Journal of Prison Education and Reentry
Vol. 6 No. 1, 2019
RESEARCH PAPER

JOURNAL OF PRISON EDUCATION & REENTRY

Learning Together: Localism, Collaboration and Reflexivity in the Development of Prison and University Learning Communities

AMY LUDLOW & RUTH ARMSTRONG
Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, UK

LORANA BARTELS
Australian National University, Australia

Abstract: *This paper engages with challenges of localism, collaboration and reflexivity in thinking about the conceptualisation and development of partnership learning communities between higher education and criminal justice institutions. Grounded in experiences of partnership working in the UK and Australia, our arguments are twofold: First, drawing on missions, policy and practice challenges, that there is a case to be made for partnership—working between higher education and criminal justice institutions; and second that, although there is a need to think about collaborative international structures, there is also a need to reflect critically on how different socio-political and cultural realities (both within and beyond national borders) might shape the particular nature of partnership working. Therefore, while warmly welcoming international collaboration in this field, we urge caution in importing or exporting different "models" of partnership working. We make the case, instead, for open-textured theoretical and empirical reflexivity.*

Keywords: *Higher education, partnership, localism, reflexivity*

> So far as practicable, the education of prisoners shall be integrated with the educational system of the country so that after their release they may continue their education without difficulty.
> —United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners [the Nelson Mandela Rules]*, Rule 104(2), 2015

This article presents a reflection on the development and evolution of the Learning Together program in England and Wales (where the first and second author are based) and the attempts to date to implement the program in Queensland, Australia (where the third author is based).[1] Learning Together is an educational initiative that aims to build transformative learning communities through bringing students from higher education and criminal justice organisations to learn together as a group face-to-face in a prison environment (for further discussion, see Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016; Nichols, 2018). Developed and led by the University of Cambridge since 2014, over 40 higher education and criminal justice institutions in England and Wales now collaborate as a network (the Learning Together Network), in conversation with international academic and criminal justice partners.

In his foreword to Paolo Freire's seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Shaull asserted that education cannot be a neutral process; instead, it functions as an instrument to facilitate conformity or "becomes 'the practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Shaull, in Freire, 1970, p. 16). Inspired by Freire's vision of education as the practice of freedom, together, we seek to locally co-produce theoretically

Correspondence: Amy Ludlow & Ruth Armstrong, Email: justis@crim.cam.ac.uk
(Accepted: 6 March 2019) ISSN: 2387-2306 doi: https://doi.org/10.25771/134v-gn16

Except where otherwise noted, content on this site is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

informed learning communities, that is, we seek to establish locally adapted learning communities in collaboration with our students (whether or not incarcerated) which are influenced by relevant theories. Specifically, we ground our practices in educational, sociological and criminological theory (Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016), with the aim of ensuring that learning transforms, rather than merely reproduces, power structures that can be exclusive, excluding, divisive and oppressive. This does not ignore the lack of autonomy and freedom experienced by those trapped in the justice system, nor the barriers to education such institutions may erect (see e.g. Kilty & Lehalle, 2018; Warner, 2018). Nevertheless, as Jewkes has noted, quoting Scott and Codd (2013, p. 170), although "prisons are 'places of sadness and terror, harm and injustice, secrecy and oppression'… they can also be places of great humour and playfulness, friendship and camaraderie, educational enlightenment, successful therapeutic intervention and transformative achievement" (Jewkes, 2015, p. xi).

Freire argued that good education is the "practice of freedom": a deeply civic, political and moral practice, which subjectifies and empowers learners to mobilise their skills and talents and recognise their stake in shaping the world for social good. As Horton and Freire put it, "[w]hat the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves" (1991, p. 181). This sort of learning transforms "the weakness of the powerless…into a force capable of announcing justice" (Freire, 1997, p. 36). It inspires "civic courage" (Freire, 1998), which fuels individual, institutional and social transformation. It is this approach to education that we seek to embrace in Learning Together, an approach that stands in stark contrast with the emphasis on vocational education which has typified prison education in both the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia in recent years.

Drawing on the work of African philosopher Kwasi Wiredu in her 2014 article, Katrin Flikschuh describes a "growing preoccupation with practical problem-solving" (2014, p. 2) that can tend towards global theorising, which she argues is "morally and intellectually inadequate" (2014, p. 25). She also draws upon Wiredu's assertion that "[t]wo virtues, then, are sought after here: one, to be particularistic enough to be capable of knowing ourselves; and two, to be universalistic enough to be capable of knowing others. Or perhaps these are two sides of the same virtue" (Wiredu, as cited in Flikschuh, 2014, p. 1). Specifically, in this paper, we examine the areas of commonality across our different cultural, social, political and legal contexts, as well as reflecting on aspects that distinguish these contexts, thereby enabling us to more critically and reflexively examine and (re-)evaluate our own respective justice and educational environments. In doing so, we embrace Flikschuh's concept of philosophical fieldwork as conceptual discovery and non-empirical fieldwork, which can function as a "corrective to our current state of ignorance regarding the thoughts and views of distant others in the context of global normative theorising" (2014, p. 1).

In many ways, Flikschuh's observations, and the concerns that flow from them, resonate with what Freire might call the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*–an approach to intellectual inquiry that reproduces existing power structures, in part because learning is neither grounded in, nor shaped by, an account of the realities of those who learn. For Flikschuh, global theorising, which often assumes and embeds western values, risks perpetuating practical policies that are "morally well-intentioned but theoretically misguided" because, through ignorance, such policies are pitched "at superficial culture rather than underlying tradition" (2014, p. 25). Once again, Flikshuh's argument echoes Freire's writing. In 1972, for example, Freire wrote, "[o]ne cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding" (1972, p. 93).

This paper engages with some of the challenges of localism, collaboration and reflexivity, through thinking about how we conceptualise and develop partnership learning communities between higher education and criminal justice institutions. Our overall arguments are twofold: first, in our different cultural contexts, there is a case to be made for partnership-working between higher education and criminal justice institutions, based on what we see as somewhat intersecting missions and comparable policy and practice challenges; and second that, although there is a need to think about collaborative international structures for the development of theory, policy and practice, there is also a need to reflect critically on how different socio-political and cultural realities (both within and beyond national borders) might shape the particular nature of partnership working. Therefore, while we warmly welcome national and international collaboration in this field, we urge caution in importing or exporting different 'models' of partnership working. We seek to make the case,

instead, for open-textured theoretical and empirical reflexivity.

This paper is divided into three sections. In the first section, we explore the missions of our universities and prisons, arguing that, despite contextual differences, they are interconnected and have somewhat similar aims as institutions that seek to be individually and socially transformative. In the second section, we build on this argument to outline how, in our distinct national contexts (namely, Australia and England and Wales), prisons and universities have some common challenges and pressures that can frustrate them in realising their ambitions. We argue that existing learning opportunities in prisons and universities in both of our countries can be, in different ways, exclusive and excluding, failing to live up to a Freirean vision of transformative education. In the third section of the paper, we explore some of the theoretical underpinnings and emergent practices that have characterised the emergence of Learning Together in England and Wales. Drawing on comparative reflections that emerged from our international collaboration, we consider how mutual curiosity might help us to critically reflect on the frameworks that inform prison-university partnership working. Such curiosity may be both intellectually enlivening and vital for the delivery of transformative learning opportunities across different national and international contexts.

At the outset, we acknowledge that there may be several reasons why people who are incarcerated do not and perhaps cannot engage effectively with education. We recognise that many have backgrounds of trauma, violence, mental illness, addiction and homelessness that may have preceded their entry into prison and, in some instances, may continue to occur in the prison context. We do not seek to trivialise the impact of these compounding and intersecting challenges on people in prison and that this may preclude interest and/or engagement in education; nor do we ignore other blockages to accessing education in prison, including, but not limited to, access to educational materials, internet access and the withdrawal of education as a disciplinary measure. Against the background of these individual, social and institutional challenges, this paper explores the aspirational potential and benefits of university/prison education partnerships and tertiary education in prison at a broad level in two countries.

Different Hemispheres but Similar Missions

At first glance, higher education and criminal justice organisations seem unlikely bedfellows: while criminal justice organisations are typically seen as institutions of confinement, control and coercion, higher education organisations promise empowerment, liberation and expanded horizons through learning. As Fine and Torre put it and drawing on earlier work by Weis and Fine (2003), "[p]risons are explicitly about State control: schools are much more complex settings of social reproduction and radical possibility" (Fine & Torre, 2004, p. 16). Though we recognise the tensions between the aims of higher education and criminal justice organisations, as well as their discomforts, our view is that both organisations, in both of our different national contexts, may have more in common than might initially appear. As Farley and Hopkins noted recently:

> Enabling educators based in both prisons and universities are invested in the design and delivery of courses which provide positive and constructive outcomes for marginalised individuals and for Australian society at large…Fundamentally, both institutions share the same goal of improving access to education for this most marginalised student population (2018, p. 148).

