STEPs

"Supporting Ties in the Education of Prisoners"

2018-1-EL01-KA204-047874

Project Guide

AUTHORED BY KONSTANTINOS OIKONOMOU

Scientific Association for the Promotion of Educational Innovation (EEPEK)

LARISSA, 2021

A project aiming at Facilitating prisoners' Transformation

Message by Dr Dimitris Kolokotronis, President of EEPEK (Scientific Association for the Promotion of Educational Innovation) – www.eepek.gr

It is a great pleasure for me to hold in my hands the *STEPs Program Guide*, which is a transparent mirror of the program as a whole.

EEPEK, of which I am the leader, has been involved in a variety of programs since its inception, thus finding the opportunity to fulfill its promise, namely the promotion of innovation. It was a special honor and joy for our Association to be assigned -by the European Union and I.K.Y.- the implementation of a project related to education, and - essentially - the reintegration of prisoners, which is the goal of a healthy penitentiary system and of a society that focuses its existence on humanity.

In the following pages you will have the opportunity to delve into our goals for this project, our thoughts and the implementation process, which was not an easy task, as well as a large amount of information and ideas for the utilization of our project by anyone having such an interest.

For education incarcerated people form a target group which poses several challenges, but at the same time offers great satisfaction to each stakeholder when this education proves successful. Nowadays, when there is a lot of talk about the need of changing people, we think that it is our duty as a society to help every fellow human being to achieve the individual and social transformation.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the Guide and applying the project

Dimitrios Kolokotronis

Preface to the Guide of the STEPs' project (https://steps.eepek.gr/)

Our intentions

The successful transition of (ex-) prisoners from prison to community requires their support, education and training both in prison and in the community.

Detainees, who receive both individual and group counseling and ongoing support and training, as well as general or vocational education, have been shown to have reduced recidivism rates and higher employment rates, findings namely that highlight the need for combined support and training.

Prisoners, in order to "make good use" of their sentence and see the period of confinement as a "second chance" to acquire skills and qualifications in order to better manage or cope with life in general, will have to work within themselves, with their mindset and spirit.

According to research, the change (namely the breaking of the vicious circle of marginalization, crime, etc.) is marked by a shift of positions of the subjects (perceptions, principles, values, etc.), from those that the prisoners possessed in the beginning to more flexible forms, including the multiple voicing.

In order to achieve results capable of giving prisoners the necessary supplies to continue as equal citizens, with obligations and rights, it is necessary to introduce flexible programs that will provide prisoners with support before and after release, which will be combined with career counseling, provision of social skills as well as life skills, preparing the individual for the transition from prison to community.

It is clear that in this context a special role is given to educators and program managers as facilitators, animators and supporters, as well as to prisoners who act as role models and collaborators having the role of mentor.

The STEPs project aims to give these opportunities to the inmate population, freeing them from ignorance, social clumsiness and "disability" and offering them support and remedial experiences to escape the vicious cycle of marginalization, crime and unemployment. The way to break this cycle is to cultivate confidence in them and in society, so that they can survive using legal means and avoid recidivism.

The partners of the "STEPs" partnership work together to create an innovative training material, which - through the prison schools or the support and reintegration centers of prisoners and other related structures - will support the effective reintegration of prisoners into society, in order for the prisoners to improve decision-making ability. The innovative product of the program will be based on new technologies and will offer virtual reality experiences to learners and their educators.

Our profiles

The following organizations and institutions work together to implement the program:

The Scientific Association for the Promotion of Educational Innovation (EEPEK) was founded in the summer of 2014 as a non-profit organization representing teaching staff, executives and vocational training professionals working in the fields of non-formal education, such as adult education and vocational training. and all levels of formal education (from pre-school education to higher education and second chance schools). The central role of EEPEK is to support teachers in their work, focusing on the creation, evaluation, use and dissemination of innovative teaching practices and methods. The above is achieved through actions such as training seminars, workshops and conferences, as well as through participation and cooperation in national and European programs.

CPIA (Centro Provinciale per l'Istruzione degli Adulti) is a new type of Italian adult education institution. It is a local service network in

the northeastern region of Rome that provides training opportunities for Italians and immigrants from the age of 16 onwards. The main goal of the CPIA is to encourage the return to adult education / training and to promote their entry into formal education and training systems. CPIA is a secondary school that evaluates, offers educational programs and issues certificates of competence and thus prepares students for vocational training programs. The CPIA consists of 4 schools in the city and 4 schools in prisons (in women's and men's prison branches) and is also based in northeastern Rome.

