

Transformational program taught in Victorian prisons that simultaneously engages justice and legal students and prisoners

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What is Inside Out?

- Inside-Out program brings university students together with incarcerated men/women to study as peers in a subject behind prison walls. In this semester-long subject about 15 “outside” (i.e. undergraduate) students and the same number of “inside” (i.e. incarcerated) students attend class once a week inside a prison.
- All participants read a variety of book chapters and/or articles and during class sessions, students discuss issues in small and large groups. In the final month of the class, students work together on a class project.

What Inside Out is NOT?

- Inside-Out is not an opportunity for anyone to gain access to prison populations as a pretext for doing research unrelated to Inside-Out.
- It is not an opportunity for charity, or to “help” incarcerated men and women in the sense of volunteerism or charity.
- Inside-Out is not a “scared straight” program. Intentions are not to give the outside students an experience that, based on fear, will cause them to rethink their life choices.
- Inside-Out is not a whistle-blowing program that has as its aim to draw public attention to problems inside the prison.
- Finally, even though bonds between and among students inevitably form throughout the semester, Inside-Out is not a vehicle for developing relationships that will exist outside the parameters of the program. Only first names are used and no other identifying information is shared. Parameters are critical to this program, as it exists within a very clear-cut, black and white environment.

History of Inside Out

- The original idea for Inside-Out came from a man named Paul, who is serving a life sentence in Pennsylvania.
- Lori Pompa, a Professor of Criminal Justice at Temple University, piloted Inside-Out in the Philadelphia Prison System in 1997, and since then more than 500 Inside-Out courses have been taught.
- One class involving 15 inside and 15 outside students has grown into over 700 classes, with 20,000+ students participating in this unique and important learning opportunity. 700+ instructors from more than 200 colleges and universities in all US states and Canada, as well as Australia, the UK and Norway.

Rules, parameters and boundaries of Inside Out

- Students follow ALL institutional rules.
- Inside-Out rules include (as examples):
 - Separate induction (prior to class commencement) sessions for inside and outside students outlining the rules, parameters and program boundaries
 - First names only are used
 - No flirtation or inappropriate body language
 - No passing of notes between students
 - Confidentiality regarding personal information
 - Appropriate dress
 - No contact outside the program

Comparative Criminal Justice Systems

- In this subject, students study the evolution and operation of criminal justice systems in different societies and communities. We consider a range of topics including the administration and function of police, corrections, and courts, the impact of customary law, and the increasing internationalisation of both the incidence of crime and the administration of criminal justice.
- Assessments include:
 - (a) Three Reflection papers (30%) – observation, reflection and integration are part of each one
 - (b) Group project – class presentation (30%)
 - (c) Major assignment - 1800 words (40%) – You are to reflect on your group participation experiences and, *supported by the assigned readings*, relate those experiences to one of the topics we explored during the semester.

Inside out Prison Exchange Program is taught at two Victorian Prisons



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Objectives of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

The 16 week long IOPEP had the following objectives:

- To develop a classroom environment where students listen and respect each other;
- To encourage critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving; and
- To empower students to become social change agents.

Evaluation of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

The IOPEP was evaluated in the following way:

- Inside and outside students completed anonymous surveys.
- Four focus student groups were run upon the completion of the teaching program.
- A peer review of teaching practice (during the teaching program) was conducted at DPFC.
- Teacher/facilitator wrote journal notes after each class at both DPFC and MCC.

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Outside students commended:

- “Once in a life-time opportunity.... Incredible and life changing.....the most fascinating, unique, thought provoking and engaging experience of any of my personal educational endeavours thus far” (Outside student, DPFC).
- “Real-world examples allow students to materialise the content in ways the theoretical underpinnings cannot replicate, thus improving overall student experiences in new and exciting ways” (Outside student, MCC).
- “I felt enormously motivated to “do exceptionally well” in Inside Out because I was ‘in awe’ of the relentless commitment of the prisoner students.” (Outside student, MCC).

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Outside students stated they had become more understanding, empathetic and less judgmental toward those in the CJS.

- “I saw that criminals are just like us – people. They are part of us and the broader community and together we can make a difference” (Outside student, DPFC).
- “These guys were smart, funny, extremely aware people. They challenged the stereotype. But of course they did, because they aren’t a stereotype; the men and women inside our prisons are people. People with different values, and faiths and aspirations like everyone else. To paint them all with the same brush would be foolish, just as it would to paint every RMIT student in the same way.” (Outside student, MCC).
- “This program demonstrates inclusiveness not only amongst the students but the wider community and the human race as a whole” (RMIT student, MCC).

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Outside students became empowered to enhance the rehabilitative opportunities of those in the CJS.

- IOPEP “gave me an opportunity to see people grow and it made me grow as a human being” (Outside students, MCC).
- “I want to make a difference and improve rehabilitation opportunities for offenders in the future, and make the system generally more proactive rather than reactive to social ills such as drug addiction” (Outside students, DPFC).
- “I am determined to ‘create a better future’ for offenders in which they are more likely to live pro-socially and crime-free.” (Outside student DPFC).

