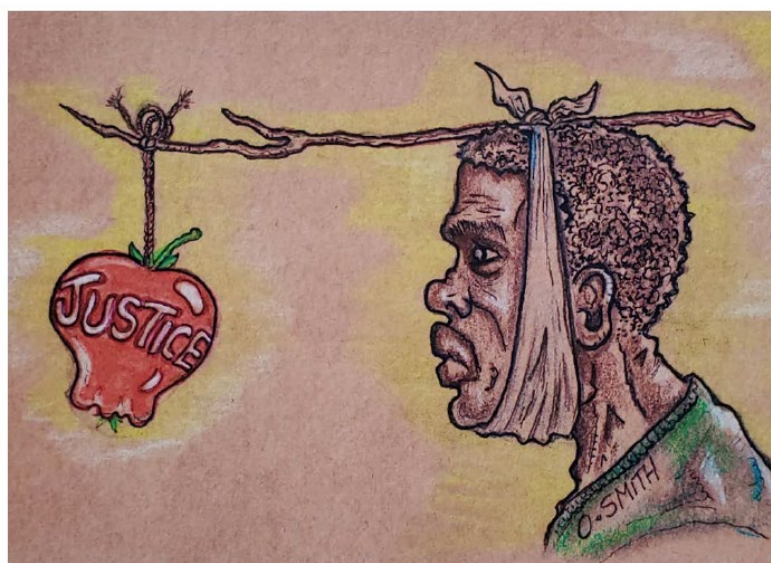
1. make sure a humane and restorative philosophy is at the heart of all decision-making processes.
2. provide small-scale, differentiated, and society-embedded living units.
3. train the trainers/counsel the counsellors/teach the teachers to professional standards that also prevail outside prison walls.

And be patient. Very patient. Rome wasn't built in one day. Prisons will not be 'unbuilt' in one decade.

Or as that other theatre great, Peter Brook, put it: 'Anything worth investing in isn't finished in a lifetime.'

### ***Skills for the future***

1. CAR-skills (communication + assertiveness + resilience).
2. 'portable' skills (problem-solving, adaptability, teamwork ...)
3. 'Philosophy' skills: seeing the bigger picture, self-relativism, sense of humour, critical thinking.



Art by Orlando Smith #P-24614. San Quentin State Prison, San Quentin, CA, 94974, USA.



Trauma is 'unavoidable' in prison. Here's how educators can help.

Clinical psychologist Napoleon Wells reflects on trauma, healing, and education in carceral spaces

**From Charlotte West. This article is reprinted with permission and originally appeared [here](#).**

*Charlotte West talks to Napoleon Wells, a clinical psychologist who works as an anxiety and trauma disorder specialist at the Department of Veterans Affairs. He primarily treats veterans who are dealing with combat trauma, but his work has also focused on the impact of trauma in classroom and work spaces experienced by BIPOC communities. He talks about how trauma impacts incarcerated students' ability to learn and function in a classroom, but also how education itself can be healing.*

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Charlotte West: What would you say is the relationship between trauma and the ability to get to a point where you can take advantage of opportunities such as higher education in prison?**

**Napoleon Wells:** I would suggest that trauma is a kind of emotional backpack that makes it difficult to access almost any options, because of the number of areas emotionally that trauma impacts. People [experiencing trauma] are hyper vigilant. They're not sleeping well ... They're socially avoidant, they're depressed, very often experiencing panic. You're talking about folks who truly aren't, because of their symptoms, going to be able to have conversations about education. They're not going to be able to sit comfortably in the classroom, they're going to have difficulty advocating for themselves with institutions and with professors, they're going to have difficulty focusing on information, on completing assignments.



I've heard from a lot of folks inside that the prison environment itself is inherently traumatic, requiring hyper vigilance. So even if you don't have a diagnosis of PTSD, you're still in an environment that lends itself to trauma. What advice do you have for educators who are going into that environment in terms of how they can best serve their students?

I will give educators the same advice that I would give a therapist who was about to start working with individuals who were traumatized. That would be to absolutely make room and embrace the fact that trauma is present. Even if you have someone whom you're serving who hasn't developed PTSD, chances are they have some of the symptoms, it's very likely just undiagnosed. If they've been incarcerated long enough, because of the kind of experiences they're going to have in prison, I would suggest that it's almost unavoidable.

If someone acts out in the classroom, it's not them being resistant to being educated. It's evidence of their current emotional functioning. Speak to the fact that you understand that their mental health and wellbeing is impacting how they're going to perform. Ask about it. This is a population that's not going to say, 'I feel weak. I'm at my worst', because you're going to have instances where that's going to be used against them in other settings. Try to make time to do a check in with all of



your students, 'How are you feeling, and what parts of this were stressful to you? Anything that I can do to make you feel more comfortable? Do I need to bring mental health into this space in order to help me see to it that you can thrive in this setting?'

As much as possible, I would suggest making as much room as you can to show as much comfort as you can with it, and be prepared to receive feedback from those who are incarcerated.

***What advice do you have in the sense that professors are not psychologists, and a lot of the time the mental health resources that are available in the prison setting are relatively limited. So recognizing that a professor isn't there to provide therapy, what are the things that they can do that might help open up those conversations?***

I tell folks to work to the end of their tether. So don't try to do what I do necessarily, but ask the question, 'How is your functioning? Do you need mental health involved?'

I think you have to be prepared to, if not necessarily be a superhero, be prepared to be an advocate, because you're trying to do a job. And trauma is going to impact your job. It's going to impact those who you serve, and their ability to absorb information. I would say 'Don't be a therapist, but do be present.' And a part of being present is asking the question and then determining what the end of your tether is. 'I can't solve this problem. But let me take it as far as I can.' And even the system might not have the resources. Push the issue.

***There are several programs that focus specifically on therapeutic and trauma-informed programs for the 18-24 year old population in prison and specific housing units, such as the [Vera Institute's Restoring Promise program](#), that pair young people with mentors. Can you talk a little bit about the benefits of targeting that [younger population](#), both with more mental health services, but also with higher education opportunities?***

We know that chronologically, 18 to 24, you're considered an adult, but you're not done growing. It's a critical age period. What is necessary there is to determine what we going to expose someone to who is 18 that is going to aid them with their healthy development. Education can be one thing. Having healthy mentors, which they haven't necessarily had, would be another.

Where mental health is concerned, my concern with incarceration and mental health is that it has always been designed to help people endure. You're going to be behind bars – 'Let me help you deal with what you feel about this,' as opposed to preparing people for being a better developed version of themselves and then coming back into contact with their life outside.