The Cyprus Citizens In Power Organization (CIP) is an independent non-profit, non-governmental organization that deals with people's needs and requirements, providing them with innovative products and free interventions related to various fields, such as education (including on- line education), integration, entrepreneurship, culture, the labor market and lifelong learning. It has a large number of volunteer associates.

The Portuguese organization KERIGMA is based in the north of the country and aims to provide education and training to adults, people in disadvantaged economic or social status. They have participated in a large number of projects so far.

The 2nd School of Second Chance (at Larissa Prison) is the first prison school established in the country. They have an extensive experience and tradition in educating prisoners, as a large number of students have studied and graduated from it.

KONSTANTINOS OIKONOMOU

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

The application submitted by EEPEK to the Greek national Agency of Erasmus +, the State Scholarship Foundation (IKY), for a project with the name "STEPs", prescribed a team that would be responsible for creating a guide for the good implementation of the

basic educational product of the project.[1] After the implementation had begun, the consortium commissioned me to write this Guide, which had been identified as a "landmark document" for the project in the text of the application.

Although the application prescribed a limited content for the Guide, which focused only on descriptions of material, equipment and software, the consortium decided to expand the content keeping in mind the original goal: the benefit of stakeholders and readers, and of course of the prisoners.

The second chapter entitled "The overarching framework of the project: Prison(er) Education" and based on the most recent literature, gives a presentation of what we would say constitutes the contents of the undeveloped field of prison education. Prisoners are considered to be vulnerable social groups. The relevant literature on the education of vulnerable groups is not extensive (Papastamatis, 2010). Reflections about the education of prisoners are in a way a subset of the general discussion that is taking place today about the education of vulnerable groups and adults. As will be seen in this chapter, theorists nowadays converge on an approach to prisoner education that is purely human-centered and which has as its basic philosophy the pursuit of the transformation of the prisoner, since only in this way will recurrence be avoided.

In the third chapter we get closer to the core of the project. It sets out our rationale behind the project which focuses on the search for an innovation appropriate to the transformative intention of prison education. The theory of change is then explained in more detail and what we might call the "STEPs method" is described. Next, we present the way in which this method emerged as a concrete activity, namely the process of collecting authentic prison inmate stories and converting them into virtual rooms / videos.

---

[1] It should be noted that the application spoke of a "Methodology Committee" that would set "methodological standards" to "guide stakeholders towards the best STEPs implementation". This guide had, in the application, the name "Methodology Report", but afterwards was replaced by the more general term "Guide". The present Guide corresponds to that text, while the names of various collaborators are mentioned at the relevant spots, as well as in a special list in the end.

The next, fourth, chapter has a purely practical character and attempts to introduce anyone - educators of prisoners and released prisoners, educators of adults, psychologists and social workers, penitentiaries and anyone else interested - in the practical implementation of the project, namely in the application of the method. Some technical instructions are given to familiarize oneself with the use of the project hardware and software, while a proposal for the elaboration of the activity is presented. At the end there is a brief description of the plot of each room.

The last chapter is dedicated to the documentation of the method, i.e. the cases used - always in the framework of the implementation of the project - by the partners, cases which were carefully studied by the consortium. It should be noted that the pandemic did not allow the practical implementation procedures that the partners initially had sought.

The Guide closes with general conclusions.

2. The overarching framework of the project: Prison(er) education.

Prisoners' education has a history of at least 200 years, as it essentially follows the history of the institution of prison itself. However, as a separate institution, it seems to have been developed and spread after the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, since the

establishment of the prison institution, which is a feature of the modern period of history, the idea of turning prisons into schools arose as well. This idea has always been discussed in the context of the dialogue on reforming prison policies, albeit without results (Behan, 2014).

In recent years, since the second half of the 20th century, prison has tended to be seen as a place not of punishment, but of isolation from the society of the person who broke the law. The aim is correcting him; that is, preparing him for reintegration into society as a responsible person who will avoid recidivism (Papastamatis, 2010). Therefore, the education taking place in the detention center/prison is considered a means, or a dimension, of the general process of imprisonment, which is, after all, the purpose of incarceration. Thus, it is hoped that the successful social reintegration of the prisoner will occur -a life in society without new delinquency, without recidivism- while, of course, social reintegration in the sense of imprisonment begins from the first day of incarceration.

