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# STATE OF THE ART IN EDUCATION AND DIGITAL PEDAGOGICAL USES IN PRISON

SPOC

IN PRISON



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## *Foreword*

This state of the art is the starting point for a proper understanding that the development of the digital and internet in a prison environment is not a new topic. Different bodies - political, legislative and educational, as well as associations and citizens groups - regularly bring this to the fore, and particularly when there is an event that shows how porous prison walls are, as when a telephone is used to film inmates in their cells. However, the formulation of this question is generally based on the principle of legalising the presence of these communication technologies (television, then computers, and soon mobile phones perhaps?). The use of these, under strict control, helps to occupy inmates and to maintain family contact. What about internet and digital technology?

Within the framework of the SPOC in Prison project we are proposing to discuss and outline a "digital education" programme adapted to the prison environment. Digital technology without internet with educational and cultural aims? This is totally possible once we consider education and culture as something other than an activity to keep people occupied and if we manage to give them added value by training the main participants (the trainers, teachers, other actors and the inmates).

The SPOC in Prison project is aimed at detainees and their trainers and it offers the development of digital skills. For inmates this will be done through a learning programme using a number of digital modules on varied themes, based on digital pedagogical objectives. For the trainers, this will be acquired through training activities in digital pedagogical design.

To help start thinking about this project we have drawn up this document which in fact is a kind of general introduction. We have identified a few initiatives that already exist or have existed as well as the obstacles to such attempts to the use of internet in prison, and the SPOC in Prison faces these as well! for Finally the scope of this document is also to outline a framework for transferable digital skills which prisoners can acquire in this kind of learning environment.

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# **1. Digital technology in prison: legislative framework and main orientations**

## **1.1. European Prison Rules (EPR): the fundamental right to Teaching and Education**

Prison is a space within society and as such it is of interest to the legislator. Rights and responsibilities as laid out by law or by internal regulations in prison. This first part deals with the legal framework relating to access to teaching and education in prison. Apart from treaties such as Rome (1957) and Maastricht (1992), laws passed unilaterally are among the legal sources of the European Union. They appear as regulations, directives, decisions, advice and recommendations. What interests us here are the regulations, for some of them concern the European Prison Rules (EPR) adopted by the Council of Europe. These rules have no binding power over member states nevertheless they do carry some weight and in general members countries have applied them.

The first European Prison Rules (EPR) were adopted in 1973 and revised in 1987. Nearly twenty years later, in January 2006, the European Union adopted a reform which introduced new regulations and the Council of Europe wanted its 46 members to harmonise their penitentiary policy. It proposed the basic principles and made practical recommendations. Altogether, the EPR proposed eight basic principles and 108 penitentiary regulations. They tackled very varied topics among which is that the rules that govern society be adapted to daily life in jail, or even that communication made with the outside world be done using mobile phones or even by internet (rule 24.1 and rule 99). As for training, which today is very often carried out using digital tools, the EPR stipulate that each prisoner has the right to education and "should not be penalised, either financially or in any other way, by their participation in educational activities ...". (28.4, 106.1 and 106.2).

Through its policy of education for adults and community development Europe has been able to put the European Prison Rules<sup>1</sup> (EPR) in place. This policy was begun in 1987 by the Council of Europe and set up by recommendation number R (89) 12, which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 1989. These regulations provide a framework for implementing:

- complete and individualised teaching programmes;
- the fight against illiteracy;
- learning numeracy;
- professional training;
- educational initiatives regarding minors in detention.

## **1.2. European project in digital skills**

The response to the European legislative framework regarding access to education saw the development of numerous partnerships. We will discuss some of them here because with them we share the leading and fundamental principles regarding education and the pedagogical relationship.

### **1.2.1. The Grundtvig FREE apprenticeship partnership**

This brings together four partner organisations in Belgium, Finland, France and Poland and it aims to share good practices in the field of reintegration into society through work. This programme is conducted on the principle of exchanging experiences and methods regarding different types of training, both formal and informal, as well

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.justice.gouv.fr/europe-et-international-10045/les-regles-penitentiaires-europeennes-10283>.

as informal learning by prisoners during and after their imprisonment. It has helped to raise awareness among prison staff and the personnel responsible for adult education, helping inmates to develop social skills and the knowledge which will improve their employability and facilitate their social reintegration.