In this section, we explore these commonalities by examining the interconnectedness of the organisations' missions. In the next section, we continue by considering their common challenges and pressures.

Though we agree with Richard Hil's caution that "[t]here is … no necessary connection between what is claimed in slogans and what actually goes on" (2012, p. 61) in modern universities, mission or vision statements offer useful starting points for reflecting upon the aspirations of public institutions and the potential relationships between them. Looking first at the mission statements of our own universities, the University of Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and the University of Cambridge in England, we find that both institutions aim to provide excellent educational experiences for their students. In so doing, both universities strive to improve society, building towards fairer, and more prosperous and sustainable communities (see University of Cambridge, 2018b; University of Canberra, 2018). Similarly, turning to the missions of criminal justice organisations in Australia and in England and Wales, we also find significant common ground.

ACT Corrective Services (2018), for example, articulates an ambition to "be recognised as a leader in the provision of effective corrective service which positively changes lives, reduce re-offending and prevent future victims", "provid[ing] sustainable opportunities for offenders to lead law abiding and productive lives in the community through rehabilitation and reintegration". In England and Wales, Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (2018) seeks to "prevent victims by changing lives" and "reduce reoffending by rehabilitating the people in our care through education and employment". Just as with universities, criminal justice organisations see themselves as striving to positively transform and improve society by encouraging individuals to fulfil their pro-social potential. Furthermore, while prisons may not be thought of immediately as seats of learning, and universities may not be thought of immediately as obvious destinations for people sentenced to imprisonment, education is explicitly embedded in the legislative framework within which prisons operate. University admissions policies also commit to widening access for people who have experienced social disadvantage. This encompasses many people who are under the supervision of criminal justice institutions.

In the higher education context, universities promise admission to students "of the highest intellectual potential, irrespective of social, racial, religious and financial considerations" (see e.g. University of Cambridge, 2004). The admissions policy at the University of Cambridge (2018a) aims for "aspiration" and "fairness", encouraging applications from "groups that are, at present, under-represented" and ensuring that "each applicant is individually assessed, without partiality or bias, with a focus on ability and potential." In England and Wales, widening participation has become a measure of excellence within the new Teaching Excellence Framework. This framework partly determines the allocation of government funding between universities (House of Commons Business, Innovation & Skills Committee 2016, p. 9). Likewise, the University of Canberra (2018) "pride[s itself] on being a beacon of equity, diversity, inclusion and access" (p. 4). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of New South Wales (NSW) recently advised that

> Australian Universities do not ask people to disclose criminal records or whether they have been in prison.…In fact I think it might be a breach of discrimination law on the basis that it is not relevant to undertaking study. (Baldry, 2018)

She acknowledged, however that some students may face more specific hurdles relevant to their chosen area of study, "e.g. student teachers, social workers, medical doctors, those wanting to be admitted as lawyers etc before they can undertake placements/internships and so on".

There are significant policy drivers, then, for universities to improve access to higher education for people who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In this context, people in the criminal justice system form an important constituency for universities committed to locating, harnessing and nurturing talent wherever it resides. However, it appears that many university admission policies and practices, at least in England and Wales, still fall short of good practice, excluding many people with a criminal record from university. In addition, there is no standardised approach to collating and using the information universities collect about applicants who declare criminal convictions (Evans, 2018).

In the prisons context, an aspirational vision for learning is articulated in the relevant international legal and policy documents that inform both the Australian and English contexts. The Mandela Rules, unanimously adopted by the United Nations in 2015, require prisons to provide education. They describe education as central to a person's social reintegration upon release; enabling people to live "law-abiding and self-supporting" lives (Rule 4). Rule 104 highlights particular needs to educate illiterate and young prisoners, but also envisages a role for higher education, with the rules stating that "further education" should be open "to all prisoners capable of profiting thereby." The Rules also outline a vision for prison learning that remains connected with educational institutions in the community. Strong emphasis is placed on providing learning opportunities within prison that are comparable with those in the community (Rule 4) and on building learning communities that transcend prison walls, such that education can continue post-release (Rule 104). The Council of Europe's (2006) *European Prison Rules* describe a vision of prison education that is similarly responsive to individual needs and aspirations and integrated with educational provision in the community (Rule 28). *The Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia* (Australian Corrective Services Ministers' Conference, 2012), provide inter alia that: prisoners should be provided with access to education that enables them to develop appropriate skills and abilities to support reduced re-offending when they return to the community (Rule 3.6); prisoners approved as full-time students should be remunerated equivalently to prisoners employed

in full-time work (Rule 3.8); and a high priority should be accorded to programmes addressing literacy and numeracy (Rule 3.9).

Although these legal provisions do not always translate into enforceable rights, their inclusion within the international and domestic legal frameworks communicates important aspirations that ought to guide policy and practice in both of our jurisdictions. The positioning of education within these rules as part of core prison "business" finds ready support in the literature that attests to the benefits of learning for living a non-offending life (e.g. Davis et al., 2013; Pompoco et al., 2017; Vacca, 2004). More ambitiously, these rules push us, as educators, to engage with prisons as equal partners, albeit with different expertise. They incite us to probe rationales for university and prison practices that stand in the way of good learning for students in prison and post-release in the same ways it would otherwise occur in the community, outside of any criminal justice involvement.

Beyond law and policy, the interconnected missions of prisons and universities are recognised by some members of the general public. When public opinion survey organisation Ipsos MORI explored social attitudes in the UK towards crime prevention, 48% of people surveyed thought that schools had a role to play in reducing crime (Duffy et al., 2008). Two-thirds of people surveyed by Esmée Fairbairn in 2005, believed that young offenders who cannot read ought to receive compulsory education, rather than custody. Similarly, in a study in the United States, three-quarters of respondents saw increasing education and job skills training for young offenders as the most effective way to reduce youth crime (Krisberg & Marchionna, 2007, p. 6). In a recent survey of 1200 adults across Australia, 82 percent of respondents agreed with the statement "we should spend more money funding effective prison-based education and treatment programs so that people leaving prisons do not commit new offences" (Fitzgerald et al., 2016, p. 316).

This evidence suggests that cross-nationally, many members of the general public recognise transformational educational opportunities as valuable ways to respond to, and reduce, crime. This is broadly consistent with Maruna and King's (2004) work on public opinion and community sanctions. Noting the problems of conceptualising "public opinion", Maruna and King argued that the general public wants "affective" as well as "effective" criminal justice: responses to crime that serve an expressive (or symbolic) function and meet emotional needs for security; indeed, they have suggested that "[j]ustice is, at its heart, an emotional, symbolic process, not simply a matter of effectiveness and efficiency" (Maruna & King, 2008, p. 347; in the Australian context, see Freiberg, 2001; Fitzgerald, Freiberg & Bartels, 2018). Punitive criminal justice policies can appear to meet these expressive and emotional needs, such as fear of crime, but Maruna and King's work suggests that these needs can also be met by stories of transformation and redemption. The transformative potential of educational experiences is well documented, both in research and narrative accounts of people who were formerly imprisoned (e.g. Boyle, 1977; James, 2016; Prisoners' Education Trust, 2018). These narratives, combined with Maruna and King's findings, suggest that the general public might welcome university and prison partnership working as a way through which both institutions could better achieve their missions and as a way through which needs for affective criminal justice might be met.

Comparable Challenges in Different Contexts

As with their missions, criminal justice and higher education organisations ostensibly have very different approaches to learning and learners. Within prisons, education can be hampered by narrow understandings of "rehabilitation" and narrow aims to reduce criminogenic risks. These understandings can result in remedial-focussed learning, which is narrowly future-oriented; correcting deficits and equipping people with basic skills so that they might "function" in society post-release, including by becoming "employable" often in low-paying jobs. Furthermore, "success" for our criminal justice systems in Australia and England and Wales is, ironically, and somewhat misleadingly, often measured by reoffending rates. Despite some recent policy drives to extend support "through the gate" (e.g. in the UK, Coates, 2016), most relationships in prison, including educational relationships, terminate abruptly upon release. By contrast, universities approach their learners as sites of potential, tied to aspirational and expansive visions of what learners' futures might hold. Rather than correcting deficits, university learning promises to cultivate high functioning, independent thinking and critical capacities. While the success of universities is also measured in terms of employment

outcomes, the measures also take into account graduate earnings and the positive contributions university graduates make to social progress.[2] Through alumni departments, universities manifest ongoing interest in the fulfilment of individuals' possibilities long after they leave university. This feeds back into the university community's sense of pride and achievement to inspire and motivate others.