A milestone in the history of promoting prison education are usually considered to be two texts of the Council of Europe, the European Prison Rules (Council of Europe, 1987, rev. 2006) and the Recommendations on "Education in Prison" (Council of Europe, 1990), which, generally, made clear the need for the implementation of anthropocentric and sociocentric education in prison. Since then, the education of detainees, in addition to being a field cultivated under the care of Justice/Civil Protextion and Education policies (in the national, international and supranational context, see European Commission, 2011), has been the subject of scientific research, as well as of many associations and unions operating in a large number of countries.[2] It should be noted here that the literature provides

---

[2] Since 2019, the institution of prison in Greece is the responsibility of the so-called Ministry of Civil Protection, as the supervisory authority of prisons, the General Secretariat for Anti-Crime Policy, was transferred from the Ministry of Justice (where it previously belonged) to this Ministry (after the change of government of 2019). Internationally, the prison is linked to the institution of Justice (and not to that of the Public Order / Civil Protection), and this situation is reflected in the literature, where the couple Justice – Education is referred to in relation to prison and prison education. However, government changes and resulting restructurings in Greece are very common. Thus, in this text, which is a product of transnational cooperation, we use both terms.

evidence of a positive correlation between reduced delinquency and participation in educational programs that meet the specific characteristics of detainees (Papastamatis, 2010). However, this change in the view of prison and education within prison should not, of course, be considered to be a rule of global educational policy. It is a dominant theoretical view, but it finds resistance in practice.

Prisoners, men and women (as well as released prisoners) are the most vulnerable group, because, despite the good intentions of the law, the prison is a place of "rejection, de-socialization ... and total liquidation of human rights" (Gasuka, 2007 , 233). Those who have come into "contact" with the criminal justice system are undoubtedly stigmatized by what this entails both for the social environment and their pre-existing relationships (eg family) as well as for reintegration and vocational rehabilitation (Gasuka , 2007).

As a target group, prisoners are distinguished by certain specific characteristics such as (Gasuka, 2007): a) institutionalization, b) lack of basic, social skills, c) low professional profile, d) lack of education and employment opportunities, e) the use of addictive substances, and f) the disruption of family life. The prison creates additional difficult living conditions due to phenomena such as overcrowding, non-segregation of prisoners, drug use, lack of specialized staff and insufficient professional profile of prison staff and lack of alternative ways of serving the sentence. Prisoners take on specific roles and behaviors due to circumstances, such as behavior marked by violence, isolation, inaction. If before - or of course, after release - prisoners are given the opportunity to participate in the learning process, as well as the prospect of vocational rehabilitation, then it is possible to change their attitude towards themselves and society, realistic perceptions, avoiding recurrence. Remaining in prison means confinement, social isolation and unemployment, situations that accompany prisoners after their release from society, while the lack of structures inside and outside the prison to support and reintegrate prisoners, of employer awareness structures, of post-penitentiary structures, of collective organizations of ex-prisoners is obvious.

It should be noted that the implementation of adult education in practice depends on many independent variables. First of all, the way one (we, the state, the authorities, etc.) perceives the importance and contribution of prisoner education is related to their ideology about the role and function of prison (Behan, 2014). But also the way we perceive the functioning of the prison depends on our view of the causes of delinquent behavior, which also includes a variety of perspectives (Papastamatis, 2010). Finally, the form in which prison education will be implemented depends on the definition we give to the concept of prison education - this means that there are several such definitions and therefore a variety of educational programs are designed and implemented, respectively (Costelloe, 2014).

As for the reintegration as a process that takes place inside the prison, there is the well-known typology of Rotman (1986), which Behan (2014) has followed in his work. Rotman makes the most important distinction between anthropocentric and authoritarian reintegration and imprisonment. Of these two versions, the anthropocentric one actually has much in common and shares the goals of prison education as an aspect of adult education aiming at critical thinking, reflection, and personal awareness. In the latter case, however, this is not exactly a reintegration, but rather an outdated correction, linked to ideas of reducing costs, decreasing crime and increasing public confidence in the penal system. The first form, that is, the one associated with adult education, respects the independence of the incarcerated, recognizes them as potential change agents, understands the social and cultural factors of social deviation, and does not seek to make them comply with a pattern of thought and behavior. The second one has, therefore, a completely different targeting.