But what I would like to see happen, and I would be more than happy to be involved with it, is an entire system redesign of how we practice mental health within incarcerated spaces. I think we have to go about not only addressing mental health for enduring, but also think about how to go about in the same way we do outside in our communities, tailoring it to the age group that we're working with.

***What do you see as the role of education in addressing some of the mental health issues that people might have? A lot of people have told me that the thing that higher education in prison did for them was give them the ability to see themselves in another light.***

It serves exactly that role. People who are struggling with mental health symptoms very often have to have an anchor in their life, whether it be their family system, whether it be their work system, [or] something like education.

If an individual can find themselves successful in learning things, moving toward a degree, moving toward a career, you're kind of having these building blocks for improved function and emotion. That allows for people to better manage their symptoms on a day-to-day basis. If I know I feel less anxious in the classroom, the classroom becomes a safe space. And so I develop a routine for functioning there that I carry outside of the classroom. If I develop success in my understanding, and I feel affirmed when I'm in the classroom, I can build my affirmations there – Yes, I am intelligent. Yes, I can understand.

It's ideal, really, for people learning how they think, how they understand, building success, and then taking that skill set, tucking that into their tool belt and carrying it with them outside of the classroom.

***Is there anything else you'd like to add?***

I want, as much as possible, for us to make education not only something that is available to our incarcerated family and kinfolk, but also as a healing resource in the same way we have mental health available. I don't want to continue to see our family just enduring.

Follow Dr. Napoleon Wells on [Instagram](#).

**In their own words: Education not Incarceration**

From Nkosohlanga Dwayi. This article is reprinted with permission from [here](#).

**In Their Own Words:**

**EDUCATION  
NOT INCARCERATION**



**Nkosohlanga Dwayi**

**My name is Nkosohlanga Dwayi, a 36-year-old male from South Africa. I am a husband, father, brother, mentor, community leader, and teacher at Essenhout Primary School in Delf. I teach Maths and English to grade 6 and 7 students. Life has taught me many valuable lessons, and I believe that life is the best teacher of all.**

**I have a past of incarceration, having spent one third of my life behind bars. When I look back on the day of my incarceration, I reflect on my journey before and after that pivotal moment. I was born in the Eastern Cape, but my parents moved to Cape Town in search of better opportunities. The rural areas of the Eastern Cape offered limited prospects for young people like me. I grew up in Khayelitsha, one of South Africa's most notorious neighbourhoods, where positive role models were scarce. The people we saw as role models are not the kind of people you would want your children to look up to. In line with the Xhosa proverb "it takes a village to raise a child," my upbringing was shaped by the poor community I belonged to. We lacked basic necessities such as water, sanitation, and electricity. I grew up in a one room shack with my mother, older sister, and younger brother, as my father worked in Piketberg just outside Cape Town. He would visit home every fortnight, so I only saw him for four days each month. My mother took care of us and raised us in his absence.**

Being without an older brother meant I had to fend for myself, with no one to report to. I experienced bullying and, in turn, became a bully. I learned that the best defence was to attack first, leading me to associate with older boys and learn their criminal trade. Starting with shoplifting, I eventually graduated to housebreaking. We would target houses in the suburbs, and our findings led me into the world of armed robbery. At the age of 12, I held a gun for the first time, surprisingly not from a gangster, but from a close relative who taught me how to shoot.

Having access to guns, engaging in crime, and participating in gang fights were common practices. Survival of the fittest was the name of the game, and we saw nothing wrong with this way of life. It was the lack of proper role models and positive influences in the township that contributed to my path towards prison. It was a poverty that went beyond material deprivation, one that robbed a boy growing up in Khayelitsha of dreams and confined him to thinking that there was nothing more to aspire to than what was in front of him.

Like many others in my community, a life of crime led to my incarceration in 2008, resulting in an 18-year prison sentence. Prison was far from easy, and on June 15, 2010, the day I received my sentence, I felt the walls closing in on me. Looking at my family, I saw tears, and in that moment, I knew that my life would never be the same again. Within five minutes of my arrest, I recognized the wrongdoing of my actions and how they contradicted the values my mother, a devout Christian, instilled in me. We used to attend church every Sunday until a life of crime pulled me away. Witnessing the hope fade from my sister's eyes and the disappointment in my little brother, who had looked up to me, as I was taken to prison, solidified my realization of straying far from the person I was raised to be.

Prison was a challenging experience, and my lawyer assured me that things could have been worse, as the judge had shown leniency. During our conversation, he inquired about my level of education, and I explained that I had completed my matric. However, I had not been accepted to university due to a delayed application, which arrived after I was already in prison awaiting trial. He advised me to return to school and promised to visit me in prison. He warned against joining gangs, as it would only prolong my sentence, and suggested that with good behaviour, I might be eligible for release in six years. His words seemed futile, considering I had just been sentenced to 18 years.

Like many from my community, I eventually joined the numbers gang, the 28s. It wasn't a choice I made consciously, but from an early age, even as early as the fourth grade, I knew which side I would align myself with when I inevitably ended up in prison. This realization raises the question of "what kind of community raises a child in such a manner?"

During my time behind bars, I chose a less conventional path—I chose education. The life of gangs and crime was not my choice but a product of my upbringing. By the time I realized who I truly was, I was already deeply embedded in that lifestyle, which ultimately cost me my freedom. Education became my chosen path because I knew that one day I would be released from prison and needed to prepare myself for the world I wanted to live in. My aspiration was to live in a peaceful world, free from crime. It wasn't driven by fear or a search for redemption within prison. It wasn't because I had undergone rehabilitation or experienced a sudden transformation. I had always desired a peaceful world and valued education and beauty. However, choices without opportunities hold little significance.

In 2018, when I was on the verge of giving up, feeling exhausted from the arduous journey of pursuing education in prison, a group from Stellenbosch visited Brandvlei prison. At that point, I was undergoing my practice teaching at a juvenile centre, where I faced dehumanizing treatment daily, including being strip-searched in front of the same students I was teaching. It was unbearable, and I contemplated quitting. However, during this challenging time, I learned that Dr. Baz, the founder of an organization called Incarceration Nation Network (INN), was visiting Brandvlei. Dr. Baz wanted to meet those of us who were pursuing Further Education and Training. On July 18, 2018, on the 100th birthday celebration of Dr. Nelson Mandela, Prison to College Pipeline South Africa was established.