The partners in the FREE programme have identified three general areas to be considered when dealing with the issue of the reintegration of ex-prisoners:

1. The labour market: in what way can formal education and informal learning facilitate the reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners into the job market?
2. Computer skills: in what way can formal education and informal learning help prisoners to acquire computer skills and how are computers used in this learning context?
3. Family consultation and professional orientation: how can education services and the family work together and how can prisoners following a course in jail be guided in order to achieve success by finishing the course in prison or on the outside?

### ***1.2.2. The Marie-Victorin CEGEP***

The Marie-Victorin CEGEP is a college offering general and professional teaching located in the north-east of the island of Montreal. In 1973 this school was given the responsibility of providing teaching for people in prison. This CEGEP based its approach on values of respect and valorisation of the adult learner and it helped in the social rehabilitation of such a population through a significant pedagogical relationship. Over the years the Marie-Victorin CEGEP has become the key player and an education leader in the world of prisons. Its expertise and its successes have earned it the support and the recognition of several participants and researchers in this field. The quality of its educational programmes is basically due as much to the relationships that the teachers establish with the incarcerated learners as to the pedagogical content. In this precise instance, the teaching aims as much at "reinsertion" in society after incarceration, particularly through access to employment, as it does to access to knowledge which encourages emancipation, self-reflection and relations with others, which is about opening up to the world, something vital in a custodial setting. In 2011 the CEGEP created a UNESCO Chair in research applied to education in prison<sup>2</sup> and offered high-level international university training on this theme.

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*"People behind bars who enrol in the two programmes on offer in the college studies diploma, in humanities and computer science, study for five days a week over four sessions, in class with a teacher or in a study room with individual teaching aids. This ensures consistency in the training programme and it is done on a daily basis to build up a life environment for these prisoners who forget their condition and their surroundings for a few hours to become simply students. [...] When you are in jail you have to relearn how to see yourself and to see things differently. And when you don't know very much you aren't able to put words to situations, your judgement is very simple, it's either black or it's white! Through education we are giving prisoners the chance to see shades and tones, which helps them while they're inside but also when they leave. They have regained important values and their view of society is more nuanced. [...] It is difficult to imagine how intense this relation (between a jailed student and a teacher) can be at present; this is important in the success and the resocialisation of prisoners."*

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*J-P Miron, Holder of the UNESCO Chair in research applied to education in prison.*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cmv-educare.com/>

### **1.2.3. Planet Tegel**

Another project which saw the light of day in Tegel prison in Germany in 1988 was set up on the initiative of a Berlin theatre director named Roland Brus and Michael Henning a multimedia designer. This was based on the development of a website: planet-tegel.de. This site was entirely created during design workshops with prisoners who acquired skills in computing, design, graphic creation and writing skills to express the site contents

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*"My only concern is to be sure that the prisoners won't be able to load pages and the site won't contain any pornography, nor racist or Nazi ideas."*

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*Klaus Lange-Lehngut, governor of Tegel prison, o Berlin.*

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In May 2000, a new function was added to the project: the exchange of e-mail. Every week many messages are sent to the e-mail address ([kontakt@planet-tegel.de](mailto:kontakt@planet-tegel.de)), and most of them reacted positively to the quality of the website. Jörg Heger had to teach a new function that was accessible thanks to the "web, but this was a rather unclear notion since exchanges were not done on-line. The inmates received their emails only on paper, which "broke" the digital procedure (the usage). This experience nevertheless demonstrates that the digital tool can be considered as a support for teaching and leisure activities.

## **1.3. Digital technology in prison: tools, uses and skills**

The use of digital tools helps inmates to familiarise themselves with computers and develop considerable skills for their rehabilitation. The 2012 report by the Fédération des Associations de Réflexion Action Prison Et Justice (FARAPEJ) on internet in prison and the one on e-learning in prison presented in 2010 by the European Commission mention projects carried out in 11 European countries including France. The projects are normally set up and co-financed by public authorities. In some countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany and Norway, Learning Management Systems (LMS) have been set up. Each time the LMS are adapted in order to respect the security requirements in the different prison systems. In other countries like Finland, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Denmark, projects have been put in place to allow prisoners internet access (of different degrees) in order to obtain information and training. When the inmates do not have access to internet, other autonomous solutions are deployed which do not require an internet connection (via a Moodlebox for example).