Despite these ostensible differences, we turn now to interrogate the realities of learning in prisons and universities, arguing through this evidence that prisons and universities might have more challenges in common than a first glance might suggest. Both institutions may be thought to have untapped potential and unmet need–failing in some comparable ways to live up to Freire's ambitions for education as the practice of freedom, promoting critical thought and empowerment for educators and students alike.

Untapped potential. It is undoubtedly true that many people who enter the criminal justice system have poor or limited previous experiences of education. In 2014-15, 42 percent of adult prisoners in England and Wales reported that they had been permanently excluded from school prior to their arrival into custody (Coates, 2016, p. iii). Nearly half of the children in custody (46%) had underachieved at school (Youth Justice Board, 2006). The "school-to-prison pipeline" (Krezmien et al., 2014) is well documented. Fractured or exclusionary experiences of education in the community increase the risks of subsequent criminal justice involvement and imprisonment (see generally Hemphill et al., 2017; Losen & Gillespie, 2012; McAra & McVie, 2010). Stigmatising, non-aspirational and marginalising experiences at school can 'set people up' for life in prison by negatively labelling, excluding and detaining young people, and sending them to the fringes of educational spaces, where there are fewer stimulating learning opportunities (Graham, 2014; see also Christle,Jolivette & Nelson, 2010).

With these incoming negative educational experiences, it is unsurprising that educational deficits in prisons are high, and successful engagement of people in education is low. In England and Wales, 57 percent of people entering prison have the literacy skills of an 11-year-old or below (Skills Funding Agency, 2016). This is three times higher than in the general adult population (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2012). Similarly, in Australia, according to the Victorian Government, only 40% of people in prison in that jurisdiction have basic literacy and numeracy skills that enable them to cope independently in the workforce (McDonald, 2015). Systems in both jurisdictions could do more to equip people with these skills whilst in custody. Three-fifths of people leaving prison in England and Wales have not achieved identified employment, education or training outcomes (Coates, 2016, p. iii). In Australia, 36% of people released from prison have not completed their final year of compulsory secondary school education, while 18% have completed only two years of secondary school education. The equivalent figure for Indigenous people leaving prison in Australia is almost double this (30 %) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2015).

Seen in this light, then, low educational attainment whilst in custody might be viewed less as an indication of limited potential or capability and more as a reflection of systemic educational failings in the community. This is compounded by the provision of education that may be poor quality or simply not valued in an environment that is commonly regarded as coercive. For example, in 2016, the NSW Government announced its intention to reduce the number of teachers and educational officers in its prisons from 158 to 87, a move the NSW Teachers Federation described as "appalling" (ABC News, 2016). Furthermore, while uptake of higher education in prisons in England and Wales and Australia is low; in Australia, only 1.7% of eligible are engaged in higher education (Productivity Commission, 2018) and participation in higher education in prisons is in fact falling in England and Wales: see Coates, 2016). However, this may say more about the paucity of available higher education opportunities than the potential of people in prison to study at this level, with a limited range of courses available and educational resource that is mostly targeted at basic skills development. In England and Wales, the Open University recently described "a glass ceiling beyond [basic levels] for prison learners, with anything above that seen as, at best, an optional extra rather than a coherent progression route for students" (cited in Coates, 2016, p. 38). A recent study of prison education in England and Wales showed that a fifth of prisoner learners would have preferred to be studying at a higher level than they were currently (Coates, 2016). The emphasis upon vocational learning opportunities has been criticised (see e.g. Warner, 2018), on the basis that it prevents prisoners from reaching their full potential. For example, Dame Coates asserted in her review of prison education in the UK that "education should be aspirational [and] must offer a learning journey that is truly transformational and enables progression to higher levels" (2016, p. 38). Already

in 1990, the Council of Europe recognised that education in prison should "aim to develop the whole person"(p. 8) and a "wide concept of education" adopted (1990, p. 13). A United Nations report goes further in suggesting that "[a]ll persons [in prison] should have the right to take part in cultural activities and education aimed at the full development of the human personality" (Munoz, 2009, p. 9; for discussion, see Warner, 2018). Critically, Munoz affirmed that education in prison is more than a tool for change; "it is an imperative in its own right" (2009, p. 2). In some ways, criticism might also be levelled at the research that has been published about the role of education in prison, which has often (though not exclusively, see e.g. Runnell, 2015) explored the relationship between education and desistance from crime through the lens of its benefits for employability post-release (Abrams & Lea, 2016; Davis et al., 2013). Pike and Farley recently suggested that "[i]t is time that correctional administrators stopped thinking about education and vocational training purely in terms of increasing employability", as many ex-prisoners will never find employment. Accordingly, "the emphasis should shift to helping prisoners to become law-abiding citizens with more opportunities to contribute positively to their communities" (Pike & Farley, 2018, p. 90).

For these reasons, although low levels of previous educational attainment and limited, or basic, educational engagement whilst in custody do not seem promising signs of fertile learning "soil", it would be misguided to think that prison-based learners in Australia or England and Wales lack potential, including the potential for higher education. It would be equally misguided, in our view, to think that the potential of everyone successfully admitted to university is well-supported or that those who do not gain a university place do not have the potential for study at that level. Access to higher education institutions and experiences upon admission, especially at more prestigious institutions, are unequal (Jerrim & Parker, 2015; Norton, 2018; Office for Fair Access, 2015; Stevenson, 2012). A report from the Social Mobility Advisory Group in England (2016) found that "socio-economic disadvantage continues to be the most significant driver of inequality in terms of access to and outcomes from higher education" (2016, p. 1). Research also shows that the transformative effects of higher education are not equally distributed across all students (e.g. Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015). A wealth of untapped potential exists among people we fail to attract to our universities and those who join university communities, but struggle to thrive during their studies and in life thereafter. We think untapped potential is a common international challenge for our prisons and our universities, and one that might be better addressed through working together.

Unmet need. As noted above, we readily acknowledge the complex needs of many in the justice system, especially in relation to trauma, mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, under/unemployment and lack of education. There is a clear need for universal, selective and indicated prevention to address these intersecting issues. Downes, Nairz-Wirth and Rusinaite recently articulated 10 key principles for inclusive systems in and around schools, including equality and non-discrimination; the right to expression of voice and participation, as well as other educational rights; a holistic approach; differentiation in prevention approaches; building on strengths; the representation and participation of marginalised groups; and life-long learning. Many of these apply equally in the context of education in prison.

Our reading of the literature suggests that the unmet potential we have described above derives partly from a common challenge of unmet need. Within prison, this relates to the predominant conception of education as narrowly remedial and rehabilitative. Learning needs are often identified through compulsory, deficits-driven processes that are repeated by multiple agencies within the same prison and on arrival to each new prison and, even once identified, support for specific learning needs is often unavailable (Coates, 2016). Assessment processes do not always capture learning differences for which additional support is needed (Coates 2016, p. 13). As discussed above, existing practices in educational assessment can lead to an over-emphasis on low-level remedial provision, rather than a consideration of how to engage a learner more holistically and ambitiously to engage and overcome barriers to their participation to fulfil their educational potential.

A remedial emphasis also runs through predominant understandings of the relationship between education and rehabilitation. Educational participation is routinely used as a sentence planning target, or as a relevant factor to assess and reduce a person's risk of reoffending (Australian Corrective Services Ministers' Conference, 2012, Rule 1.3; National Offender Management Service, 2014, [2.15]). However, the relationship between educational achievement and risk reduction can be too narrowly understood and poorly evidenced. Rehabilitation, as a central goal of imprisonment, is mostly understood as 'making the unfit fit' (Maruna, 2012,

p. 74). In some cases, this means that education is only valued narrowly as it pertains to this kind of rehabilitation; in other cases, the rehabilitative value of engaging in education is misunderstood and overlooked (Coates, 2016; see also e.g. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, 2016, p. 25; Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2015). This can mean that access to educational provision,especially higher educational provision, is not prioritised, or worse, blocked.

Two levels of unmet need can thereby thwart learners with potential in prison—not having adequate procedures to help people to identify their learning potential and, if identified, not having either the ethos or the provision to enable learners can achieve that potential. These unmet needs may account for the decline in higher education study in prisons in England and Wales in recent years, with only 200 higher education qualifications at Level 3 (A-Level equivalent) or above delivered to a population of over 86,000 prisoners in 2014-15. This amounts to a decrease of more than 85% on the number of Level 3 qualifications that were delivered in prisons in England and Wales in 2012-13 (Coates, 2016).

