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Changing views and perceptions: the impact of the Australian Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program on students

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ABSTRACT

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program has been delivered at 2 prisons in Victoria, Australia, Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and Marngoneet Correctional Centre, since 2015. Selected university (outside) students and prisoners (inside) engage in a collaborative learning environment, studying Comparative Criminal Justice Systems. Students critique complex criminal justice material and undertake university standard assessments. The programme was evaluated through pre-test and post-test surveys and focus groups. This paper outlines this evaluation, including the similarities and differences between inside and outside students' experience, their knowledge of the criminal justice system, the stereotypes and the values, and challenges of the Inside-Out programme. Student views of the criminal justice system and each other were challenged and changed, often in unexpected ways. The knowledge from this evaluation will contribute to the improvement of Inside-Out processes and outcomes, nationally and internationally.

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Introduction

This paper discusses the evaluation of the inaugural Inside-Out Prison Exchange Pilot Program (referred to from here as Inside-Out) in Victoria, Australia. Inside-Out is a blended learning programme where university (outside) students and prisoners (inside) students come together as equals in the university context to learn with and from each other, in prison, whilst undertaking a university subject (Van Gundy, Bryant, & Starks, 2013). The programme was delivered by Royal Melbourne University of Technology (RMIT) University in collaboration with Corrections Victoria (Department of Justice and Regulation). The programme was trialled and evaluated over the first semester, from February to June in 2015 (see Martinovic, Liddell, & Muldoon, 2017).

Inside-Out originated 20 years ago in Philadelphia, United States (US), as the brainchild of Paul Perry, a prisoner serving a life sentence (Long & Barnes, 2016). It was then founded and implemented by Lori Pompa at Temple University in 1997 (King, Measham, & O'Brien, 2019). In 2002, Pompa and a group of ex-Inside-Out students, known as the Graterford Think Tank, developed the Inside-Out training package. The training package prompted

national and international programme expansion. At mid-2017, nearly 700 Inside-Out university subjects have been taught, with more than 30,000 students participating in classes across the US, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), and Norway (Inside-Out Centre, 2017).

Inside-Out offers both inside and outside students a meaningful and egalitarian learning experience. The learning focus is student centred as it enables students' insights to be at the forefront of their learning experience (King et al., 2019). University students reconsider what they know about crime and justice based on lectures and textbooks and come to understand the human and social elements of incarceration before they begin criminal justice careers (Long & Barnes, 2016; Pompa, 2013b).

Incarcerated students can discuss their lived experiences of the criminal justice system (CJS) and provide personal insights into how that system could improve (Martinovic et al., 2017; Werts, 2013). Link (2016) discusses benefits for inside students in becoming more critically aware and enlightened during classes as well as "knowing that at least some people on the outside are actively involved in improving the current system of criminal justice" (p. 52). King et al. (2019) suggest the programme allows both student groups to critically explore their own beliefs and identities to hopefully foster social change, break down, and overcome social barriers. As the semester progresses, the learning experience becomes unifying with dialogue deepening between student groups.

In Victoria, Australia, Inside-Out classes have been delivered as part of RMIT University's Criminology and Justice Studies discipline. It was conducted in Victoria in 2015 in two prisons, Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (DPFC) and the Marngoneet Correctional Centre (MCC). DPFC houses female prisoners only, and MCC houses male prisoners only. This was the first time that Inside-Out was trialled simultaneously at two different prisons (Martinovic et al., 2017).

All inside and outside students were enrolled in the RMIT subject Comparative Criminal Justice Systems. This subject examines the CJS worldwide. Students were exposed to the same rigorous subject requirements and learning context. Strict rules, parameters, and boundaries guide the operation of Inside-Out classes; these include following all prison rules as well as programme-specific rules such as using first names only, no flirtation or inappropriate body language, confidentiality regarding personal information, appropriate dress, and no contact outside the programme.

This paper presents the evaluation of the Inside-Out programme at DPFC and MCC. It includes contextual literature, the methodology used for the evaluation, and the findings. The most powerful impact of the programme was the changing views and attitudes of both inside and outside students about their preconceptions of each other and their respective lives.

Higher education – its impact in prisons

Studies by Batiuk, Lahm, McKeever, Wilcox, and Wilcox (2005) and Warr (2016) showed the importance of education in prisons. Warr suggested prison-based education was a pedagogically transformative experience. Diseth, Eikeland, Manger, and Hetland (2008) showed incarcerated people are motivated to learn when appropriate learning strategies are offered, though the impact of prison regimentation can hinder such learning. Batiuk et al. compared the likelihood of prisoner recidivism after receiving a college degree,

high school diploma, vocational training qualification, or obtaining no education/training. They found that a college qualification had the strongest impact on reducing recidivism. L. M. Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, and Miles (2013) showed that any education in a correctional environment has positive outcomes for prisoners in prison and upon release.