This moment infused me with a renewed sense of faith and hope. Incarceration Nation Network gave us something to look forward to. Dr. Baz assured us that we mattered and that we were the generation that would change the world. From that day forward, she has been by our side, walking with us on this journey of reintegration. Through the prison to college pipeline, Incarceration Nation Network continues to support individuals like me who choose the less-travelled path of education while behind bars, providing education grants to further their studies and empower them to play positive roles in their communities upon release.

Today, I am proud to say that although I was incarcerated for my wrongdoings, I am not defined by my time in prison. I am who I am today because I refused to conform to the norms of incarceration. I am an ordinary man, but my circumstances are far from ordinary. I am Nkosohlanga Dwayi—a visionary, a leader, and a lifelong learner. I firmly believe in the words of Dr. Nelson Mandela, who said, "Education is the most powerful weapon to change the world." I aspire to bring about change in my community through education.

## Selected research articles

**Compiled by Stephen Seymour and Helen Farley**

In each newsletter, Stephen and Helen bring together some recently released articles which we think you will be interested in. If you have an article or have found an article you think the membership would be interested in, please reach out to: [secretary@acea.org.au](mailto:secretary@acea.org.au).





**'Education changes a person': exploring student development in a college-in-prison program through critical andragogy**

***Teaching in Higher Education, 2023***

**Patrick Filipe Conway**

This phenomenological study investigates the educational experiences formerly incarcerated students identify as being important developmentally as part of their participation in a college-in-prison program. It does so by exploring the experiences of 21 formerly incarcerated students who participated in the Boston University Prison Education Program, the longest continuously-running college-in-prison program in the Northeast US. The study is contextualized within a critical andragogical framework, one which prioritizes developing agency and self-direction in learning, as well the capacity to critique ideological norms and develop deeper understandings of social contexts. Findings indicate program participation helped disrupt unhealthy personal and interpersonal dynamics within the prison environment. Participants developed confidence, pride, healthier self-conceptions, greater empathy, and a desire to positively impact others. This study's implications can help inform instructors and program administrators in the development of effective curricula aimed at being responsive to the developmental needs and goals of students.

**Peer-led literacy: a prison library's collaboration with the Shannon Trust**

***Library and Information Research, 2023***

**Andrew Lacey**

This case study interrogates the delivery of the Shannon Trust literacy programme in a men's category B London prison (HMP Wandsworth). This includes an exploration of prison libraries' collaboration with the Shannon Trust, and how prison library staff practically facilitate the programme; from selecting prisoners to become literacy mentors, finding prisoners willing to become learners, and collecting feedback. This study also looks at some of the challenges faced by prison-based Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals when delivering a programme such as this. The study concludes with a set of recommendations for other LIS professionals considering programme delivery in the prison context.

**Are Education Programs in Prison Worth It? A meta-analysis of the highest-quality academic research**

***Policy Brief: Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2023***

**Steven Sprick Schuster and Ben Stickle**

More than five in every 1,000 people in the U.S. population are behind bars, the sixth highest rate in the world, even though many other countries have higher violent crime rates. The Prison Policy Initiative project that 6% of Americans will be imprisoned at some point in their lifetimes, including one in 10 men and almost one in three African-American men. The impact of high incarceration rates extends beyond the effects on inmates and their families. There are large societal costs, directly and indirectly, with each crime and corresponding imprisonment. Direct costs consist of the expenses to house prisoners and other forms of public expenditures within the criminal justice system. A 2017 estimate places the cost to house prisoners at \$80.7 billion, while the costs of policing, courts, health care, and various other expenses brings the total price to \$182 billion. The cost of crime on victims themselves is another significant, if difficult to quantify, cost of criminal activity.



### [Experiences of Learners Who Are Incarcerated With Accessing Educational Opportunities in Ontario, Canada](#)

*Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 2023*

**Ardavan Eizadirad**

Access to education is a human right that should be upheld for everyone including individuals who are incarcerated as outlined in Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 25 interviews were conducted between April to June 2021 with various key stakeholders: 5 staff involved with the delivery of educational programs in jails, 10 learners who are or were formerly incarcerated, and 10 representatives from post-secondary institutions or jails. The objective was to identify barriers limiting access to education, while incarcerated and post-release, and how such barriers can be mitigated. Responses were examined using Critical Race Theory as a paradigm and thematic analysis as a methodology. Findings indicate that access to education for individuals who are incarcerated remains limited, not prioritized, and overall an underdeveloped sector in Canada. More funding and resources need to be allocated to prioritize education and expand the capacity of incarceration facilities to offer more programming in ways that are accessible and socio-culturally relevant.

### [Prison Work and Vocational Programs: A Systematic Review and Analysis of Moderators of Program Success](#)

*Justice Quarterly, 2023*

**Alexandra V. Nur and Holly Nguyen**

Custodial prison work and vocation programs are among the most common programs in United States corrections. However, literature suggests ambiguity regarding their effectiveness in producing desired outcomes. Extant systematic reviews and meta-analyses of these programs are dated, focus on post-release programs, and rely on monolithic effect sizes to determine if these programs 'work.' To assess this issue, we conduct a meta-analysis of 31 program evaluations published between 1986 and 2017, focusing on study and program characteristics that moderate conclusions of success. We argue that several issues require attention before researchers can conclude whether and for whom custodial work and vocational programs are successful, including: incomparable outcomes; treatment heterogeneity and treatment effect heterogeneity; program stacking; and conflicting definitions of programs. Implications from this study aid in establishing a cohesive literature to make stronger conclusions about the characteristics of programs and program evaluations that produce effective custodial work and vocation programs.

### [Being an Educator: Norwegian Prison Officers' Conception of their Role regarding Incarcerated Persons' Education](#)

*Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, 2023*

**HMK Eide, KT Westrheim**

Despite the fact that prison officers are close to the incarcerated persons in everyday life in prison, and therefore will have great impact and influence on the incarcerated persons' understanding of and motivation for education and training in prison, we still know little about prison officers' understanding of their professional role regarding incarcerated persons' education. This article will investigate how Norwegian prison officers understand their importance as educational actors through the following research question: How do Norwegian prison officers understand their role as actors in incarcerated persons' education? Building on qualitative interviews with 16 Norwegian

prison officers' the article analyses the role of prison officers from a broad educational perspective (Biesta, 2009; 2014; 2015; OECD, 2005; 2019). The analysis reveals that prison officers conduct work that enables incarcerated persons to master their own lives during the execution of and after completing their sentences. Although prison officers play a significant role in incarcerated persons' education in prison, they are partly unaware of this role, and find that their own role is not in a collaborative relationship with other actors who facilitate incarcerated persons' education.