Unmet need can similarly thwart potential at university. Though undergraduate student satisfaction is reportedly high in the UK and Australia overall (see e.g. Universities Australia, 2018; Universities UK, 2018), there are well-documented shortcomings in existing measures of satisfaction and levels of student participation in the relevant surveys. Students' experiences vary significantly across groups and between universities. In Cambridge, some of our university-based Learning Together students have described feeling that the University had unrealistic expectations of their latent capability. Others, in common with students elsewhere in the UK, described unmet needs for psychological and emotional support during their studies, and related depersonalised, detached, frenetic and overwhelming experiences of learning with too few opportunities for processing, reflection or synthesis–learning that makes them feel that ideas are the preserve of a few, and an "indulgence" which has little utility or bearing upon real life. In his seminal text on Australian universities, *Whackademia*, Hil expresses similar sentiments, arguing that "universities tend to churn out graduates who are entirely unprepared either for the world of work … or for active participation in everyday civic life" (2012, p. 194). In his subsequent book, *Selling Students Short* (2015), Hil drew on interviews with 150 students across Australia to report on students' dissatisfying experiences of large class sizes, inadequate facilities and feeling lonely and isolated. He ultimately critiqued a system "increasingly obsessed with performance-based, administrative concerns", lamenting that the "informal spaces that once enabled to immerse themselves in the presence of others, to contemplate, think and reflect, have over time been significantly eroded" (2015, p. 4).

Once more, unsatisfactory experiences of university life are not equally distributed within diverse student populations. Socio-economically disadvantaged students tend to do least well at university, even controlling for prior attainment. White students who are not from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have better course completion, attainment and employability outcomes and report highest levels of satisfaction with their university experience (Mountford-Simdars et al., 2015). A report, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council of England, found that some of the standard approaches to university curricula and learning can favour students who are better situated socially and economically. Experiences of support and encouragement from teaching staff, and a sense of belonging, were found to be critical in stimulating students' learning and attainment. Students from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, and students who are struggling financially, had less positive overall experiences of learning within universities, and less positive overall experiences of their relationships with teaching staff and their peers, with weaker senses of belonging. There are many ways in which their needs–financial, social, emotional and pedagogical–are not being met. The learning opportunities that universities provide can be both exclusive and excluding, inaccessible to many with the potential to do well, and isolating for many who learn there (Hil, 2015).

What emerges, then, despite prisons' and universities' ostensibly different approaches to learning and learners, is a somewhat common picture of untapped potential, unmet need and the inherited difficulties of working within imperfect institutional and social structures with ever-increasing pressure on resources. Prisons and universities are both susceptible to criticism for being exclusive and excluding learning communities that merely reproduce rather than transform existing power structures. They are both "locked in" in some of the same ways, under pressure "to serve State interests, dependent on state dollars, and in the grip of a 'control society' in which ideologies of safety and justice are undermined by practices of surveillance and outcomes of inequality" (Fine & Torre, 2004, p. 16; see also e.g., Taylor, 2013). The challenge for both institutions is there-

fore how to work within this context to provide high-quality, expansive and inclusive learning opportunities that capitalise on the individual and communal potential of transformative learning. We see prison and university learning communities as one way of helping both institutions to rise to this challenge.

The Case for Open-Textured Reflexivity

So far, in this paper, we have made an argument for partnership working between universities and prisons, based on some similarities across the different national contexts of Australia and England in the missions of our institutions and the challenges that they face in achieving their missions. However, as Mayes et al. (2018) have acknowledged in the Canadian context, even without the existing barriers present in both corrections and universities, forming a cooperative relationship between any two large institutions presents challenges, including security concerns, logistical considerations and resource implications (see also Farley & Hopkins, 2018).

In this section, we consider the thornier matter of *how* universities and prisons might work together. We begin by considering some of the theoretical underpinnings of Learning Together in England, and the values and practices that have emerged. We then turn to consider some of the different socio-political and cultural realities we encountered and reflected on together in Australia, which have prompted new questions about ways of doing, knowing and understanding prison and university partnerships. In this way, we seek to respond to and overcome the Flikschuh's concern about "the apparent lack of interest in finding out what—and how—distant others think" (2014, p. 3). Drawing on these experiences, we make the case for reciprocal international collaboration in place of "exporting" or "importing" "models" of prison and university partnership working–open-textured local, theoretical and empirical reflexivity. Through this, our hope is that we can begin to articulate common high-level values to build community and solidarity within and across borders, and advance theory, evidence, policy and practice.

1. Learning Together in England–theoretical underpinnings and emergent practices. The design of Learning Together in England is grounded in resonances between the individual and social components of transformative learning and movements away from crime. In the educational sphere, Learning Together has been influenced by the critical pedagogical work of Paolo Freire (1972; 1998), Jack Mezirow's (2000) work on emancipatory and transformative learning, and Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's work on communities of practice in learning theory. Criminologically, Learning Together has been informed by the work of desistance scholars, especially Shadd Maruna, Fergus McNeil, Stephen Farrell, Anthony Bottoms and Joanna Shapland, whose work has advanced understandings about how people move away from crime (see e.g. Shapland et al., 2016). Within processes of learning and desistance, Learning Together is especially interested in the role of stigma and prejudice, and the potential of intergroup contact–engaging with people across perceived, and experienced, social "differences"—to reduce stigma and prejudice (e.g. Allport, 1954; Petigrew & Tropp, 2006), catalyse learning (e.g. Gurin et al., 2002) and support desistance (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010).[3]

One of the characteristics that transformative learning, intergroup contact and desistance theories share is their close attention to the social contexts in which transformative interactions occur. Transformative experiences–of learning, stigma reduction, and desistance–do not happen in isolation. Jack Mezirow's (2000) educational research positions challenges to individuals' "frames of reference" at the heart of transformative learning. Drawing on Habermas (1984) distinctions between two major forms of learning (instrumental and communicative), Mezirow highlights the particular importance of communicative learning to transformative educational experiences. Instrumental learning seeks to control and manipulate the learning environment and focuses on improving performance. Communicative learning, by contrast, emphasises what a person means and views knowledge as a route through which we understand ourselves, our connections with others, and the world around us. We learn from and with others and realise our own potential best when we are also involved in recognising and realising the potential of others (Dweck, 2006; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2004).

The importance of mutuality and social context in learning is echoed in findings from studies on intergroup contact. Collaborating on a task in circumstances of parity which reduce power imbalances can be important for creating environments for "meaningful encounters" (Valentine, 2008) in which stigma and prejudice reduce (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Sociological and geographical literatures explore

the benefits of reducing perceptions and experiences of stigma and prejudice from the perspective of creating more inclusive and sustainable communities (Amin & Howell, 2016; Bauman, 2016; Sennett, 2018; Valentine, 2008). Desistance research suggests that increasing relational capital and access to pro-social opportunities and support, while reducing perceptions and experiences of stigma and prejudice, can increase the probability of positive outcomes after prison (LeBel et al., 2008; Meisenhelder, 1982; Sharpe, 2015). Stigmatisation, by contrast, tends to perpetuate segregation, exclusion and persistent offending (Braithwaite, 1989). This evidence suggests to us that the relational contours of potentially transformative learning environments share some of the same characteristics as environments that are conducive to supporting desistance from crime—environments that develop, enable and "scaffold" the exercise of autonomy, have equality and mutuality at their heart, and nurture and sustain inclusive community networks.

Building from this research, and some of the intersections we see emerging from the different strands of literature, Learning Together Network partnerships have generated a set of core values. These values form part of our common Terms of Reference, which anchor our practices and operationalise our vision. These values include:

- potential – nurturing talent wherever it is found;
- progression – providing routes for our learners to reach their potential and working collaboratively to challenge the structures and practices that limit this; and
- participation – collaborating with our students and with each other to co-produce transformative communities of learning.

Underpinning all of our values is a commitment to parity and to reflexive evaluation – paying close attention to curating learning communities that bring people together in ways that reduce power imbalances and to evaluating our practices in ways that shape our knowledge base and help us all to develop our practices.

As Learning Together has developed within the criminal justice and higher education contexts of England and Wales, we have negotiated practices to reflect these values and commitments. Working towards potential means that our courses are open to all students, who are recruited on the basis of their future contribution, rather than defined by their past. We do not exclude people based on the offences for which they have been convicted. This is partly pragmatic, because we know that conviction type does not always accurately reflect offending. It is also partly ethical and intellectual, because we do not wish to perpetuate hierarchies of harm between offence types, and because community networks and resources are equally, if not even more important, to support desistance among people convicted of high-profile and commonly stigmatised types of offending, such as sexual offences (McAlinden et al., 2017; Bartels, Walvisch & Richards, 2019). We also do not have minimum formal education qualification requirements—we admit people who believe they can undertake the work required and can evidence the skills and commitment to complete the course. For many of the reasons that we outlined in the second section of this paper, we have not found formal educational qualifications to be a good measure of intellectual potential, notwithstanding the challenges of teaching and learning with students of high intellect who need extra support to develop the necessary formal study skills.