University-level education programmes in prisons have many benefits (Allred, Harrison, & O'Connell, 2013; Dawe, 2007; Long & Barnes, 2016; Shoemaker, Willis, & Bryant, 2014). The primary benefit is reduced recidivism as educated prisoners are more likely to obtain employment (Allred et al., 2013; Shoemaker et al., 2014). L. M. Davis et al. (2013) demonstrated a 43% reduction in recidivism for offenders involved in prison education programmes (see also Dawe, 2007; Steurers, Smith, & Tracy, 2001). Education also leads to higher wages upon release, enabling individuals to better support their families and contribute to tax (Steurers et al., 2001). Hence, it increases the likelihood of prisoners pro-socially contributing to society (Shoemaker et al., 2014).

Inside-Out philosophy sees all people, incarcerated or not, having "innate worth, a story to tell and experiences to learn from", whilst examining social issues through the "prism of prison" (S. Davis & Roswell, 2013, p. 3). Additionally, two different groups of students come together in one teaching space, and within a relatively short period differences lessen (Pompa, 2013a). The teaching programme encourages dialogue and equality between students via its unique structure (Pompa, 2013a) which is different from other prison-based higher education programmes. Such learning and teaching is transformative in that it increases opportunities for both student groups to have learning experiences that emphasise collaboration, dialogue, and innovative problem solving, across profound social barriers. All students are encouraged to become leaders and address issues of social concern particularly about crime and justice (Boyd, 2013; S. Davis & Roswell, 2013; Inside-Out Centre, 2017).

A similar programme to the US's Inside-Out programme is the Learning Together programme, which commenced in 2015 at Cambridge University, UK. Learning Together has not been formally evaluated, but an article has been published with preliminary findings drawing on data from students and academics (see Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016, p. 14). While there are similarities between Learning Together and Inside-Out, the key difference is that Learning Together allows inside students to form friendships with outside students which extend beyond the prison-based teaching programme.

There is limited research on Inside-Out programmes. What exists is predominantly quantitative (Long & Barnes, 2016). Research has however shown that when prisoners learn with university students in programmes, they increase their ability to engage with educational material (Allred et al., 2013; Hilinski-Rosick & Blackmer, 2014; Werts, 2013). They are therefore better able to self-reflect and self-assess their own values and beliefs (Conti, Morrison, & Pantaleo, 2013; Hilinski-Rosick & Blackmer, 2014). Further, Allred (2009) and Hilinski-Rosick and Blackmer (2014) believe that the structure of Inside-Out facilitates the breakdown of existing stereotypes, and reconstruction of stigma. Similarly, Armstrong and Ludlow's (2016) Learning Together programme showed that student groups connected in new ways and re-shaped ideas about themselves and each other.

Long and Barnes' (2016) evaluation, which included pre-and post-subject surveys of 248 students and 13 facilitators in 10 different Inside-Out subjects in the Philadelphia area, found that all students were able to improve critical thinking skills and ability to engage

with learning materials. Inside students obtained higher academic outcomes than outside students, whereas outside students increased their ability to challenge stereotypes, connect to the community, and become aware of structures of power and privilege (Long & Barnes, 2016). However, 60% of inside students did not complete Inside-Out, due to being transferred, released, or having other complexities. Allred et al. (2013) reported a similar finding.

Inside-Out results in university students critically analysing their own values and beliefs relating to the CJS (Hilinski-Rosick & Blackmer, 2014; Werts, 2013). Simultaneously, the programme engages prisoners in learning and creates positive behavioural changes. In addition, Allred et al.'s (2013) study found a statistically significant increase in self-efficacy among incarcerated individuals who were involved in Inside-Out. Self-efficacy involves a person's belief in their own abilities to "mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands" (Wood & Bandura, as cited in Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 184). Zajacova, Lynch, and Espenshade (2005) believe self-efficacy strongly contributes to educational attainment, occupation, and career outcomes. It is also an important indicator of student ability to adapt to challenges and opportunities (Allred et al., 2013).

As indicated above, in Victoria, Inside-Out classes were delivered for the first time at two different prisons. RMIT University and Corrections Victoria both required the programme be evaluated to determine its benefits, challenges, and future feasibility.

Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used to ascertain if the Victorian Inside-Out programme met its objectives. These objectives involved inside and outside students listening and respecting each other and developing critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving skills. The evaluation's quantitative component was based predominately on the US Inside-Out pre-and post-test evaluation instrument (Martinovic et al., 2017). The qualitative component (the focus groups) was included to provide deeper knowledge of students' experience of learning together in prison.

Initial discussions for developing Inside-Out in Victoria commenced in 2008 but stalled due to questions about the viability of the programme. Similar challenges were reported by Link (2016) in the USA and King et al. (2019) in the UK. In 2013, approval was obtained from Corrections Victoria for piloting the programme at two prisons. Protracted discussions then occurred with university administration to address university concerns about risk and duty of care to all involved. A risk assessment and management tool was then developed (see Figure 1).

Outside student selection commenced after approval was obtained from RMIT in late 2014. Students submitted an expression-of-interest application. They were interviewed via a panel of RMIT academics and senior prison personnel. Selection was based on their life experience, completion of relevant subjects (corrections, community corrections, and case management practice) at a high academic level, and their suitability to be part of a challenging learning and teaching environment within a prison. They signed a confidentiality agreement and a professional ethics and conduct code. The risk management strategy (Figure 1) also addressed possible contingencies regarding student safety and inappropriate conduct of inside and outside students. Education officers in prisons

RISK	Students' selection	Exposure to prison environment	Exposure to offenders	Overall safety	Social media and confidentiality	Students may develop a relationship with prisoner	Behaviour
RESPONSE	<p>Selection criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * anticipate behavioural issues * determine risk * manage risk 	<p>Students may find prison environment distressing.</p>	<p>Students may find offenders' stories/comments distressing.</p>	<p>To ensure overall safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * prison officer/s will be present close by. * lecturer will have a duress alarm. * classroom is under video surveillance. 	<p>Students required to sign a confidentiality agreement.</p>	<p>Guidelines to ameliorate risk developed: e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * students in different groups * first names only used * no flirtation * no inappropriate body language * no inappropriate dress 	<p>Students are to behave professionally and ethically.</p>
ACTION	<p>Where students are late or inappropriately dressed, they will be refused entry to the prison.</p> <p>More complex students with behavioural issues will be dealt with in consultation with programme managers.</p> <p>Students may be expelled from the programme.</p>	<p>Students will be advised of counselling services.</p>	<p>Students will be advised of counselling services.</p>		<p>Training will be provided on appropriate use of social media,</p> <p>Inappropriate use of social media results in expulsion.</p>	<p>Prison responses to a breach can occur and students may be academically counselled.</p>	<p>Students are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * aware of code of conduct. * advised of expectations and professional behaviour. <p>Rules of engagement are developed, and appropriate behaviour is enforced.</p>
EVALUATION	<p>Lecturer will evaluate the risk management strategy.</p> <p>Procedures and risk management strategies will be updated as required</p>						

All prison visitors are subject to prison regulations and orders. Disobeying prison orders is an offence that could result in a visitor being banned from entering a prison.

Figure 1. Inside-Out risk management strategy.

selected prisoners for participation based on their good behaviour and willingness to participate and engage in the teaching programme, not on their past educational achievements. Additionally, approval was sought and obtained for evaluation of Inside-Out from the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee and RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee.

Quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to obtain both breadth and depth (Newman, 2013). The evaluation encompassed the following:

- Pre-test and post-test questionnaires (prior to the commencement of Inside-Out and following its completion) were completed by both inside and outside students. Pre-test for inside and outside students included demographic information, variables about understanding the CJS, specifically sentencing, punishment, and rehabilitation, as well as their expectations of Inside-Out. The post-test surveys aimed to determine the knowledge gained, as well as the values and challenges of Inside-Out.
- Four focus groups of 1-hr duration were conducted at the completion of Inside-Out. Focus-group questions included what was good about the programme, what aspects of the programme worked well, what aspects of the programme did not work well, and what aspects of the programme could be improved.

Quantitative data were collected by an independent researcher and analysed by an independent statistician. Qualitative data were gathered by the same independent researcher together with the Inside-Out teacher, to combat suspicion and mistrust often felt by incarcerated people towards those with whom they are not familiar. Qualitative data were analysed by a research assistant and then by the same independent researcher. Both quantitative and qualitative data were thematically analysed using NVivo software package and then amalgamated into the final report (Martinovic et al., 2017). More detailed information was obtained from the focus groups. This could be because students were unfamiliar with the survey tool including writing prescriptive information, as opposed to being involved in a focus group, where they could share their thoughts, feelings, and views with people they knew. The same independent researcher being present together with the Inside-Out teacher may have increased the participants' involvement.