**Supporting students significantly behind in literacy and numeracy: A review of evidence-based approaches**

***Australian Education Research Organisation, Monash University, 2023***

**Kate de Bruin, Eugénie Kestel, Mariko Francis, Helen Forgasz, Rachelle Fries**

In Australia, a substantial proportion of students start secondary school with literacy and numeracy skills that are 3 or more years below those of their peers (ACARA 2021). Evidence suggests that low literacy and numeracy skills hinder students' access to the curriculum (Shinn et al. 2016) and can result in poor progress or educational failure. These students are also more likely to face poor outcomes post-school, such as in their health and employment (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020).

A large body of research has been conducted on literacy and numeracy instruction and interventions for primary school-aged students, as fundamental skills in these domains are generally taught as part of the primary school curriculum. However, less is known about the applicability or effectiveness of interventions for older students who have not mastered these foundational literacy or numeracy skills. Questions also remain about the feasibility of implementing literacy and numeracy interventions within secondary schools, where teachers are typically less familiar with teaching these basic skills and where scheduling constraints exist. In this report, the findings of an umbrella review to address these gaps in knowledge is presented.

**Custody, violence against women and violence against children**

***United Nations Human Rights Council, 2023***

**Reem Alsalem**

The present report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, Reem Alsalem, is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 50/7. The Special Rapporteur, along with the other members of the Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on the Elimination of Discrimination and Violence against Women, has voiced concern about the pattern of ignoring intimate partner violence against women in determining child custody cases across jurisdictions. Since raising specific concerns to Brazil and Spain, the Special Rapporteur has received reports of cases from countries where such violence has been ignored and where mothers making such allegations have been penalized by law enforcement and/or the judiciary responsible for determining custody cases.

The tendency to dismiss the history of domestic violence and abuse in custody cases extends to cases where mothers and/or children themselves have brought forward credible allegations of physical or sexual abuse. In several countries, family courts have tended to judge such allegations as deliberate efforts by mothers to manipulate their children and to separate them from their fathers. This supposed effort by a parent alleging abuse is often termed "parental alienation". The report examines ways in which family courts in different regions refer to "parental alienation" or similar pseudo-concepts in custody cases, ignoring histories of domestic violence, which may lead to the

double victimization of victims of such violence. The report also offers recommendations for States and other stakeholders on how to address the situation.

### [The information needs and practices of Australian adult prisoners](#)

*Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 2023*

**Jane Garner**

This paper describes the findings of a research project conducted in six adult prisons in New South Wales, Australia that sought to study the information needs and information seeking practices of adult Australian prisoners. Through data gathered from 106 prisoner surveys, the paper identifies the information needs of Australian adult prisoners across six information domains: legal, education, spirituality, health, prison life, and re-integration. For each information domain, participants were asked to identify their preferred source or sources of information from eight possible information sources: prison libraries, tablet devices, staff, family/friends, health services, television/radio, books etc. not from the prison library, or other. The number and nature of unmet information needs are also explored and described. The data gathered enables a study of the different information needs and behaviours of female and male prisoners, and prisoners from across various security levels. The paper finds a significant level of unmet information need in the lives of Australian adult prisoners across all information domains studied. Prisoners are heavily reliant on sources of information that are likely to be non-expert such as custodial staff, other inmates, and family and friends to attempt to meet their information needs about significant critical issues such as their ongoing legal matters and their health. The information needs are similar for female and male prisoners, however their information seeking practices differ, with male prisoners being more likely to have support from family and friends as information sources than female prisoners. Prisoners living in minimum security prisons are least likely to identify a need for spirituality-related information compared with prisoners living in other security classifications and are most likely to seek information regarding their reintegration back into their communities as they plan for their release.

### [An Evaluation of Tablet-Based Education in Two State Prisons](#)

*Journal of Correctional Education, 2023*

**S, Vaughn-Somervell, C. Poole, R. Gardner, B. Winters**

The pandemic created significant barriers to delivering education services and programs in prison, prompting many correctional administrations to consider the use of tablet-based education. The present study accordingly used a tablet-based survey to explore the tablet-based education experiences among people who are incarcerated. The present study unites and builds on literature regarding education and recidivism and tablet-based education in prison to explore the demographic characteristics, relationships, criminal justice experiences, and educational experiences of tablet users using tablet-based education while incarcerated in one of two state prison administrations. Taken together, findings from the authors' survey indicate that, in comparison with prison populations nationwide tablet users were younger, better educated, less likely to have been involved with state child protective services as a minor, and more likely to be first-time offenders than their peers in prison nationwide. As prisons continue to expand tablet-based education, they should be mindful of the strong preference among incarcerated people both for in-person instruction and the reality that providing additional opportunities to those already most likely to succeed creates a self-fulfilling prophecy that has little to do with this educational technology.

### Career Thoughts of Incarcerated Students

*Journal of Adult and Continuing Education May 29, 2023*

**Abigail M. Holder, Nicholas C. Derzis, Margaret Shippen, & Jinhee Park**

In 2018, the Bureau of Justice Statistics released the results of a nine-year longitudinal study that among 412,731 inmates released in 2005, 84% of them were rearrested. This high recidivism rate shows a clear need for reentry intervention to reduce these rates. A key part of reentry intervention should include career readiness, which helps individuals attain skills and education that are congruent to the skills needed in the labor force. Providing career assistance and interventions to those entering the workforce is understanding an individual's desire and motivation in career and education, and negative career thoughts predict job attainment and satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to examine the career thoughts of incarcerated students and determine if intersections of their identities effect their career thoughts using the Career Thoughts Inventory and demographic information. The intersections examined include (a) re-offense, (b) disability status, (c) education level, and (d) employment experience. This study focuses on investigating the career thoughts of incarcerated students at a technical college serving only incarcerated adults. Results of this study indicate that these intersections do not have a significant difference with incarcerated students' career thoughts.

### Thematic Inspection Report on Education and Work Training in Prisons

*June 2023*

**Department of Justice (Ireland)**

This is the first Thematic Inspection Report on Education and Work Training in prisons conducted by the Office of the Inspector of Prisons (OIP), in partnership with the Department of Education Inspectorate (DE Inspectorate). The aim of this partnership is to draw on the specialist expertise of the DE Inspectorate to assess the quality of provision of education in prisons in Ireland. The report provides an assessment of education and work training in Wheatfield Prison, Mountjoy Men's Prison (Progression Unit and Main Prison) and Arbour Hill Prison. The OIP examined and assessed work training provision in each of the prisons, and the DE Inspectorate evaluated provision of education.