Valuing progression has meant that we do not believe in delivering one-off courses within prisons or with people on probation, without plans for how students can build from their learning. Our approach favours community building, based on ongoing learning-focused relationships with all of our students, including as they undertake multiple courses, transition between institutions and/or into the community. Our students are encouraged to stay in touch with each other and support each other in their learning. We aim to support all of our learners equally, responding to their needs as students, and supporting their progress as alumni. We hold alumni events and write references. As standard academic practices, these commitments also reflect the value of parity among all Learning Together students, which continues to be central to our practices even outside of the classroom. Parity has meant developing an approach to recruitment that is identical for all of our students. Our application forms, selection criteria and processes are the same for all students, and students attend the same security and boundary-setting session at the start of each course together, to discuss and subscribe to the prison and university's rules and create their own community rules for the course. After courses end, all students can stay in touch with each other if they so wish. We encourage all of our students to think about how

they can continue to support and sustain each other between courses, and how they might share their talents and ideas to nurture their own progression, as well as the progression of others. Reflecting these values within our commitment to evaluation has involved developing participatory methodologies through which we work with our students to understand their experiences. We have, for example, worked with our students to make films and write songs about their experiences, and engaged in group data analysis sessions with our students.

2. Learning Together in Australia–new challenges and possibilities. Growing international interest in Learning Together over the last four years has nurtured a critical engagement with the underpinning evidence and emergent values that have informed the initiative so far. In 2016, we travelled together between Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne, collaborating with professionals and students across different prisons and universities. These exchanges highlighted many ways in which the Australian local context presented new opportunities to develop locally grounded Learning Together practices that might fulfil similarly transformative aspirations within a different context. We were able to organise one knowledge exchange event including representatives from prisons and universities from four jurisdictions within a private prison on the outskirts of Sydney. We also held events within universities in Canberra and Melbourne and met with practitioners and policymakers in local prisons separately. Within this vast landscape with devolved penal power, existing research relationships between prisons and universities were clearly less well established and more regionally diffuse and varied than in England and Wales.

Flikschuh's idea of philosophical fieldwork requires a preparedness to step outside one's comfort zone conceptually rather than physically. This preceded but was supplemented by the first and second authors' visit to Australia, which in turn prompted the third author to view aspects of her own country and culture through fresh eyes. As Flikschuh put it, "[r]eflexive awareness of one's own unavoidable parochialism can serve as whetstone to the endeavour towards relatively greater non-parochialism" (2014, p. 19). In particular, we were struck by or reminded of four features of the Australian context: (a) the country's geographical scale as compared to the UK; (b) the devolved nature of criminal justice in each state and territory; (c) the nature of existing relationships between universities and criminal justice institutions; and (d) the impact of Aboriginal histories and traditions, including the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the criminal justice system. Although Indigenous people comprise only 3% of the general Australian population, over a quarter of the adult prison population is Indigenous; this rises to a third for the female population and over half of the juvenile detention population. In addition, Indigenous people generally perform worse on all health, education, employment and recidivism indicators (for a comprehensive recent overview, see Australian Law Reform Commission, 2017). In this final section of our paper, we reflect on these issues to consider how local realities might shape ways of doing (practices), knowing (methods) and thinking (understanding), to enrich prison and university partnership working more broadly. We conclude by returning to Flikschuh's work to consider how a commitment to locally co-produced practices, national and international collaboration, and empirical reflexivity, might enliven partnership working and prove vital for the development of transformative theory, policy and practice in this field.

Even before setting foot in a prison or university in Australia, we were learning. As we began to travel and study the map, we were struck by the vast expanses of inhospitable land, peppered with population hotspots. Australia is the sixth largest country in the world by landmass, but, for such a geographically large landscape, it has quite a small population, of approximately 24 million people. This contributes to making Australia the second wealthiest nation in the world (Shorrocks et al., 2017). Despite this wealth, a relatively large (and rising) percentage of the Australian population are imprisoned, with an imprisonment rate of 222 per 100,000 in June 2018 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018). By way of comparison, the imprisonment rate in England and Wales in October 2018 was 141 per 100,000 (World Prison Brief, 2018). Prisoners in Australia housed in 114 prisons (Productivity Commission 2018) across six independent states and two territories, which governed by their own legal framework, policies and procedures and underpinned by nine different frameworks for the criminal justice and sentencing systems more generally. Federal offenders, who account for about two percent of offenders, serve their time in state and territory prisons.

There are some limited examples of existing partnerships between prisons and universities, although these are disparate in terms of geography, form and duration. Two notable examples are the Australian National University Legal Literacy Programme, which began in 2010, and the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program,

which commenced in the United States over 20 years ago and started in two prisons in Victoria in 2015 (RMIT, 2015). The Legal Literacy Project involves ANU law students visiting the ACT prison once a week for six weeks. The students co-produce a syllabus of law classes by discussing which topics the students in prison would like to learn about and can cover a broad range of legal issues including family, employment, criminal and business law, depending on the interests of each cohort of participants. The students from the university then design workshops that focus on the relevant legal issues identified and together they role-play different aspects of the legal system, law and legal process (see Right Now, 2012). This program involves the dissemination of information from university students to people living in prison, and has not been formally evaluated, it nevertheless constitutes an important example of an effective prison/university partnership. In Australia, Inside-Out involves classes of 15 "inside" and 15 "outside" students. In an evaluation involving pre- and post-program anonymous student surveys, focus group discussions and peer review teaching practice, results showed the program was positive, with students saying they had grown through the program and it had broken down differences between the inside and outside students. After the program, a think tank began operating at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, with 20 inside and outside students, as well as RMIT University staff, meeting fortnightly. This group seeks to provide input on criminal justice issues, such as how to improve the quality of prison life (Martinovic, 2016). There are other examples, including the efforts of Richards and Bartels to set up a Learning Together partnership with the Queensland University of Technology, but examples tend to be local and specific and have not become accepted practice across either higher education or penal institutions.

In stark contrast to Australia, England and Wales is geographically small, with a comparatively large population of over 58 million, more than double that of Australia. As set out above, comparatively lower percentage of the population is incarcerated. The number of people in prison has been falling slightly over the last few years but is still the highest imprisonment rate in Western Europe. In this geographical context, many people housed in the 118 prisons across England and Wales regularly move around the estate, both nationally and regionally. This is particularly true of people who are serving sentences in excess of 15 years. There are some regional differences, but a central management structure has allowed the Learning Together Network of prison and university partnerships to engage with the system at a national strategic level, as well as through local relationships between prisons, probation trusts and universities. Building on many years of prison sociology scholarship, particularly entailing detailed ethnographic work, local and national partnerships have benefitted from a strong ethos of collaboration and a long history of educational partnership working in different forms (see further Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016).

The scale of England and Wales, the national coordination of prison policy and management, and the depth of existing empirical research relationships, have each contributed to enabling fruitful dialogue between academy and prison policy and practice. This dialogue has, in turn, enabled Learning Together to push in fairly coordinated ways at the frontiers of criminal justice and higher education practices and policies. Outcomes of this include continued contact between students who are part of the Learning Together community in the face of institutional prison conventions that typically stop relationships at the prison gates; the development of a digital learning platform to support learning in the context of little other existing access to technology in prisons; and local and national action challenging universities to consider previous criminal convictions only once an application has been evaluated on its merits.

Within the context of England and Wales, with its smaller geography, centrally managed prison system, and prisons' more systemic openness to working with universities, it has made sense for Learning Together partnerships to come together as a national network. National collaboration has helped students to progress in their learning as they are transferred between institutions across the country, just as university students sometimes transfer their studies to other universities. Some Learning Together students have begun courses in one prison and finish their studies at a different prison with the support of a different partner university. Similarly, examples exist of students who transfer to another prison temporarily for extended family visits nearer their hometown and link in with Learning Together partnership activities and studies in their temporary host prison. Other students have come from taking a Learning Together course as an undergraduate or graduate in one university, to be involved, as student or facilitator, at another university. With so many partnerships now operating across England and Wales, these collaborations designed to nurture potential and provide routes of

progression have not obscured the many differences among partnerships. Each partnership has local strengths and challenges that are shaped by the type of prison, its population, function, architecture and location, as well as the strengths, focus and sometimes constraints of the local university.