Participants' profile and response rate

At DPFC, the age of female inside students ranged from 20 to 40 years. They had attained a higher level of education (than the MCC inside students – see below) and were mostly employed at the time of their arrest. Their lifetime experience of imprisonment ranged from 4.5 to 66 months with an average of 32.9 months. At MCC, the age of male inside students ranged from 20 to over 50 years. They had attained a lower level of education and were mostly unemployed when arrested. Their lifetime experience of imprisonment ranged from 78 to 132 months with an average of 125.5 months. Many inside students at MCC had been incarcerated on multiple occasions. Twenty-seven out of 30 outside students who participated in Inside-Out were young women. All outside students were working part-time and studying. All said they had never been incarcerated.

Pre-and post-test response rate

Each student provided a personal identification code prior to the pre-test survey being administered. They were informed that the same code would be required for the completion of the post-test survey. Initially, it was expected that each programme would comprise 15 inside and 15 outside students. The 30 students in each programme meant a total of 60 students would participate. However, at MCC one inside student withdrew before the programme commenced. Eight of the 14 MCC inside students left or were removed from the programme during the 16-week programme, leaving only six who completed post-test questionnaires. DPFC also suffered inside student attrition, due to release or movement of prisoners to a lower security prison. Thus, 10 inside students at DPFC completed post-test questionnaires. Outside student post-test returns numbered 15 and 14 for DPFC and MCC, respectively. Pre-test surveys were analysed only when students completed post-test surveys and the responses were clear.

Focus-group participation

A total of 25 students volunteered to participate in the focus groups. This number included 12 inside students, seven from DPFC and five from MCC, and 13 outside students, seven from DPFC and six from MCC. The four focus-group discussions were transcribed by a confidential, secure transcription service. Focus-group participants were given a pseudonym which indicated whether they were inside or outside students and the prison where they attended Inside-Out. Inside students were also provided with a number reflecting the order of speaking in the focus group. This was not possible for the outside students as the conversations were more interactive and the transcribers were unable to identify participants accurately.

Results

The data are presented thematically. The first theme provides a critique of the CJS, using the data from the pre-and-post-test questionnaires and focus groups. The second theme presents information from the focus groups only about seeing prisoners as more than a stereotype – the survey did not elicit any views about this. The third and final themes discuss the values and challenges of Inside-Out based on the focus groups as the data were richer than in the surveys.

Ability to understand and critique the CJS

Inside and outside students at DPFC and MCC were asked to indicate their level of understanding of the CJS by indicating with an X on a continuum from one to 10.

The results of this analysis are shown in [Tables 1 and 2](#); these display the scores and means for DPFC and MCC inside and outside students in the pre-test and post-test phases.

From the tabulated means in [Table 1](#), it can be seen that prior to Inside-Out, inside students at DPFC had a much lower level of understanding to outside students. By contrast, at the programme's end, inside students' understanding was marginally superior to that of outside students. Further, their growth in understanding was at 174% on their base

Table 1. Students' level of understanding of the CJS at DPFC.

	Pre-test	Post-test
Inside students	3.06	8.39
Outside students	6.0	7.87
Total mean	4.9	8.06

average levels whereas that of outside students was a more modest 31.16%. The programme's impact was much greater in relation to inside versus outside students, although it was important for both groups in terms of enhancing their perceived levels of understanding the CJS.

From the tabulated means in [Table 2](#), it can be seen that prior to Inside-Out, inside students at MCC had a somewhat lower level of understanding of CJS than outside students. At the end of the programmes, inside students' understanding was lower than at the pre-test and much lower than understanding indicated by outside students, who greatly increased their self-rated level of understanding (44.50% higher). Thus, the programme's impact at MCC was much greater for outside than inside students and the impact for inside students much greater at DPFC than MCC.

Students' critique of the CJS predominantly involved the negative impact of the media, public, government, and politicians/politics on prison life and prisoner treatment. Most inside students wanted outside students to understand the impact of these negative perceptions on prisoners and the subsequent lack of opportunity for prisoners. Such impact included feelings of hopelessness, limited self-worth, and institutionalisation. They wanted outside students to understand that the longer someone stays in prison the harder it is for them to reintegrate into society. Further, there were complicated reasons that led to their imprisonment, and in many instances they felt they were victims of circumstances, including victims of the CJS.

