

Chapter 11

Learning Programs or Educational Curricula for Prisons in the Twenty-First Century?

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ABSTRACT

This chapter states that there exists a difference between a learning program and an educational curriculum. Beneficiary-learners participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of learning programs whereas educational curricula are offered by some authorities who hardly consult with potential learners and who oversee the fashioning, execution and evaluation of the programs they have developed. The chapter draws attention to the fact that with regards to education in prison, the world is currently divided into three camps (nations that believe in the provision of a full range of educational services to prisoners, those that hold the view that only a limited provision of educational services is needed and nations that think prisoners deserve no education). The chapter ends by supplying a rationale for the provision of learning programs to the prisoner and the psycho-social and temporal sources from where the building blocks for such learning programs should be derived.

INTRODUCTION

The knowledge, observance and enforcement of human rights are processes that evolved gradually with the enlargement or rise in human consciousness. History tells us that, even in the most technologically and economically advanced societies

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of today, such common phenomena as the rights to vote and be voted for, were earned only through the letting and spilling of the blood and sweat of groups of people. The partially independent British colony of New Zealand was the first in the world to grant national level voting right to women in 1893 (historynet, 2016). Only after then did Sweden, Britain and the United States of America grant limited voting right to women at the beginning of the twentieth century (historynet, 2016; Rubio-Martin, 2013). Even, at the beginning of this twenty-first century, women and groups of minority people residing in parts of the world are still battling to access some basic human rights. Article 26 of the Human Rights Declaration of 1948 promulgated by the United Nations grant every human being the right to education (United Nations, 1948). This same right to education is protected by Articles 13 and 14, 28, 29 and 40, 5, 10 and 14 and 12 of the International Covenant On Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against women and the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man respectively (National Economic and Social Rights Initiative, 2016). Yet, observation shows that all nations of the world currently fall into three categories in regards to the provision of education for incarcerated offenders. One group of countries have come to accept that the prisoner needs to be offered a full range of educational services commensurate to that available to free citizens. Another set of nations maintain that only a limited educational offering can be available to the prisoner while a third group of countries currently deny incarcerated offenders any forms of education.

The current chapter is premised on the view that the incarcerated offender is entitled to education just like any free person. However, the chapter argues that, given the peculiar psychological, environmental and social conditions of the incarcerated offender, learning programs and not educational curricula should be the basis upon which prison education should be anchored especially in the twenty-first century.

BACKGROUND

How I wished I could entitle this chapter 'Prison Education Curricula for the Twenty-First Century' since 'curriculum' is a terminology in currency within prison education literature discussing contents of educational programs offered in prisons. However, I am not able to adopt this terminology in this chapter because first and foremost the terminology 'curriculum' was deliberately invented in 1918 for learning institutions (Alvior, 2014; Kelly 2009' Bilbao, Purita, Lucido, Iringan, Tomasa & Javier, 2008) and prisons were and are still not established expressly as learning institutions in the sense assumed within the context of a curriculum.

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