In Australia, the geopolitical realities of the criminal justice and higher education systems felt distinct. Farley and Hopkins capture some of Australia's geographical distinctiveness in terms of "painful immobilisation", where prisons are often many hours' drive from the nearest town (2016, p. 150). They see this as a "core strategy" of the modern Australian penal system and extend this concept to include the lack of access to internet-enabled devices for students in prison. Despite general policy encouragement of education as a tool of rehabilitation, they argue that "this lack of internet access undermines … access to higher education in the short term and successful rehabilitation in the long term" (2016, p. 150). However, to the outsider, there are some intriguing outcomes of the "enduring social and cultural isolation of modern Australian prisons" (2016, p. 150). Farley and colleagues have utilised technology, including internet access, on a comparatively grand scale to provide access to higher education in far-flung prisons across Australia, especially through the Making the Connection project, which was run by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) from the end of 2013 until mid-2018. This project developed two technologies that did not require internet access: a server-based solution (called the USQ Offline Enterprise Solution) and a notebook computer solution (called the USQ Offline Personal Device). The Enterprise Platform is deployed into correctional centre computer labs, while the Offline Personal Devices are allocated to prisoners to take back to their cells. Incarcerated students can access their courses via an offline version of USQ's learning management system. They can enrol into five programs (Tertiary Preparation Program; Indigenous Higher Education Pathways Program; Diploma of Arts; Diploma of Science; or Associate Degree of Business and Commerce). The project was active in Queensland (all prisons except the reception centre); Western Australia (10 prisons); Tasmania; and the Northern Territory (two prisons and one work camp). The project enrolled some 1,700 prisoners across 39 centres. Retention rates for these prisoners were higher than for non-incarcerated students in the same programs (76% vs 65%) and grades were slightly better than for non-incarcerated students. The project has now been transitioned into business-as-usual at the USQ, which will continue the project with the participating jurisdictions while still negotiating with the remaining four jurisdictions (Farley, 2018; see also Farley & Hopkins, 2018). While Farley et al. (2016) highlight the challenges of limited internet access for students in prison, even the tenets of this conversation are remarkable from a comparative perspective, with such limited existing provision in England and Wales. It is possible to see how local context in Australian partnerships has shaped these higher education practices and advanced the dialogue around technology in learning and internet access beyond what has been perceived as politically and practically possible elsewhere.

If local contexts necessarily and profitably shape ways of doing, our travels also brought alive the ways in which local contexts can also shape ways of knowing–of interrogating the nature and impacts of local practice. The geography and central management of the prison system in England and Wales means that applications to conduct research in prisons go through a central ethics board, which is specific to Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, in addition to assessment by local university ethics boards. A long history of empirical prisons research in England and Wales has built strong and trusting relationships between prisons and universities, in which close and sustained ethnographic description of prison life has been possible. This benefits partnership practices and establishes a basis of trust for accessing prisons for delivering courses, as well as evaluating the experiences and impacts of Learning Together partnerships. High levels of trust and understanding between prisons and universities permit a more open exploration in research, expanding the questions that can be asked and how those questions can be explored. It is possible to get local permission to conduct evaluation at a single prison as well as multi-site permission for comparative national evaluation.

By contrast, in Australia, the devolved nature of criminal justice power makes this process more cumbersome, with eight prison systems operating a variety of research approval processes. The 40 Australian universities are also generally located in capital cities, often far from the major prisons, which may in turn be governed by a different legislative framework. As an example of this tyranny of distance, one prison in Western Australia is over 1,000 miles from the nearest university and capital city (Darwin, in the Northern Territory), which is governed by a different legislative sentencing and corrections framework. In addition, there is a much more limited culture of prison research in Australia; indeed, external researchers may be regarded with

wariness, if not outright hostility. The contrast with the established prison research tradition in England and Wales, was readily apparent to the third author while she was based in Cambridge in 2015. This was again reinforced by the observations of the second and third authors during their visit to Australia and ongoing attempts by the third author to gain research access to Australian prisons.

Ways of knowing are not only shaped by the sometimes-bureaucratic processes of clearance procedures; the making of academic knowledge can also be enlivened by the nature of questions that are thought to be of local interest, and local preferences and cultural approaches of working towards answers. The first two authors had never previously travelled to Australia and were struck by the public rituals of acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (hereafter Aboriginal) cultures and connections to the land. We enjoyed enlivening dialogue with prison practitioners whose work focused on responding to the needs of Aboriginal prisoners. Some of these colleagues noted parallels between the concerns and pedagogy of Learning Together and traditional forms of teaching and learning through dialogue within Australian Aboriginal traditions (see also Kilty & Lehalle, 2018, in the Canadian context). Beyond synergies in terms of practice, we could see how co-producing learning and evaluation in this context might expand our ideas about what our research questions should be, and how we could go about answering them. Considering Indigenous research methodologies in the American context, Gone (2018) explores the benefits of Indigenous research methods, arguing that they can enliven us to new questions and new ways of asking them. But Gone also warns against methodological exclusivity, arguing that researchers should avoid 'indigenous-western' binaries and instead move towards 'Métis knowledge', a conscious mixing of interests and approaches to methodological enquiry. He argues that the kind of dialogue this mixing produces is at the heart of good scholarship. One could call it learning together.

Concluding Thoughts

Farley and Hopkins recently observed that, in both prisons, and in universities, "higher education is and should be also about human development, social relationships, social mobility and social justice" and it is "critically important that we continue to work together to overcome the institutional, structural and systemic barriers that adversely affect incarcerated university students" (2018, p. 150). Naturally, ways of knowing shape what is known; this leads us to our final reflection. There is a sense in which, through working as an international community of prison and university partnerships we can, together, shape what is known, and what is knowable, drawing comparatively from each of our local contexts. We have recently reflected on current approaches to risk management in some prisons and universities in light of an old children's tale called "Chicken Licken". In this story, a young chick has the unfortunate experience of an acorn falling on his head. Confused by this new experience, the young chick runs to the King to tell him that he believes that the sky is falling down. On his way to the King, the chick gathers many other animals with him, who all run with him in fear of the perceived impending sky falling disaster. Chicken Licken is a sad story which ends with all of the animals being eaten by a fox before they had chance to realise that the sky wasn't really falling down–it was just an acorn.

In her article, Flikschuh (2014) warns of the potential ills of lazy global theorising, where local practical problems are addressed in light of norms transferred without sufficient care from familiar to unfamiliar global settings. We recognise the dangers she highlights. However, we also recognise the experiential truths of the Chicken Licken tale. In the face of new experiences, it can sometimes be easy to misunderstand a context or problem. Without others around you, with whom you can stop and exchange experiences and ideas, it can be tempting to forge ahead without questioning whether the assumptions we bring to new experiences or environments really hold. Similarly, without others around you, it can be easy to take for granted, and embed rather than challenge, existing thinking that may not reflect the best of what might be. There is a sense in which the "chickens" of each of our cultural realities—the myths that persist, and the ways these shape our practices, methods and knowledge—can be productively disrupted and developed through locally grounded, open-textured theoretical and empirical learning together.

Flikschuh argues that it is "reasonable to assume that those who are distant from us geographically and culturally are likely to conceive of and reflect on the realities of their social worlds and natural surroundings

in ways that differ from how we conceive of and reflect on our social realities and natural environments" (2014, p. 16). The joys of collaboration implicit in her paper are found in how we render these differences intelligible, through what she describes as "a genuine and sustained curiosity and interest in what-and how-distant others think" (2014, p. 25) and an acknowledgement that all knowledge and ways of doing things, are, at their root, parochial. Flikschuh thinks that collaborations of this kind–what we have described as open-textured reflexivity about our practices, methods and theoretical frameworks–might help to avoid "the foisting of practical recommendations upon distant contexts on the basis of merely presumptive claims to universal validity or generalisability" (2014, p. 21).