### Learning with digital technologies in prison: a scoping review

*Digital Education Review, 2023*

**R. Barros, A. Monteiro, C. Leite**

The challenges of a knowledge-based society require the development of digital skills recognizing the potential of learning supported by technologies. Within this scope, and based on research published over the last decade, a scoping review of 66 articles was performed to create a framework derived from existing literature to analyse approaches to identify views about learning supported by digital technologies in prison environments. The results allowed both the presentation of an evolutionary perspective of the state of art regarding digital technologies in prison education and to identify four views: Technical, Humanistic, Regulatory, and Organizational and Community. These views and the critical recognition of the approach that underpins them can contribute to understanding complementary roads to reach the political goals recommended for contemporary prison education, putting the focus on the promotion of conditions of lifelong learning in line with the challenges of the 21st century.



**[An evaluation of prison-based theological education: current and former students' perspectives](#)*****Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 2023*****R. LaBarbera**

Increasing access to higher education in prison is a topic of growing concern among researchers and correctional staff. The current evaluation analyzed data collected from 109 interviews in California, Texas, and Kansas with currently incarcerated students of a prison-based theological education program called The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) and with formerly incarcerated graduates who had participated in the program while they were incarcerated. In addition, 157 surveys were collected from individuals in California, Texas, Kansas, and Colorado who were currently incarcerated and formerly incarcerated program graduates. This study highlighted participants' perceived impact of TUMI, particularly on how they perceive overall program quality, areas for improvement, self-rated psychological well-being, and evaluation of prosocial thinking, behavior, and relationships, all of which contribute to identity change and desistance.

**[The First Step Is a Doozy: The Accessibility of Law School Applications for Incarcerated Students](#)*****Berkeley Journal of Criminal Law, 2023*****J. M. Binnall, L. M. Davis, A. Lopez**

Many incarcerated individuals who are interested in law school seek out applications while still in custody. But acquiring applications can prove problematic in the US, as the law school admissions process is now entirely online and incarcerated individuals do not have access to the Internet. Accordingly, an incarcerated person must request help from those on the outside, asking free advocates to reach out to potential law schools to secure an admissions application. This study explores US law schools' willingness to 1) provide an incarcerated ...

**[Development of Tertiary Education in Prison and Correctional Centres in Nigeria](#)*****Best Journal of Innovation in Science, Research and Development, 2023*****N. J. Ogunode, K. Edinoh, R. C. Odo**

**Purpose:** This paper discussed development of tertiary education in prison or correctional centres in Nigeria specifically looking at the challenges militating against development of tertiary education in Nigerian correctional facilities.

**Method:** Secondary data were adopted to provide empirical support to the paper. The secondary data were collected from print materials and online publications.

**Finding:** The paper concludes that shortage of funds, inadequate infrastructure facilities, shortage of instructional resources, inadequate facilitators, poor support from private organizations, lack of blueprint for prison tertiary education in Nigeria and shortage of higher institutions offering distance learning programme are the challenges militating against development of tertiary education in Nigerian correctional facilities.

**Recommendations:** The paper recommends that the federal government should establish special education funding programme for correctional centres in the country. The government should direct all higher institutions offering open or distance learning education to establish study centres in correctional facilities in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. Governments should provide classrooms and computers halls in all the facilities across the country. Government should provide adequate instructional resources in all the study centres. Higher institutions that have already established study facilities in correctional facilities should deploy adequate facilitators to the

centres. Private institutions like the Church, Mosque, international organizations, companies etc should be encouraged to invest more in prison education.

### [Transformational learning and identity shift: Evidence from a campus behind bars](#)

#### ***Punishment & Society***

**Amy E Lerman and Meredith Sadin**

Identity-driven theories of desistance provide a useful model for understanding change in a carceral context. However, these theories often are not grounded in specific programmes or practices that might catalyze identity shift, and tend to focus narrowly on recidivism as the sole outcome of interest. In this study, we examine the role of prison higher education in identity-driven change through the process of transformative learning. Using administrative information on college-level course completion and an original longitudinal survey of prison college students, we show evidence of both between- and within-subjects shifts in individuals' sense of self-efficacy, as well as their broader civic orientation. We further explore the role of identity using a survey experiment that randomly assigns individuals to a "student" versus "prisoner" identity label. We find that identity labelling has significant effects on both confidence in accomplishing one's goals and perceived likelihood of recidivism. We supplement these quantitative findings with qualitative interviews of prison college alumni. Our study suggests that access to higher education can be consequential for those in prison, and provides a broader framework through which to analyze the effects of prison programming that extends beyond recidivism.

### [Collaborating across prison walls and borders: cocreating an all-island curriculum that builds empathy and mutual understanding between diverse communities of North and South of Ireland prison university partnerships.](#)

**Gillian McNaul, Shadd Maruna, Katharina Swirak, James Cronin, Maggie O'Neill, Kathleen White**

Academics from University College Cork and Queens University Belfast have over the past two years established university-prison education partnerships with Cork Prison and HMP Hydebank Wood. Borrowing from similar US and UK based models, the Cork 'Inside Out' and Belfast 'Learning Together' projects are the first such courses on the island of Ireland, with university students and incarcerated persons studying side-by-side as equals in the prison classroom. Students and educators report that participation in the prison-university classroom raises empathy and provides skills for entering into dialogue across social differences. The North/South HEA-funded 'TOGETHER' collaboration between these two projects will now research the learning from these innovative approaches to university-prison education with incarcerated and university students in and across both sites. TOGETHER will facilitate incarcerated and university students to act as researchers, who will document and analyse how their different backgrounds shape their experiences of justice, stigma, labelling and harm. Through creative, visual and participatory methods, incarcerated and university students will record moments of learning in the prison-university classroom. Importantly, this will also provide insights into how prison-university classrooms facilitate students in building empathy towards their peers from diverse backgrounds. Both Belfast and Cork classrooms will also collaborate to further improve each other's work. As a result of this process, TOGETHER will then produce the first all-island Curriculum for prison-university partnerships. This Curriculum will be the first of its kind on the island of Ireland, adapted specifically to an all-island context, and moving beyond the imported ideas from the US and the UK.