In France, the Cyber-base Justice tool is a partnership between the Ministry of Justice and the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations bank. This is to equip different penal institutions with access points restricted to a list of internet sites that are administrative, or for information or educational use. The use of this computing equipment is supervised by professional mediators after profiling for computer literacy and technical access: the internet profile (right click and keyboard use are forbidden as well as visits to websites like Tour-eiffel.fr, marmiton.com, laredoute.com...), the accompanied internet profile (the user is supervised), the "online exercise" profile (reserved for sites where there are exercises and auto- evaluation) and the office skills profile (learning how to use software and word processing, Word, Excel, PowerPoint). For each use profile there is a corresponding penal profile evaluated according to the "dangerousness level" of the incarcerated user, the length of the sentence still to be served, the follow-up on school or vocational training.

Means of communication mediated by technology in a prison environment vary widely throughout Europe. National laws are not always respected and the development of communication infrastructures varies between

countries. We provide an account of the situation in thirteen European countries via the following interactive panorama accessible [here](#)<sup>3</sup>.

This panorama highlights the narrow link between access to communication technologies and traditional means of communication. Speaking generally, telephone calls and access to internet services restricted to communication by email and part of the web are not added together but exist side by side in a meritocratic system. While the telephone and mail predominate as standards of communication, access to computer technology is not systematic on one hand because traditional means of communication cannot always be guaranteed, and on the other hand telecommunications infrastructures are unequally deployed and access to computer technology is conditioned by the selection of a restricted number of candidates.

Close observation of the availability of internet access in a prison environment has led us to note two trends: the first concerns the setting up of a proxy which filters flow and the content from the web, generally focused on resources linked to rehabilitation; the second reveals the deployment of teaching resources such as the project E-LIS in Germany.

To summarize, this first part is based on three orientations: the digital can/must accompany rehabilitation programmes for those in prison; the project-based approach is mainly valorised by European policies but what about a global vision; access to education and training with the help of digital tools.

## 2. Distance learning conditions in prison

Distance learning helps provide solutions to the follow-up and accompaniment of prison inmates when they take up their schooling or their studies again. It is designed to favour this kind of course and also matches security measures such as isolation. However, the current landscape of distance learning tends to reinforce the constraints on learning in such an environment: no internet connection, limited access to teaching aids (books, computers, supplies ...) lack of peer to peer communication and with teachers on the outside, methodological accompaniment restricted according to level of studies. On the European scale, there have been several initiatives around the development of digital technology in prison.

### 2.1. Distance learning conditions

Correspondence courses, which is a phrase that is still widespread in the prison milieu and is understood to be one form of distance learning, can provide a person in detention and who wishes to pursue some kind of training with access to a course that is not provided by the teaching team.

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*"These courses generally involve an outside institution that sends documents to be studied as well as assignments for the pupil to complete and return to the institution. In turn, the establishment replies in written form with corrections, comments, etc. With other forms of distance learning, the reactions may be less direct, such as when audio or video tapes are used. In those cases, the learner is supposed to work alone and monitor their own progress. Audiovisual and written documents are often used together, and sometimes (like in the British and Dutch open universities) they are completed by work supervised by a teacher."*

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*Conseil des Ministres § 5.6.).*

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<sup>3</sup> This interactive map was made using the tool Genially by 2<sup>nd</sup> year students in the Masters in Digital Humanities at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, in the framework of a distance learning course on pedagogical interactions in prison.