In this paper, we have sought to make a case for prison and university partnerships in both Australia and England and Wales (for recent discussion in the Canadian context, see Kilty & Lehalle, 2018; Mayes et al., 2018), but this does not mean that exporting one form of partnership working from one locality to another will necessarily be equally appropriate or beneficial. Above all, the Learning Together programme does not present a replicable model that can be adopted holus-bolus, without regard to the local criminal justice and university contexts. By taking time to get to know others in different cultural contexts, and by thinking critically and reflexively with others about our own theoretical underpinnings and practices, we have come to know ourselves a little better. This has, in turn, helped us to recognise and test some of our assumptions and 'myths'. Within the Learning Together Network, we continue to collaborate with each other nationally and, increasingly, internationally, including with colleagues in Belgium, Denmark, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, South Africa, Spain and the USA. Through working collaboratively, with curiosity about both common and divergent problems, strengths, interests and approaches, our hope is that we might together be able to develop frameworks for comparative research and policy and practice development that emerge from, and are strengthened by, their localism. By working towards comparative knowledge production in this locally grounded way, we hope to develop new questions, new approaches to answering these questions and new knowledge that will enliven the transformative potential of our local and global prison and university partnerships. In the context of the framework of Flikschuh's philosophical fieldwork as conceptual discovery, our reflections in this paper also help us avoid the imposition of lazy global normative theorizing and cultural invasion, however well intentioned. However, we recognise the need for further research in this area, including empirical research on the effects of university–prison partnerships. This should in particular focus on the voices of people with lived experience of education in prison (see e.g. Anonymous, 2018; MacPherson, 2018; Nicholls, 2018), including their perceptions of barriers to participating in prison–university partnerships. Privileging these voices would in turn further Freire's vision.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the good intentions of all involved in this work who are motivated, as Horace Webster put it at the opening of the Free Academy in 1849, to create the kind of higher education that "can be successfully controlled, not by the privileged few but by the privileged many" (as quoted in Roff, Cucchiara & Dunlap, 2000, p. 6). Our suggestion in this paper is that we might best fulfil our collective ambitions and the transformative promise of prison and university learning communities, by working openly together, animated by mutual curiosity, so that we really get to know each other, and in so doing, might come to understand ourselves, our contexts, and our potentials and limitations better.

References

ABC News (2016, May 11). More than 70 teaching staff in NSW prisons to go under education shake-up. Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-11/teachers-in-nsw-prisons-to-go-under-shake-up/7404596

Abrams, L., & Lea, C. (2016). An ethnographic study of life skills courses in a men's jail. *Prison Journal, 96*, 667-687.

ACT Corrective Services (2018). *ACT corrective services*. Retrieved from http://www.cs.act.gov.au/act_corrective_services

Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge/Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Amin, A., & Howell, P. (2016). *Releasing the commons: Rethinking the futures of the commons*. London, United Kingdom /New York, NY: Routledge.

Anonymous (2018). Schooling in a Canadian federal prison. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 20-30.

Armstrong, R., & Ludlow, A. (2016). Educational partnerships between universities and prisons: How Learning Together can be individually, socially and institutionally transformative. *Prison Service Journal, 225*, 9-17.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). *Corrective services, Australia, June quarter 2018*. Cat 4512.0. Canberra, Australia: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Australian Corrective Services Ministers' Conference (2012). *Standard guidelines for corrections in Australia*.

Australian Law Reform Commission (2017). *Pathways to justice—Incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Report 133. Sydney, Australia: Australian Law Reform Commission.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015). *The health of Australia's prisoners 2015*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Baldry, E. (2018, July 27). Personal communication on file in possession of authors.

Bartels, L., Walvisch, J., & Richards, K. (2019). More, longer, tougher… or is it finally time for a different approach to the post-sentence management of sex offenders in Australia? *Criminal Law Journal, 43,* 41-57.

Bauman, Z. (2016). *Strangers at our door*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Boyle, J. (1977). *A Sense of freedom*. London, United Kingdom: Ebury Press.

Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame and reintegration*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Christle, C. Jolivette, K., & Nelson, C. (2010). Breaking the school to prison pipeline: Identifying school risk and protective factors for youth delinquency. *Exceptionality, 13(2),* 69-88.

Coates, S (2016). *Unlocking potential: A review of education in prison*. London, United Kingdom: Ministry of Justice.

Council of Europe. (1990). *Education in prison: Recommendation No. R (89) 12 adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 1989 and explanatory memorandum*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe (2006). *European prison rules*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Davis, L., Bozick, R., Steele, J., Sanders, J., & Miles, J. (2013). *A Meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Downes, P., Nairz-Wirth, E., & Rusinaite, V. (2017). *Structural indicators for inclusive systems in and around schools: Analytical report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Duffy, B., Wake, R., Burrows, T., & Bremner, P. (2008). *Closing the gaps: Crime and public perceptions*. London, United Kingdom: Ipsos MORI.

Dweck, C. (2007). *Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, & United Kingdom (2004). *Rethinking crime and punishment: The report*. London, United Kingdom: Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Evans, G. (2018, July 17). *How welcoming are our universities for people with criminal convictions?* https://learningtogethercambridge.wordpress.com/2018/07/17/how-welcoming-are-our-universities-for-people-with-criminal-convictions/

Farley, H. (2018, August 1). Personal communication on file in possession of authors.

Farley, H., Pike, A., Demiray, U., & Tanglang, N. (2016). Delivering digital higher education into prisons:

The cases of four universities in Australia, UK, Turkey and Nigeria (Yongsheng Zhang trans.). *Distance Education in China, 7*(26), 35-43.

Farley, H., & Hopkins, S. (2016). The prison is another country: incarcerated students and (im)mobility in Australian prisons. *Critical Studies in Education, 58*(2), 150-167.

Farley, H., & Hopkins, S. (2018). Moving forward together: Supporting educators to support incarcerated students in Australian prison-based higher education. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 143-150.

Fine, M., & Torre, M. (2004). Re-membering exclusions: participatory action research in public institutions' *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1*, 15-37.

Fitzgerald, R., Bartels, L., Freiberg, A., Cherney, A., & Buglar, S. (2016). How does the Australian public view parole? Results from a national survey on public attitudes towards parole and re-entry. *Criminal Law Journal, 40*, 307-324.

Fitzgerald, R., Freiberg, A., & Bartels, L. (2018). Redemption or forfeiture? Understanding diversity in Australians' attitudes to parole. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1748895818800738

Flikschuh, K. (2014). The idea of philosophical fieldwork: global justice, moral ignorance and intellectual attitudes. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 22, 1-26.

Freiberg, A. (2001). Affective versus effective justice: Instrumentalism and emotionalism in criminal justice. *Punishment and Society, 3*, 256-278.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of the heart*. New York, NY: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth, United Kingdom: Penguin.

Graham, K. (2014). Does school prepare men for prison? *City, 18*(6), 824-836.

Gone, J. (2018). Considering Indigenous research methodologies: critical reflections by an indigenous knower. *Qualitative Inquiry*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418787545

Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. (2002). Diversity and higher education: Theory and impact on educational outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review, 72*(3), 330-367.

Gurin, P., Nagda, B., & Lopez, G. (2004). The benefits of diversity in education for democratic citizenship. *Journal of Social Issues, 60*, 17-34.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action – Reason and the rationalization of society*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hemphill, S., Broderick, D., & Heerde, J. (2017). Positive associations between school suspension and student problem behaviour: Recent Australian findings. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice,* (531). Canberra, Australia: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (2016). *An inspection of through the gate resettlement services for short-term prisoners*. Manchester, United Kingdom: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (2018). *About us*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/her-majestys-prison-and-probation-service/about

Hil, R. (2012). *Whackacdemia: An insider's account of the troubled university*. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press.

Hil, R. (2015). *Selling students short: Why you won't get the university education you deserve*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.

Hirschfield, P., & Piquero, A. (2010). Normalization and legitimation: Modelling stigmatizing attitudes towards ex-offenders. *Criminology, 48*, 27-55.

Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1991). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee (2016). *The teaching excellence framework: Assessing quality in higher education* (Third Report of Session 2015-16 HC 572). London, United Kingdom: Stationery Office.

James, E. (2016). *Redeemable: A memoir of darkness and hope*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury.

Jerrim, J., & Parker, P. (2015). Socioeconomic inequality in access to high-status colleges: A cross-country comparison. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 42*, 20-32.

Jewkes, Y. (2015). Foreword. In D. Drake, R. Earle & J. Sloan (Eds.), *The palgrave handbook of prison ethnography* (pp. ix-xiv). Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kilty, J., & Lehalle, S. (2018). Voices from inside the circle: The Walls to Bridges collaborative teaching and learning experience in Canada. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 46-56.

Krezmien, M., Leone, P., & Wilson, M. (2014). Marginalized students, school exclusion and the school-to-prison pipeline. In W. Church, D. Springer & A. Roberts (Eds.), *Juvenile Justice* (pp. 267-287). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Krisberg, B., & Marchionna, S. (2007). Attitudes of US voters toward youth crime and the justice system. *Focus: Views from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency*. Retrieved from https://www.nccdglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/focus-voters-and-youth.pdf

LeBel, T., Burnett, R., Maruna, S., & Bushway, S. (2008). The "chicken and egg" of subjective and social factors in desistance from crime. *European Journal of Criminology, 5*, 130-158.

LEGACY Project (2018). *Measuring learning gain*. Retrieved from https://warwick.ac.uk/services/aro/dar/quality/legacy/strands/measuringlearninggain/

Losen, D., & Gillespie, J. (2012). *Opportunities suspended: The disparate impact of disciplinary exclusion from school*. Los Angeles: Centre for Civil Rights, University of California.