**Teaching 'inside the wire in an Aotearoa New Zealand prison: A collaboration between the University of Otago and Otago Corrections Facility**

**F. E. Gilmour, S. Lucke, A. Eketone**

While the benefits of prison education have been established, access to education in prison faces multiple barriers including limited opportunities provided by tertiary institutions; a lack of digital access; institutional barriers (including limited movements to classrooms and restrictions on mixing of cohorts); and motivational barriers (often brought about by poor experiences with formal education). Potential students often have histories of experiencing social disadvantage and structural inequality that have impacted their prior-prison learning. In Aotearoa New Zealand prisons, there are currently only about 30 learners engaged in higher education (out of a population of 7,708 on 29 April 2022). It is a key goal of Ara Poutama Aotearoa/Department of Corrections (Corrections) to invest further in education and to ensure people being released from prison have the necessary levels of education for full participation in society.

**'Condemn the fault and not the actor of it?' Moving beyond the limits of recidivism to enhancing (re)humanisation through a Shakespeare focussed, prison-based approach**

***English in Education, 2023***

**Laura Louise Nicklin**

It is well researched, yet under-acknowledged in policy and practice, that prison alone is unsuccessful in reducing criminality. Though in the USA recidivism is high, recidivism is both a common and limited measure, rarely capturing individual nuances. This paper presents key findings from an ethnographically- informed exploration of a well-established multi-sited Shakespeare-focussed prison-based programme boasting broader positive outcomes, specifically surrounding one research question: What are the perceived outcomes of engagement in prison-based Shakespeare programmes, as reported by participants and practitioners? This paper outlines key overarching findings, surrounding perceived impacts of participation through the use of Shakespeare in multiple perceived roles (including playwright, character, mentor, friend, educator), work around literacy, emotional and expression skills and programme practices (including theatre-based activities, spaces, solo, group and ensemble activities, practitioner- participant interactions and ethos). These are connected to social- justice issues, concluding an overarching outcome of potential (re) humanisation of people in prison to society and themselves.

**Driver Licences, Diversionary Programs and Transport Justice for First Nations Peoples in Australia**  
***International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy, 2023***

**Gina Masterton, Mark Brady, Natalie Watson-Brown, Teresa Senserrick, Kieran Tranter**

In Australia, one significant cause of the imprisonment and disadvantage of First Nations people relates to transport injustice. First Nations people face obstacles in becoming lawful road users, particularly in relation to acquiring driver licences, with driving unlicensed a common pathway into the criminal justice system. This paper identifies that while some programs focus on increasing driver licensing for First Nations people, there are significant limitations in terms of coverage and access. Further, very few diversionary or support programs proactively address the intersection between First Nations people's driver licensing and the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, it is argued that scope does exist within some state and territory criminal justice programs to enhance transport justice by assisting First Nations people to secure driver licensing. This paper highlights the

need for accessible, available and culturally safe driver licencing support programs in First Nations communities led by First Nations people.

### **From Prison Zooms To Hospital Rooms: Unmasking the Positives Of Remote Education Of Remote Education**

**Thesis, 2023**

**Molly Chao Yeselson**

*From Prison Zooms to Hospital Rooms: Unmasking the Positives of Remote Education* is the culmination of a seven-year battle for my life and my education. Remote and hybrid education are perpetually identified as the cause of pandemic-era learning deficits. My project seeks to challenge such rhetoric by detailing the positive educational experience I, a student with a disability, along with my incarcerated peers, have had thanks to distance learning. I argue that as the world shifts from a pandemic to an endemic approach to COVID-19, higher education must keep its virtual doors open to non-traditional students.

### **The Right to Education: Is it a Reality or a Pipe Dream for Incarcerated Young Prisoners in Malawi?**

***Journal of Prison Education and Re-entry, 2023***

**Samson Chaima Kajawo, Lineo Rose Johnson**

Young people are often incarcerated in penitentiaries worldwide. Incarceration is not expected to hinder their access to quality education. This article, guided by Marxist theory, examines the practicality of educational rights at five young prisoners' facilities in Malawi. The study used a descriptive phenomenological qualitative research design to engage the voices of 52 incarcerated and released young people in semi-structured interviews to ascertain if prisoners' quality education was a reality or mere pipedream at young prisoners' facilities. The findings show a disparity between correctional education policies and the actual reality. Due to the inadequacy of resources and the negativity of the prison environment, the facilities failed to provide quality, appealing and motivating education to the already educationally disenchanted incarcerated young people, resulting in low enrolment rates. It was, therefore, concluded that education was still a pipe dream at young prisoners' centres in Malawi.

### **Students in Correctional Education: Developmental Education's Forgotten Population**

***Journal of College Reading & Learning, 2023***

**Jonathan Lollar, Carol Leah Mueller & Wes Anthony**

The Office of Correctional Education was created through an Act of Congress in 1991 to oversee and coordinate prison education programs as a way to reduce recidivism (Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, 1990). However, correctional education completion rates are extremely low. Therefore, we used secondary data from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies survey to show that students in prison would benefit from developmental and student supports. Survey data represented 1,319 prisoners and 8,670 from the household population. We used descriptive analysis, chi-square tests, and Welch's t-tests to analyze survey data. We conclude that those in the prison sample had a greater potential need for student support programs than the household sample and would benefit from increased developmental and student supports.



**In the Mix: A Phenomenological Study Examining College Campus Experiences of Formerly Incarcerated Students**

***Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 2023***

**Sherrise Y. Truesdale-Moore & Jacqueline S. Lewis**

Through a phenomenological framework, college students formerly incarcerated were studied to examine their experiences, perceptions, and challenges they encountered as they attempted to complete their college degree. Results uncovered seven themes: Education as survival, education as growth and development, feeling disrespected, education for career development, college readiness, navigating the culture of higher education, and accepting the challenges in higher education.

**Carcerality and Higher Education**

***About Campus, 2023***

**L. Collins, T.L. Buenavista**

According to the World Prison Brief (2021), the United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, with an incarceration rate of 639 per 100,000 people. In 2021, there were over 2 million people incarcerated in prisons and jails across the United States. The extremely high rate of incarceration is often attributed to several structural factors including mandatory minimum sentencing laws, the war on drugs, and the privatization of prisons, which has created a profit incentive for keeping people behind bars. Additionally, racial and economic disparities in the criminal justice system have contributed to the overrepresentation of Black and Brown people, as well as low-income individuals, in the prison population.