In the focus groups, outside students expressed feelings of empathy and sadness about people who break the law, viewing them as trapped in desperate, negative, and problematic lifestyles. These lifestyles included drugs/alcohol use, family dysfunction, inadequate education, and employment opportunities. Further, prison life according to all focus-group participants was considered to be regimented, dehumanising, boring, isolating, and violent at both DPFC and MCC. Many inside and outside students also reported feeling uncertain or unconvinced about the value of punishment. However, outside students were more supportive of punishment than inside students.

Outside students also suggested the prison regime could contribute to the inside students feeling like outsiders of society:

They're [prisoners] treated as a number from the minute they go in and no one else sees them as anything else. And if no one starts seeing them as humans, how can you fix a problem when no one thinks it's a problem? (Outside student, MCC).

Table 2. Students' level of understanding of the CJS at MCC.

	Pre-test	Post-test
Inside students	5.0	4.5
Outside students	5.82	8.41
Total mean	4.9	8.06

MCC inside students felt the CJS emphasised the loss of autonomy, a sense of them and us, unequal power relationships, and poor treatment of prisoners, resulting in prisoners feeling de-humanised.

Seeing prisoners as more than a stereotype

The inside and outside students spoke of the power of Inside-Out to challenge and change the negative stereotypes held by each group. Most inside students talked about the need to change outside students' negative perceptions of them based on negative media reporting and public perceptions. Similarly, outside students felt Inside-Out gave them more confidence to discredit the negative stereotypes of prisoners and stigma portrayed by the media in the community.

The evaluation showed that outside students overcame negative stereotypes they did not know they held. Some students disclosed they were surprised they had negative and preconceived perceptions of the inside students' personalities and physical appearances which were ingrained into society. For example:

You have all these biases without even really thinking about it, ... that there's not that typical offender, but until you go and see it for yourself, that's when it all sets in and you really grasp it (Outside student, DPFC).

Outside students' assumptions on crime, justice, and offending were tested and resulted in them seeing these issues from a different perspective. One outside student at MCC talked of her preconceived "negative mindset" of what people in prison would act and look like. Inside-Out helped her become a "different person" who no longer "judges people on appearances".

Inside students at both prisons said the programme enabled outside students to see them as normal people and not bad people who have no hope or potential. Both DPFC and MCC inside students said that they could drop the prison mask or persona (which they had developed in prison to protect themselves from the harsh environment) and just be themselves. Further, inside students were surprised that outside students treated them with respect, as "normal" people and not as prisoners. For example:

It was incredible to hear them say like, "Oh my God you're just like us. ... we're no different" (Inside student 04, DPFC).

The outside students believed seeing past negative stereotypes and treating prisoners inclusively as part of the community was more effective in reducing offending than excluding them. For example:

... Treating them as an outsider of society is what makes them become antisocial and attached to groups that feel the same way because that's their little community because they feel like we're pushing them out [of society] (Outside student, MCC).

Further, building their self-esteem and self-worth could result in a positive change in the way they treat other people:

If you treat them any other way, how will they ever feel respect for themselves, love for themselves and worthiness for themselves? Because once you start to feel it for yourself, once you respect yourself, you respect everyone that's around you (Outside student, MCC).

Outside students believed because Inside-Out is based on respect, equality, and seeing people as individuals without judging them for being in prison reduces feelings of stigma.

Values of the Inside-Out programme

Inside and outside students valued the Inside-Out programme and described the entire experience as “life changing”. Experiences were summed up in the following way:

That [the Inside-Out] was unbelievable, ... irreplaceable, invaluable, and to have that much knowledge basically gives you the confidence (Inside student 02, DPFC).

All outside students said that Inside-Out gave them a learning experience they could not have obtained “in the classroom” at university. Through the interaction with inside students, they gained “invaluable knowledge” of the CJS and were able to “integrate theory and practice”, thereby “consolidating everything [they had] learned in classrooms”.

Inside students 04, 05, and 06 from DPFC felt an increase in knowledge would benefit outside students in their future criminal justice careers, making them better practitioners:

... as people we've all committed a crime to be here, but our crime doesn't define us as a person. It's a mistake we've made in our lives and we need people who work in the [criminal justice] system to have more empathy and be more able to forgive and work with people rather than against them (Inside student 04, DPFC).

All inside students felt empowered to influence perceptions of future policymakers and criminal justice practitioners by increasing their understanding of the challenges facing incarcerated people. There was also a sense of validation that while their experiences in the CJS may be personally negative, they could use these to educate others and improve the CJS. For example:

... it was our experiences that will actually shape the future changes that would bring about the positive changes that the [criminal justice] system desperately needs (Inside student 02, DPFC).