MacPherson, K. (2018). Transformation through education: The epitome of a 'hook-for-change'? *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 10-19.

Martinovic, M. (2016). Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program arrives at RMIT in Melbourne. *PacificRim: Newsletter of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology, 13*(2), 15-16.

Maruna, S. (2012). A signalling perspective on employment-based re-entry: Elements of successful desistance signalling. *Criminology & Public Policy, 11*, 73-86.

Maruna, S., & King, A. (2004). Public opinion and community penalties. In A. Bottoms, S. Rex & G. Robinson. (Eds). *Alternatives to Prisons: Options for an Insecure Society* (pp. 83-112). Cullompton, United Kingdom: Willan.

Maruna, S., & King, A. (2008). Selling the public on probation: Beyond the bib. *Probation Journal, 55*, 337-351.

Mayes, L., Owens, T., Falvai, J., & De Temple, T. (2018). Turning correctional education inside-out: Experiences and lessons from a university partnership. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 57-69.

McAlinden, A., Farmer, M., & Maruna, S. (2017). Desistance from sexual offending: Do the mainstream theories apply? *Criminology & Criminal Justice,* 17, 266-283.

McAra, L., & McVie, S. (2010). Youth crime and justice: Key messages from the Edinburgh study of youth transitions and crime. *Criminology and Criminal Justice, 10*, 211-230.

McDonald, M. (2015, November 9). Victorian prisoners to be tested for literacy, numeracy in justice system shake-up. *ABC News.* Retrieved from http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-09/victorian-prisoners-to-be-tested-for-literacy-and-numeracy/6923000

Meisenhelder, T. (1982). Becoming normal: Certification as a stage in exiting from crime. *Deviant Behaviour: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 3*, 137-153.

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S., & Higham, L. (2015). *Causes of differences in student outcomes*. London, England: Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Munoz, V. (2009), *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education* (Report No. A/HRC/14/25/Add.2). Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Human Rights Council.

National Offender Management Service (2014). *Prison service instructions 2014: Sentence Planning 19/24*. London, England: National Offender Management Service.

Nichols, H. (2018). Higher education in high security: Meaningful education experiences in the absence of learning technologies. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 70-80.

Norton, A. (2018, February 22). *Higher education inequality: How well has Australia limited differential access levels by socioeconomic status?* Retrieved from https://andrewnorton.net.au/2018/02/22/higher-education-inequality-how-well-has-australia-limited-differential-access-levels-by-socioeconomic-status/

NSW Teachers Federation (2018, July 14). *TAFE and corrective services on Federation's election agenda*. Retrieved from https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/news/2018/07/tafe-and-corrective-services-federations-election-agenda

Office for Fair Access (OFFA) (2015). *OFFA topic briefing: BME students*. London, United Kingdom: OFFA.

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (2015). *Annual report of her majesty's chief inspector of education, children's services and skills 2014/15*. (Report No. HC 616). London, United Kingdom: Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Petigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*, 751-783.

Pike, A., & Farley, H. (2018). Education and vocational training: Why the differences are important. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 81-93.

Pompoco, A., Wooldredge, J., Lugo, M., Sullivan, C., & Latessa, E. (2017). Reducing inmate misconduct and prison returns with facility education programs. *Criminology & Public Policy, 16*, 515-547.

Prisoners' Education Trust (2018). *Learners' stories*. Retrieved from https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/stories

Productivity Commission (2018). *Report on government services 2017*. Canberra, Australia: Productivity Commission.

Right Now (2012). *ANU law students at the ACT's Corrections Centre*. Retrieved from http://rightnow.org.au/interview-3/anu-law-students-at-the-acts-corrections-centre/

RMIT University (2015, July 31). *Jail no bar to equal justice for RMIT students*. Retrieved from https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2015/july/jail-no-bar-to-equal--justice-for-rmit-students

Roff, S., Cucchiara, A., & Dunlap, B. (2000). *From the Free Academy to CUNY: Illustrating public higher education in New York City, 1847-1997*. New York, NY: Fordham Press.

Runnell, L. (2015). Identifying desistance pathways in a higher education program for formerly incarcerated individuals. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 61*, 894-918.

Scott, D., & Codd, H. (2012). *Controversial issues in prisons*. Maidenhead, United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Sennett, R. (2018). The open city. In T. Haas & H. Westlund (Eds.), *In the post-urban world: Emergent transformation of cities and regions in the innovative global economy* (pp. 97-106). Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Sharpe, G. (2015). Precarious identities: "Young" motherhood, desistance and stigma. *Criminology & Criminal Justice, 15*, 407-422.

Shapland, J., Farrell, S., & Bottoms, A. (2016). *Global perspectives on desistance: Reviewing what we know and looking to the future*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Shorrocks, A., Davies, J., & Lluberas, R. (2017). *Global wealth report 2017*. Zurich, Switzerland: Credit Suisse Research Institute.

Skills Funding Agency (2016). *OLASS English and Maths assessments: Participation 2015/16*. London, United Kingdom: Skills Funding Agency.

Social Mobility Advisory Group (2016). *Working in partnership: Enabling social mobility in higher education*. London, United Kingdom: Universities UK.

Stevenson, J. (2012). *Black and minority ethnic student degree retention and attainment*. London, United Kingdom: The Higher Education Academy.

Taylor, E. (2013). *Surveillance schools: Security, discipline and control in contemporary education*. Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Universities Australia (2018, May 16). *Student satisfaction with uni education remains high*. Retrieved from https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/Media-and-Events/media-releases/Student-satisfaction-with-uni-education-remains-high#.W1-CR3dh3Uo

Universities UK (2018, July 27). *National student survey 2018*. Retrieved from https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/National-Student-Survey-2018.aspx

University of Cambridge (2004). *University of Cambridge's Response to the fair admissions to higher education (Schwartz Report): Draft recommendations for consultation, May 2004* [Position statement]. Retrieved from https://www.cao.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.cao.cam.ac.uk/files/rfc/rfc_fairadmissions-2.pdf

University of Cambridge (2018a). *Admissions policy*. Retrieved from https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/applying/decisions/admissions-policy

University of Cambridge (2018b). The *University's mission and core values*. Retrieved from https://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/how-the-university-and-colleges-work/the-universitys-mission-and-core-values

University of Canberra (2018). *Distinctive by design: Our strategic plan 2018-2022*. Canberra, Australia

Vacca, J. (2004). Educated prisoners are less likely to return to prison. *Journal of Correctional Education, 55*, 297-305.

Valentine, G. (2008). Living with difference: Reflections on geographies of encounter. *Progress in Human Geography, 32*(3), 323-337.

Warner, K. (2018). Every possible learning opportunity: The capacity of education in prison to challenge dehumanisation and liberate 'the whole person'. *Advancing Corrections, 6*, 32-45.

Weis, L., & Fine, M. (2003). *Silenced voices: Extraordinary conversations*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

World Prison Brief (2018). *United Kingdom: England and Wales*. Retrieved from http://www.prisonstudies.org/country/united-kingdom-england-wales

Youth Justice Board (2006). *Barriers to engagement*. London, United Kingdom: Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

Footnotes

[1] The initiative in Australia was undertaken in collaboration with Dr Kelly Richards, Dr Bronwyn Ewing and Emeritus Professor Russell Hogg of the Queensland University of Technology.

[2] See for example the new measures of 'learning gain' being developed under the LEGACY Project (2018), funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

[3] For a more detailed account of the theoretical basis of Learning Together and the values and practices that have flown from this basis, see Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016.

Dr Amy Ludlow is Director of the Master of Studies Programme in Criminology, Penology and Management and a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Criminology, and an Affiliated Lecturer at the Faculty of Law at the University of Cambridge. She has conducted wide-ranging research projects in prisons, focussing especially on how organisational reforms in the sector, particularly marketisation and privatisation, affect prison staff culture and quality of life for staff and prisoners. Together with Ruth Armstrong, she founded and directs Learning Together, a higher education initiative that builds learning communities that span criminal justice system and university walls.

Dr Ruth Armstrong is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow and Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge. Ruth has conducted research internationally and in the UK on different aspects of life in prison and post release, especially focussing on the individual and social aspects of routes out of crime. Together with Amy Ludlow, she founded and directs Learning Together, a higher education initiative that builds learning communities that span criminal justice system and university walls.

Professor Lorana Bartels is a Professor of Criminology at the Australian National University and was previously Professor and Head of the School of Law and Justice at the University of Canberra, Australia. She is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Tasmania, a Life Member of Clare Hall at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law. She is also a member of the editorial boards of the Alternative Law Journal, Criminal Law Journal and International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology. Professor Bartels has published extensively on criminal justice issues, especially sentencing, corrections and the treatment of Indigenous peoples and women in the criminal justice system.