The following paragraph concludes (§5.7.):

*"[...] the inconveniences of correspondence courses and other kinds of distance learning are such that it is recommended that only limited use should be made of them. Often, this kind of teaching does not allow the learner to make the link between the lesson on one hand and their own experience and environment on the other hand. As the course content is fixed and thus non-negotiable, the indispensable element of student participation in course design is largely absent. Moreover, there are hardly any, or even no lessons in the presence of a teacher and no contact with other students following correspondence courses. Consequently, it is very hard to maintain motivation, and courses of this type are characterised by the very high drop-out rate, except there where the orientation and selection procedures before and during the course are really very good."*

## ***2.2. Teaching staff***

In prison teaching teams and the classes given, both at a distance and in the presence of the students, are based on two defining educational principles (formal and informal). Formal education activities are part of the programmes that make up the different cycles of school or university studies. They respond to aims that have been validated by decision-making authorities. As for informal education activities, they are often viewed as being complementary. So, periods spent in workshops are fairly well developed in prison. Professional training is also well developed and is dispensed by trainers, a status which should be distinguished from teachers and volunteers. The methods of organisation and the status of the teachers varies from one country to another. Teachers and trainers are employed by the Ministry of Justice and many volunteers participate. In France, teachers depend on the Ministry of National Education and the education system also calls on many volunteers.

These difference in status between countries are not anodyne. In France teaching teams' working conditions are necessarily controlled by the prison authorities and also by the kind of penal establishment concerned. A demanding adaptation must be made since the way the ministries of justice and education function is paradoxical: one guaranteeing rightful access to education when on the other side the focus is on security, and education is seen as an occupational activity like sport or library visits.

## ***2.3. Training devices connecting inmates with society***

Countries in northern Europe are often given as an example when discussing distance learning in prison. As early as 1842 Sweden had drawn up the *Comprehensive School Statute* in order to make educational activities obligatory for all prisoners aged 35 and under. It was in 2007 that resource centres (known as CDR) were set up in Sweden's 61 prisons. In each CDR (which are the equivalent of school centres in most other European countries) the inmates and their teachers have a pedagogical platform connected to an intranet network which centralises about 140 courses. This teaching offer covers all school levels as well as language learning. The teachers can organise virtual classes, upload files, post messages, have limited and supervised access to internet and act as tutors for another teacher's class. Prisoners also have access to all these resources and tools.

Norway also has a similar connected arrangement: Internet For Inmates. It is mainly used by inmates to access university teaching platforms. In the United Kingdom prisoners have access to a virtual campus according to the prison's geographical location. They can access classes, and job offers and can keep their work in files.

To summarize, this kind of mechanism allows individualised programmes and follow-up in case of transfer from one institution to another. But it is also and above all a very different prison environment from countries such as France, Italy, Spain and other countries in southern Europe.

### **3. Adapting training devices to prison conditions: ideas and perspectives in the SPOC project**

#### **3.1. Raising awareness inside and outside prison**

The main issue lies in raising awareness among the different actors. Many associations are working towards this. The most well-known at the European level is undoubtedly the [European Prison Education Association](#) with offices in different European countries which share prison educational practices and experiences and draw up recommendations for the legal framework for the application of basic access rights to education in prison, with a colloquium held every two years. In particular this association deals with questions relating to the development of internet and the authorised uses of communication technology and mobile supports in prison.<sup>4</sup>

Recently the association [Prison Insider](#) collected, organised and disseminated information about conditions of detention around the world. It publishes interactive maps, testimonies and reports of activities, and has proved to be particularly active in political and associative circles.

Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3, SPOC in Prison project lead, is helping to write three guides to accompany and raise awareness among actors in the prison environment and in the university world. They are currently being distributed to administrative and educational institutions, to associations and universities. The first one is aimed at teaching teams specialised in the prison environment and to prison administrators. It presents the university teaching arrangement as well as proposals to ease a prisoner's administrative path for when they wish to enrol in a distance learning programme. The second guide is aimed at teachers and teams of pedagogical engineers in French universities. It sets out the digital techno-pedagogical adaptations created by various pedagogical teams including those at UPVM3 in order to improve the access and the follow-up of university distance teaching programmes applied to those in detention. The third is currently under production. It will be an interactive guide like a document type web and will include the accounts and experiences of teachers and prisoners everywhere in Europe and partners in the SPOC project will be invited to contribute.

Taking these three forms of raising awareness among the different actors in the prison environment, the SPOC in Prison project is proposing a third orientation regarding the development of **disconnected digital uses**.

#### **3.2. Using disconnected training devices in prison?**

It should be remembered that the relationship with the teacher on the prison site is vital even in the context where teaching is supported by digital technologies. The SPOC in Prison project proposes exchanging about practices with a view to developing disconnected learning environments. there are two pedagogical principles behind this position.