Inside students valued learning both from other inside students and from outside students' life experiences and being able to apply their own experiences to the content they were studying in Inside-Out. Meeting and speaking to people who were not incarcerated was valuable. For example:

Normally, we're the subject of discussions but we never get to be the participant in these kind of discussions (Inside student 02, MCC).

The personal development of two inside students was described by the outside students. The first inside student “found a love for education and knowledge that he didn't even know he had”. The other example was described by an outside student:

[Inside student] has been in and out of the [criminal justice] system for a very long time and to see that he still had that fire, you can see that it doesn't matter how old you are or what you've been through, he still has the potential to have a passion in something (Outside student, MCC).

This inside student's drive to further his education and his positive attitude “inspired” the outside student's learning.

Lastly, the MCC outside students discussed developing professional practice skills in Inside-Out such as establishing professional boundaries, building rapport, responding professionally to personal disclosures, and active listening. Although the DPFC outside students did not discuss learning specific professional practice skills, they did state they learned other skills, including problem-solving in discussion groups.

Challenges of the Inside-Out programme

The main challenge highlighted in the MCC focus group was that eight out of 14 inside students at MCC were removed or left Inside-Out. One of these left the programme due to attendance at a mandated offender behaviour programme. In the fifth week, two inside students were removed for breaking Inside-Out programme rules. The remaining inside students stated that the prison officers did not provide them with an official reason why these inside students were removed. This resulted in inside students speculating and assuming reasons were unfounded and/or based on rumours or gossip. Some MCC inside students believed this started off a “chain reaction” leading to two additional inside students choosing to leave Inside-Out as an act of solidarity. For example:

It was a real pity. ... One guy has got a bad taste in his mouth about it, and he just spread it and he spread his negativity to a few people and so he made a couple of people drop out just because of his negativity (Inside student 02, MCC).

Further, in the ninth week the decision at MCC to implement strip searches for inside students after Inside-Out classes led to three more students leaving the programme. Strip searches were never implemented, but it was too late to stop the negative impact.

Speculation by inside students about these last two issues is inevitable and we were not able to test their conclusions against the views of those who left the programme. Nevertheless, these events had a significant impact on the inside students who remained, the outside students, and the teaching programme. The remaining MCC inside students reported feeling embarrassed and guilty that a total of eight inside students left or were removed from the programme. Outside students were worried that these events might lead to Inside-Out being suspended or cancelled due to the lower number of inside students remaining. This led to them providing additional study assistance to the remaining students. Further, inside students who remained in the programme said they did so for the outside students as it would not be fair to them if they missed out on the programme. The outside students were touched by this and felt it was “beautiful” that the inside students did not want to let them down. They felt this was a testament to the character and dedication of the inside students.

Discussion

The findings from the questionnaires and focus groups revealed all student groups considered Inside-Out to be a powerful learning experience they would not have experienced in a university classroom. This was a common finding in Long and Barnes (2016). All outside students were able to share criminological textbook knowledge, and in return they gained knowledge from the inside students lived CJS experiences.

Knowledge of the CJS

The results demonstrated a significant difference at the programmes' completion for the inside students at DPFC and MCC. As indicated above, the DPFC inside students' growth in understanding of the CJS was marked compared to the increase of understanding for outside students. In contrast, at MCC inside students reported a decrease in their understanding of the CJS. While the most recent evaluation of Inside-Out by Long and Barnes (2016) reported higher academic gains for inside students compared to outside students, the differences were not as dramatic as in the evaluation of the Inside-Out programme at DPFC.

In contrast to Long and Barnes (2016), the disparity between inside and outside students' knowledge of the CJS at MCC was considerable with outside students increasing their level of understanding and the inside students decreasing their level of understanding. The variation between inside students at MCC and DPFC could be attributed to a loss of morale when other inside students were removed or left the programme at MCC. There may be other differences between the two prisons which were not accessible to the researchers which could influence inside student attitudes and thus influence the findings. A contributing factor was also that many MCC inside students had negative life experiences as they were predominantly unemployed at the time of incarceration, had longer incarceration periods than the DPFC inside students, and were repeat offenders. Such factors could impact on their learning in Inside-Out and their future education and employment prospects, critical for reducing recidivism (Shoemaker et al., 2014; Steurers et al., 2001). DPFC inside students were mostly employed at the time of their arrest and appeared to have a positive outlook for the future.

