

Re-engaging incarcerated children and young people with education and learning using Authentic Inquiry in Italy, Spain, Germany and the UK

Authors

Dr Adeela ahmed Shafi, Tristan Middleton and Chris Jones

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Abstract

Children and young people who come into conflict with the law tend to be disengaged with education and learning with many having dropped out of school well before being incarcerated. This paper reports on the activities and research conducted as part of an EU Erasmus+ 3-year funded project with 5 partners in four countries including Spain, Italy, Germany and the UK. The Project involved the development of a Training Pack to train educators in the partner countries on the Authentic Inquiry methodology which has been shown to be effective in engaging children and young people who are incarcerated or in other (community) youth justice settings. The research questions were focused on the impact of the use of Authentic Inquiry on learners in custodial or youth justice settings as well as the impact of the use of methodology on educators and their pedagogy. Quantitative data (from 82 educators and 73 young people), collected via an online pre-and-post self-report survey against 8 dimensions of learning power demonstrated that the young people could be re-engaged with education and learning as evidenced in the change in their learning power profiles. The qualitative data (from 16 educators and 14 young people) also show the greatest impact to be on the emotional component of engagement which is essential for accessing learning. The Authentic Inquiry methodology also had an impact on the educators as learners by an improved learning power profile and on their pedagogical approach. Implications for practice are discussed and ways in which to embed such an approach into the educational offer for children and young people in youth justice setting in the different country contexts are discussed.

Key words: incarcerated children, education and learning, authentic inquiry, young offenders