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Inside students commended:

- “When you walk through the door of an Inside Out class you are no longer a prisoner or an inmate, you are a student.” (MCC Inside student).
- “I left school when I was 15. I left because I hated it. Yet here I was enthusiastic and inspired about learning and education for the first time in my life. I really wanted to know more about the subject and felt part of something greater and more important than myself. I even did the homework. For two hours a week I was no longer a prisoner. For two hours a week I was me.... and I was free....” (MCC Inside student).

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

The vast majority of inside students stated that outside students had listened to their opinions and treated them with respect.

- “The initial sense of ‘otherness’ that we as prisoners always feel quickly disappeared and by the end of only our second class it no longer mattered who was in green (referred to prison dress) and who was not. If you had an opinion or an idea you offered it and it was the validity of those ideas and your contributions that mattered. We were all equals. We were graded equally, we were treated equally and as equals we navigated the horrors of some of the world’s CJS.” (Inside student, MCC).
- “Positive attitudes from outside students gave me hope for a better future for myself. I have gained confidence and an inspiration to want more from my life, to expect more from myself, to try harder and to be braver.” (Inside student, DPFC).

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Inside students discussed wider benefits associated to IOPEP:

- “Unfortunately, it is way too easy in prison for the world to shrink to encompass only what exists between the walls. The gossip, the insults, the unintended slight or angry words all become magnified and take on more meaning than they should.....'Inside Out/Think Tank' is a lifeline to the world outside and attendance at each session allows me to reset my thinking and remember that prison is not the world, that I am more than a prisoner and that I have value. But even more importantly than that, it allows me to contribute. It gives me the opportunity to ... make an actual difference and that is the most powerful feeling in the world.” (Inside student, DPFC).
 - “I now want to engage in other prison programs and further study.” (Inside student, MCC).
- ➔ Such positive comments and subsequent actions by inside students are considered likely to lead to lower re-offending rates.

Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Corrections Victoria personnel commented:

- “Marietta’s key accomplishment in running Inside Out has been the ability to obtain respect and adoration by the prisoner students, and of course, the RMIT students. Dr Martinovic’s skill in delivering a curriculum that was interesting and challenging, accounted for different learning needs and removed barriers related to students preconceptions and ‘status.’”Prisoners who have been a part of the IOPEP have generally become more compliant and more easily managed within the prison environment, and some have even become role models for other prisoners” (Jenny Roberts, Senior Project Manager, CV).
- Scott Hctor-Turned (DPFC) stated “in my 20 years of work with prisoners I have never seen them line up half an hour ahead for any kind of a program until IOPEP...”

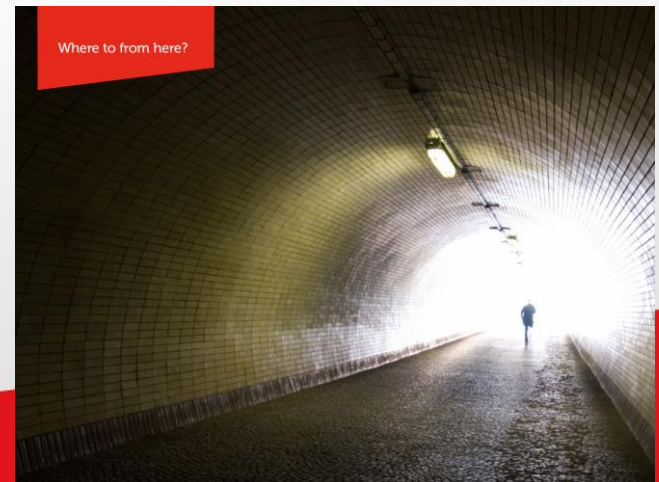
Outcomes of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program

Corrections Victoria personnel commented:

- IOPEP has been described by Rod Wise, Deputy Commissioner, Corrections Victoria as “exceeding all expectations..... [and] Corrections Victoria hoping that all programs delivered to prisoners result in the outcomes reported by the inside students who participated in the IOPEP.”
- “I welcome the opportunity to observe the RMIT students and acknowledge the potential for this program to assist the organisation to identify some exceptional future correctional employees.”

Conclusion

- All outside students discussed in their feedback comments developing a passion to make a difference and a keen interest in pursuing this in their subsequent employment and/or post-graduate study. All inside students made comments along the lines of 'imagining a better future for themselves.'
- In the future, expansion of the IOPEP beyond DPFC and MCC is planned.



Summary of program's impact – outside student

“I believe that I now have a greater understanding of why it is so important to support people through rehabilitation and to be able to reintegrate them into society. This program has put a face on the importance of supporting people who have made a mistake. I now understand that these are real people with real lives who have made mistakes, they are valuable and important – just like us – they are not just a news headline” (Outside student, MCC).



Summary of program's impact – inside student

“I have spent more than half of my life behind bars. In fact, over the last 22 years, ever since I was 15 years old, I have been coming to prisons – from youth detention to where I am now. All my life I have blamed others - the justice system, family and carers - for how my life has turned out. I guess it is easier than blaming myself... Over the last couple of months since starting Inside Out there has been a shift in my thinking. I have started to see that I have so much going for me and I have done nothing about it. I have come to the realisation that the key to getting out and staying out of prison has been inside me the whole time, and I am going to use it. I see now, thanks to this class, that I have the intelligence and the ability to change my life, and my future.” (Inside student, MCC)



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For more information

Please visit The Inside Out Center – Philadelphia, USA

<http://www.insideoutcenter.org/index.html> ---

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