In contrast, outside students at MCC reported a greater understanding than DPFC outside students even though they were selected similarly, based on their subject selection and the high grades they had achieved in their studies. Such increased understanding of the CJS for outside students at MCC was attributed to them providing additional assistance to the inside students (after students left or were removed from the programme), which led them to obtain higher gains in their understanding of the CJS.

Negative stereotypes

DPFC and MCC inside students felt Inside-Out challenged the stigma and negative stereotypes about people in prison. DPFC inside students felt it was important for outside students to know there are many complex and interrelated factors which can lead to offending. Further, being in prison does not automatically make the inside students bad people. Inside students at both prisons wanted the outside students to see past the prisoner label and view them as normal people with families, lives and stories, points made in Long and Barnes (2016) and Pompa's (2013b) research.

Whilst inside students at both prisons wanted to be viewed as everyday people, the female DPFC inside students again displayed more insight in this area. They reflected on how and why the outside students may view them negatively and worked hard to counteract this. Such in-depth interaction and learning could be attributed to the DPFC programme not being disrupted as occurred at MCC. As Allred (2009), Hilinski-Rosick and Blackmer (2014), and King et al. (2019) showed, the Inside-Out teaching programme facilitates such in-depth interactions.

Allred (2009) and Long and Barnes (2016) referred to outside students significantly increasing their ability to challenge stereotypes about people in prison. In contrast, however, this evaluation showed outside students developed a greater understanding of themselves (similar to Armstrong & Ludlow, 2016) as they reported that the teaching programme challenged them to consider stereotypes about prisoners that they did not know they had. It must be noted however that Armstrong and Ludlow (2016) did not specifically refer to students' perceptions of commonly held stereotypes. The depth of data obtained from the focus groups showed Inside-Out enabled the students to share experiences that were more reflective and detailed than those reported in predominately quantitative research (see Long & Barnes, 2016).

Outside students were also able to challenge their implicit biases towards people in the CJS and recognise the complex individual differences that can lead people to offend. The DPFC and MCC outside students attributed being able to overcome these negative stereotypes to the equality between both student groups in Inside-Out. They felt that using the term inside student instead of prisoner helped to remove the boundaries between the two groups allowing them to just be students (see also Allred, 2009; Hilinski-Rosick & Blackmer, 2014).

The findings from the inside student focus groups highlighted one subtle difference between the two groups regarding inside students' self-confidence and self-image. The DPFC inside students stated the regimented prison environment contributed to their low self-confidence and self-image prior to Inside-Out (see Diseth et al., 2008). In contrast, the MCC inside students did not speculate on what factors may have contributed to their low self-confidence and self-image. Unlike the male MCC inside students, the female DPFC inside students may have been more perceptive and less fearful revealing their vulnerabilities. Further, the student group was stable throughout the teaching programme. Both groups talked of increased motivation and self-confidence in themselves and their abilities through Inside-Out. They found they could undertake higher education as well as engage in intellectual discussions (see Allred et al., 2013; Long & Barnes, 2016). Consequently, this helped inside students improve their perceived self-worth and self-image (Allred et al., 2013; Conti et al., 2013).

The ability of inside students to drop the prison mask and just be themselves was a unique research finding. It is documented in criminological research that most people in prison adopt a tough and emotionless persona to survive the harsh prison environment (Haney, 2001). In our study, inside students were able to see other inside students as the people they are, rather than the prisoners they are. These findings are indications of inside students developing and demonstrating self-efficacy (see Allred et al., 2013; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Zajacova et al., 2005).

Values and challenges of Inside-Out

Inside-Out was considered a very positive learning experience for DPFC and MCC inside students. They valued being able to share their lived criminal justice experiences with the outside students and relate it to the content in Inside-Out. Both groups of inside students felt Inside-Out helped them have a voice on criminal justice issues. They stated this was a rare event as they were often subjects of public discussion but were rarely able to

participate in them. Inside students also said Inside-Out was an opportunity to bring about positive change in an area that directly affects them, that is the CJS.

The DPFC and MCC inside students described the Inside-Out key learning experiences differently. The DPFC inside students had a greater focus on learning from each other and accessing education. They were surprised at the amount of information they were able to learn and retain in Inside-Out. DPFC inside students also identified learning from the outside students' experiences as well as learning from other inside students. DPFC inside students seemed to have a better understanding of Inside-Out's mutual exchange of knowledge approach. This may be because the DPFC inside students were more educationally prepared and had attained higher levels of education before being incarcerated. Further, the MCC inside students were more introspective and had a greater focus on the wider implications of Inside-Out for them. They felt Inside-Out might help them reintegrate back into society by meeting and speaking to people (outside students) from the community. They discussed building social connections and trust with the outside students. As far as can be determined, these results from inside students are not present in any of the other evaluations of Inside-Out to date.