**Carceral State University: On College-in-Prison and its Role Within the Larger US Prison System**

***About Campus, 2023***

**R.L. Abouras**

There are certain conversations that, for better or worse, will always stick with you. For me, one such conversation was with a man named Gerald, the first of several faculty members I interviewed for a study on teaching college coursework in prison settings. At the time of the interview, Gerald had over two decades-worth of experience teaching Criminal Justice in federal, maximum security prisons. I, by contrast, was a third-year doctoral student who had only recently discovered an interest in prison education, despite never actually having set foot in a prison myself. Needless to say, I jumped at the opportunity to speak with Gerald—a real expert in the field of prison education—eager to learn from him and his many years of experience.

**Teaching in an unfamiliar place: A mixed methods-grounded theory study on the experiences of new correctional educators**

***Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, 2023***

**N. Patrie**

New correctional educators must learn to teach in an unfamiliar correctional environment. In this convergent mixed-methods study, experienced correctional educators in Alberta, Canada reflected on their first 6 months teaching in adult correctional institutions. Teachers initially struggled to do something familiar (teach) in an unfamiliar place, perceiving prisons as non-conducive to education. Seeing the absence of a purpose-built community, they built one or attached to existing non-educational communities. New educators invoked strategies such as engaging in mutual support,

connecting with non-education professionals, asking others to demystify institutional culture, and practicing reflexivity. When reflecting on useful training and orientation activities, participants favoured community and relationship building. The teachers' actions are framed using the concept of communities of practice, and a substantive theory of learning to teach in correctional environments is proposed. Finally, recommendations are provided to help ensure that new teachers are supported and prepared as they enter correctional education.

### [Resocialisation through e learning motivation, skills, and expectations of Finnish inmates](#)

***Masters Thesis, 2023***

**Samuli Siikarla**

The objective of this research is to determine if the resocialisation processes, supported by e-learning, would meet the capabilities, and needs of inmates in closed and open institutions in Finland. To reach to objective, three study questions were set:

1. How do Finnish inmates see their motivations, possibilities, and skills for e-learning?
2. How do Finnish inmates see education as a tool for resocialisation?
3. What kinds of features define Finnish inmates as students and learners?

The method of this study is qualitative empiric research, and the strategy of study is a case study, which was seen as a suitable strategy through its flexibility and wide range. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data for analysis, and later, through findings, the author was able to find answers to study questions.

### [Offender eLearning: A systematic literature review on re-entry, recidivism, and life after prison](#)

***Cogent Social Sciences, 2023***

**Gilbert Mahlangu & Eugenia Zivanai**

Several studies have been conducted on education in the discourse of offender rehabilitation; however, little has been published on the nexus between offender eLearning and re-entry into a digital society. This study aimed to systematically review the existing literature on offender education focusing mainly on eLearning to explain how offender eLearning enables re-entry, reduces recidivism, and promotes a better post-release life. The review draws on the good lives model (GLM) of offender rehabilitation and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Both theories acknowledge the paradox of digital inclusion in offender rehabilitation. We found that online education, facilitated by digital platforms, is a chance for offenders to learn new information and develop their abilities, presuming that the demand for education and training in prisons must be comparable to that of traditional educational institutions. Digital prison education gives inmates a purpose for their time in imprisonment as well as prepares them for life after prison. We conclude that technology cannot replace good teaching in offender rehabilitation; it can only support it. Moreover, the mere presence of the most innovative, mobile, user-friendly technology will not improve access and outcomes if the users on the ground do not have the time, space, resources, energy, and motivation to engage it. We, therefore, recommend that the technology for offender rehabilitation must be highly contextualized to ensure the long-term accomplishment of eLearning initiatives aimed at non-traditional and isolated students.

**Pedagogy, Course Design, and Student Engagement: Instructor Preparations for Teaching in the Correctional Environment**

***Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 2023***

**Ashley M. Appleby**

Existing research consistently provides evidence for the success associated with incarcerated student participation in higher education in prison programs. In consideration of the benefits of these programs, instructors who teach for higher education in prison programs are one of the primary links between the institutions of education and corrections and are therefore well-positioned to provide valuable insight into their experiences navigating the tensions at the intersection of the university operating in the correctional environment to shed light on the nature and quality of these programs. Through a multi-method approach including a survey (n = 156) and semi-structured interview (n = 41), this study explores how instructors prepare for offering a course for higher education in prison programs, which remains understudied in this line of research. Findings indicate that there remain substantial burdens on instructors and higher education in prison programs to continue to provide high-quality education in the correctional environment, as programs remain fragile and burdens are ever-changing across course offerings and semesters.

**Pedagogy, Course Design, and Student Engagement: Instructor Preparations for Teaching in the Correctional Environment**

***Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 2023***

**A.M. Appleby**

Existing research consistently provides evidence for the success associated with incarcerated student participation in higher education in prison programs. In consideration of the benefits of these programs, instructors who teach for higher education in prison programs are one of the primary links between the institutions of education and corrections and are therefore well-positioned to provide valuable insight into their experiences navigating the tensions at the intersection of the university operating in the correctional environment to shed light on the nature and quality of these programs. Through a multi-method approach including a survey (n = 156) and semi-structured interview (n = 41), this study explores how instructors prepare for offering a course for higher education in prison programs, which remains understudied in this line of research. Findings indicate that there remain substantial burdens on instructors and higher education in prison programs to continue to provide high-quality education in the correctional environment, as programs remain fragile and burdens are ever-changing across course offerings and semesters.

**Examining the Impact of Postsecondary Correctional Education Programs on Participant Self-Stigmatization: The Student Perspective**

***Thesis, 2023***

**C.M. Clark**

To provide a better understanding of the effect education has on formerly justice involved individuals' self-stigmatization, this dissertation explores the lived experiences of those persons who have completed their college degrees while in prison. A qualitative method was used to gather data from former students who have participated in correctional education programs.

The resultant data explains individuals' experiences of self-stigmatization while seeking employment and reconnecting with family and gives perspectives about their futures, since completing their educational programs. The data further details the role education plays in mediating feelings of self-

stigmatization for formerly justice-involved individuals. The knowledge will aid correctional administrators in measuring the efficacy of correctional education programs to decide if more programs are needed or if improvements can be made to existing programs to ensure successful rehabilitation and community re-entry of incarcerated persons.