The first is the conception of a learning path aimed at people in prison. This is a primordial stage in the transmission of knowledge based on digital technologies. In this particular context, the learning path must deal with three phases:

- Entry into the pedagogical activity or the first digital "page" that the inmate discovers. This gives the theme, the objectives, the organisation of the course and it must be interactive and attractive;
- The way that instructions are phrased is important especially if the inmate is alone in front of the computer. The clearer the instructions, the easier it will be for the learner to be autonomous;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.epea.org/skype-ipads-and-in-cell-education-at-heart-of-major-prisons-shakeup/>

- Intervention by the learner<sup>5</sup> must be anticipated according to the follow-up conditions of the training. For example, if the learning path contains a pdf document to be read, the learner must be able to intervene and know, for example, how to annotate, highlight and underline in this kind of resource.

The second principle is that of scriptwriting, which requires the teacher-designer to consider the target public, to spell out the pedagogical aims and skills and to choose the kind of technological support adapted to the constraints of prison. So, a teaching scenario prescribes, often in an ordered manner, activities, technological usages and the media needed and generates particular mediations between the learner and their environment. A scenario is divided into a series of "grains" which are themselves constituted of diverse audiovisual resources (short videos for example), texts (pdf documents) or even interactive maps without an internet connection being necessary at the point of use.

### ***3.3. Supporting inmates during their learning experience***

The approach developed in the SPOC in Prison project is based on the learning experience of the prisoner. It is fundamentally founded on *experimental knowledge*<sup>6</sup> in other words, in the context which interests us, the ability to co-build the personal account of a lifestory, of a shared meaning of prison and cultural knowledge. This kind of knowledge is widely mobilised in classroom situations in prison. At to try to also create meaning when developing digital learning paths this kind of knowledge can be reinvested in different forms.

#### ***3.3.1. Training trainers***

Training for trainers is indispensable in the development of digital usages in prison and should include an introduction to scriptwriting and to digital tools where the productions can be consulted and handled offline. For example, mental tools such as Mind Map, ScenariChain and Chamilo.

#### ***3.3.2. Developing tutorial activities***

These kinds of activities can be integrated in a learning path designed with digital tools. They can be dispensed by specialised teachers, methodologies, the organisation of personal work and questions about understanding of didactic elements. They can appear in any form such as face to face encounters or else done over Skype or in asynchronous meeting spaces (so that the institution can set up a connection).

#### ***3.3.3. Designing digital skills adapted to incarcerated learners***

Recommending the development of digital usages, even disconnected, in the context of learning while in prison, supposes a number of prerequisites in this field. Here we distinguish between digital competencies and computer skills. For example, this is about considering the annotation of a pdf document or the sequencing of a video as digital skills adapted to prison where the internet connection is not always allowed. Computer skills consist for example in knowing how to switch on a computer or even creating a file.

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<sup>5</sup> See the doctoral thesis in Language Sciences by Lucie Alidières (2013): [https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00873193/file/2013\\_alidieres\\_arch.pdf](https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-00873193/file/2013_alidieres_arch.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> L. Alidières (2013). Interactions et pratiques d'un processus d'innovation pédagogique en environnement carcéral. Thesis in Language Sciences, Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3.

## *Glossary*

**EPR:** European Prison Rules which aim at the harmonisation of prison policies in the member states of the Council of Europe.

**CEGEP:** Collège d'Enseignement Général Et Professionnel (a college for general and professional training) set up in order to harmonise the education system in Quebec.

**FARAPEJ:** Fédération Des Associations Réflexion Action Prison Et Justice, a group which brings together associations which intervene in the field of prison-justice.

**LMS:** Learning Management System refers to online training platforms.

**TIC:** Techniques of information and communication, referring to tools such as telephones, internet, distance learning, television, computers, networks and software.

**CDR:** Centre for Documentation and Resources

# SPOC IN PRISON

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## SPOC IN PRISON

SPOC in Prison is a Cooperation for innovation and the Exchange of good practices project in the field of Adult Education funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

This strategic partnership aims at designing a Small Private Offline Course (SPOC) that will allow both prisoners and prison educators to acquire digital skills.

The objective of SPOC in Prison is to promote digital learning in prison, while starting a form of collaboration at the European level in this field.

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