Outside students at both DPFC and MCC developed professional skills that would enhance their career prospects. The MCC outside students specifically discussed developing professional practice skills as two of the students had already begun working in case management roles in the CJS. They were able to clearly see the transferability of skills they had learned in Inside-Out. The DPFC outside students only mentioned related skills. No other Inside-Out research to date has mentioned the acquisition of case management skills.

Inside and outside students at both DPFC and MCC cited few programme challenges related to Inside-Out. At MCC, inside student attrition was seen as the main challenge by both inside and outside students. This attrition had a negative impact on the inside students' learning experience. Similar issues of attrition were experienced by Allred et al. (2013) and Long and Barnes (2016). The inside student selection process at MCC has subsequently been improved and now includes an education officer, case managers, and clinicians.

Limitations of the research

There were four key limitations for this research:

- (1) There is a dearth of existing research about Inside-Out worldwide. This impacted to some degree on the analysis of this research study as it limited our ability to draw connections with similar studies.
- (2) This research related to the inaugural Inside-Out programme in Australia. The survey tool used was based on the US Inside-Out programme. While the instrument was adapted slightly to Australian conditions, it did not elicit sufficient in-depth information. The inclusion of focus groups partly filled the gap by providing additional qualitative information.
- (3) The final number of inside students at both prisons was reduced, which impacted on the overall numbers participating in the surveys. The greatest impact was felt at MCC, where only six completed the post-test questionnaires. Hence, there were only 45 pre- and post-test questionnaires analysed as opposed to the expected 60. That aside, the sample was small.

- (4) As described above, the inside student attrition at MCC impacted on the learning experience of both groups of students. While this can be considered as a limitation of the research, it did, however, provide outside students at MCC with a greater understanding of the realities of prison life.

Conclusion

The inaugural delivery and evaluation of the Inside-Out programme in Australia indicated positive results at both prison locations, with some variation of student experiences, even though it was based on a relatively small sample of 45 pre-and post-test questionnaires and 25 focus-group participants. The depth of data obtained however showed Inside-Out to be both a dynamic and transformative learning process that met the key objectives of the teaching programme.

We expected that most inside and outside students would increase their understanding of the CJS as the subject content was specifically related to comparing CJS worldwide. As shown above, this was not the case for MCC inside students. The teaching programme, however, enabled inside students to share their experiences of the CJS, thereby enhancing outside students' understanding of their incarcerated experience. Such shared knowledge enabled both groups to increase their ability to critique the CJS internationally.

We obtained five results that were different from previous research, two of which were unexpected:

- (1) The outside students were challenged to consider their views and perceptions of commonly held stereotypes about prisoners and prison life. What was unexpected was that outside students were not aware that they held these negative perceptions.
- (2) The programme enabled inside students to challenge their negative perceptions and assumptions about people from the community. They did not expect outside students to show empathy, understanding, and care about their lives. They felt that this experience would improve their reintegrative prospects.
- (3) Outside students were also able to challenge their own perceptions and biases towards people in the CJS and recognise the complex individual differences that can lead people to offending.
- (4) Inside students talked about their ability to drop their prison persona, that is, to be themselves, without acting tough and emotionless. Hence, this was a unique opportunity for them to openly and equally engage and participate in discussions.
- (5) Outside students developed professional practice skills including establishing professional boundaries, building rapport, responding professionally to personal disclosures, and active listening.

The different and unexpected results provide data which will enhance and improve future Inside-Out educational processes. For the inside students, more inspirational stories from previously incarcerated people are required to assist them to have a more positive social outlook. For outside students, the teaching needs to expand their professional practice skills by helping them build rapport, engage with incarcerated people, and more fully understand the importance of boundaries in working with people in the CJS. The

unexpected results arose from the focus-group discussions, not the survey questionnaires. Future research needs to include more in-depth questions in the pre-test and post-test survey instruments to collect numerical data on attitudinal change.

The outcome for outside students is a greater understanding of inside students' personal offending trajectories, which could translate into an increased capacity to educate their colleagues and hopefully the wider community on the complexity of such offending. The outcomes for inside students are a greater knowledge of themselves and their place in the CJS. This has the potential to improve their personal growth and desistance from crime. Further research, however, is required to test the possibility of such outcomes.

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