### [Mentoring after prison: Recognition as a tool for reflection](#)

*British Journal of Community Justice, 2023*

**S. Hean, S.E.N. Sæbjørnsen, T.F. Eines, C.K.U. Grønvik**

Many organisations offer mentoring schemes to support people leaving prison and resettle back into the community. Mentorship relationships are complex but despite this, there remains limited theoretical and/or research informed tools to guide mentorship practices and hereby the success of ex-prisoner mentorship. The aim of the paper is to contribute to this shortfall by presenting a theoretically informed framework to assist reflection on mentorship practices and the mentorship relationship: the Recognition Reflection Framework (RRF). The framework has potential to provide mentors with a tool to reflect on ex-prisoners' need for recognition of worth if they are to desist from crime. The paper describes the theoretical development and preliminary validation of this reflection framework, underpinned by a strengths-based mentoring approach, and developed through the merger of concepts from recognition theory, person centred care and therapeutic alliances. We present this framework as a means through which mentors can reflect on how they may specifically contribute to secondary and tertiary desistance, as well as reflect on ways they can personally develop a constructive mentor-client relationship.

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### **Character makes the man**

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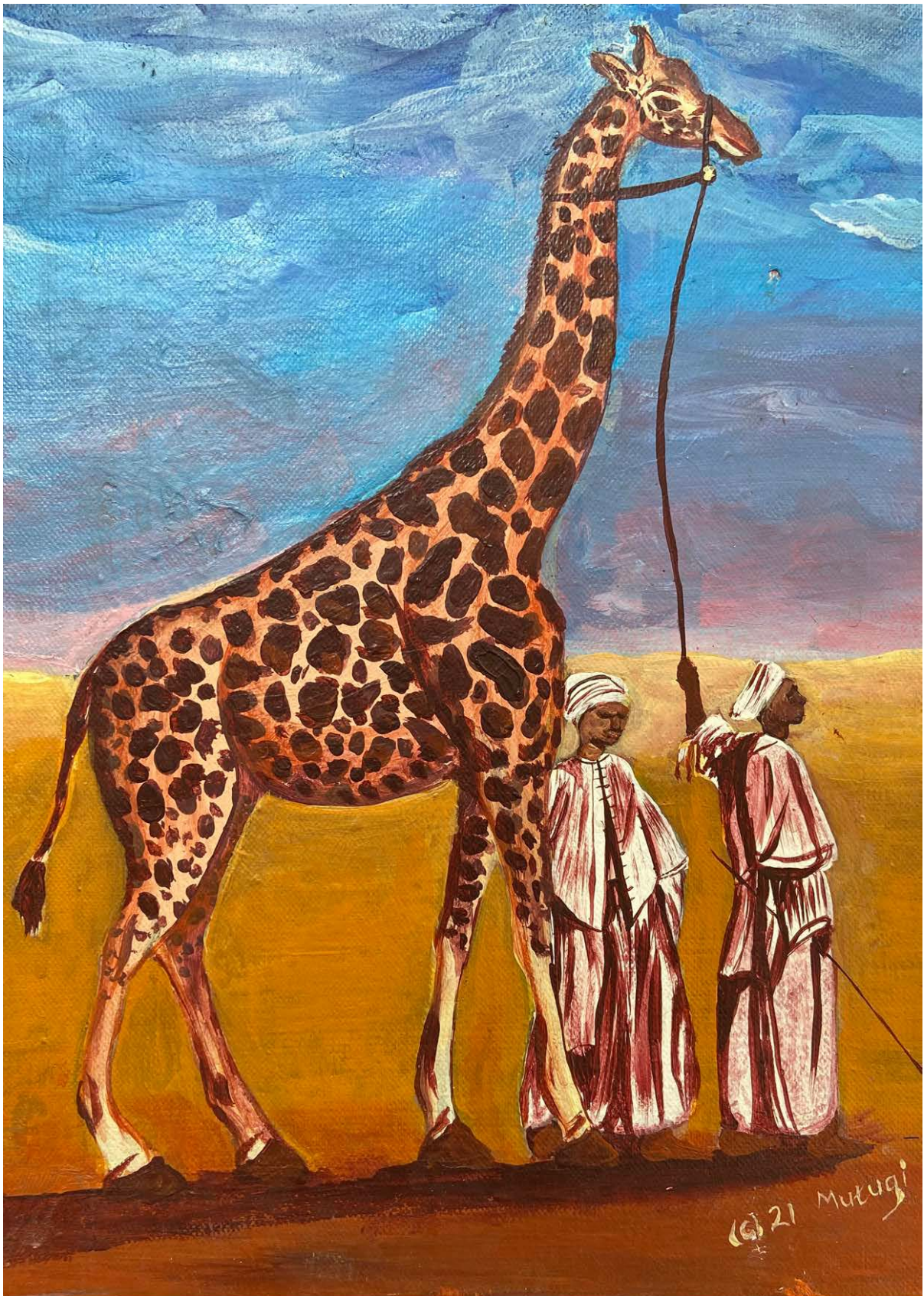
In a world full of pride, deceit and lies  
Real eyes realise real lies reel lives!  
You say it's about whānau, all for family  
Yet your actions continually destroy these trees!  
Entrapment, manipulation, extortion, control  
Pretending friendships spiraling down a black hole!  
Selfish behaviour it's all about ME  
Entitled arrogance fueled by jealousy!  
Corruptive takers saying 'what you gonna do?'  
Laughing and mocking until it happens to you!  
Run to the boss because we look after our own  
But it comes at a cost that's not often disclosed!!  
Agree to the terms we got you bro,  
In our world two wrongs DO make it right that's how it goes!  
We can do whatever, wherever to anyone  
But how dare they challenge us back, that's not the one!  
Fear, intimidation, numbers and cash  
Do what we say or get the bash!  
Fronting rebellion against the systems authorities  
Yet applying the exact same underhanded strategies!



One against many stand on your own two feet  
Fighting each other for control of the street!  
Loyalty preached it's all of our wishes  
Yet you can't even be loyal to your own bloody missus!  
Trust in me bro, I got your back  
Followed by betrayal, denial, damn that's whack!  
Irresponsible ignorance of any consequence  
Just blame someone else and let the drama begin!  
This is the state of our ancient code  
Which obviously today is not so well known!  
Integrity, honour, mutual respect  
Straight up as – what you see is what you get!  
No mask wearing, own your mistakes  
Giving way more than what we would take!  
Genuine friendships real brotherhood bonds  
Back-to-back battles remembered in songs!  
We'd die for each other without giving it a thought,  
The streets we grew on it was caught not taught!  
We fought against judgement, we fought to survive  
Our love and our characters are what keeps us alive...







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