Two different sets of assumptions are also identified in the theory of human delinquency (Papastamatis, 2010). On the one hand, it is the view that goes back to Socrates and argues that people are basically good and moral and break the law out of ignorance or because of social conditions. The other assumption stems from Christian teaching and advocates that man is by nature imperfect and sinful. Without having to go into details of these assumptions, let's

just point out here how each set of assumptions perceives the solution of the problem differently. The first considers that delinquency and crime are corrected by changing social conditions rather than by punishing the individual. Imprisonment offers mere criminal restraint and minimal correction. Therefore, prison should strive to provide a humane living environment and focus on education, which will give people access to power and the ability to change their identity. The second believes that people by nature have antisocial behavior and therefore need to learn to live together through socialization and social control. In both cases, however, we see that the responsibility ultimately falls on the individual and that the offender becomes the object. However, a change of identity occurs only when the person is considered a subject, that is, when the peculiarities of the prisoners are fully recognized. When a person is considered a subject, they can also be considered a citizen.

Motivation of prisoners' participation in education is a popular topic in the literature, and rightly so. A plethora of different motivations are recorded and data identified coincide with the data provided by the research in the category "objectives and results" (of prison education). Here we will limit ourselves to a recent categorization by Behan (2014), who points out prisoners' motives are often multilevel, but also changing in the course of their studies. We refer to Behan here, as his conclusions coincide with those of the wider literature.

The first category of incentives is called "preparation for release». Prisoners are trained to acquire skills and knowledge that they did not have before incarceration. They look forward to a productive life after imprisonment. They recognize the low level of education as a general feature of all prisoners, due to which they were trapped in unemployment, underemployment and unskilled manual labor before their incarceration. Prisoners in this category see education as useful and rather emphasize the need for vocational training.

The second category is called "killing the time". These prisoners see education as a strategy to tackle prison, but in

particular to tackle the damage that prison causes as a coercive, totalitarian institution. Acquiring skills is not a priority.

The third category is called "escaping from the prison". In this case, the detainees seek to be in a space of the penitentiary, which is more pleasant than the prison itself and where they do not feel imprisoned. A big plus in this category is the fact that detainees come in contact with a type of staff that does not belong to the institution of prison; that is with teachers. Prisoners are treated as students, not the other way around, and the benefits are even greater when the school is in a different building. This category is especially important if one considers the much-discussed opposition between the two cultures, this of education and that of incarceration, which are essentially opposing each other. While in school, prisoners are "absent" from prison and its authoritarian climate. This category is very important for another reason: it seems that the oppression of the prison has not stifled the initiative of the prisoner-student.

The other category is called "transformation". Prisoners in this category recognize the desire or need, even if it is not their primary goal, to engage in education for the purpose of transformation, which of course is not achieved only through education. Student-inmates show interest in the world around them and work together to develop social relationships, which are the result of their voluntary decision rather than an imperative instruction from above.

The last category is called "agency and change". In this category, the inmate-student has already been involved in a critical, according to Mezirow (e.g.: 2000), thinking process, as he wants to change his frame of reference and acquire new ones. The detainee in this category does not comply, but takes action to change (his perspectives).

It should be noted that prisoners generally come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and minorities, and this seems to be the case worldwide. Although crime does not belong on the margins of social phenomena and is not the privilege of the underprivileged, it is nevertheless a fact that members of the underprivileged are the ones

who are more easily arrested and convicted, as the "powerful" people often escape arrest etc. At the same time, these individuals are distinguished for their low level of education (Papastamatis, 2010). However, prisoners have their own history and their own experiences, values and knowledge, as well as their own educational needs. In whatever prison they find themselves, they are closely connected to the lives they were leading before their incarceration. Therefore, prisoners cannot be recognized by education as having only one general profile. Each of them has unique characteristics that are inserted and must be used in the educational process (Reuss, 2005). Accordingly, the education provided must be holistic.

From this holistic point of view, the education of prisoners needs to cultivate the knowledge, skills, values and motivations that are necessary for the positive citizenship. By accepting this, we accept the transformative power of education, especially in terms of personal development and social capital (Costelloe, 2014). It is therefore clear that prison education should not be limited to certain basic or professional skills, which of course are prerequisites; no one doubts their value. Nor should we be cautious in providing it because of the cost.

Prison education has as its main goal transformation and personal development (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). The prisoner must find the voice and speak out , but to speak he needs empowerment. "*Empowerment is the process that aims for any person in a state of marginalization and dependence to handle themselves independently, to communicate creatively and effectively with other participants in the same system and to take an active part in the labor market and the wider social becoming*" (Papastamatis, 2010).

As follows from the above analysis, the education of prisoners can only require from the educators a specific profile and the use of appropriate techniques. According to a comprehensive list of characteristics and properties (Gasuka, 2007), prison educators need to distance themselves from the web of stereotypes and prejudices about the prison world. They must also have the ability to manage difficult issues leading to conflict, as well as of understanding that the

target group lives in severe conditions of exclusion and that there is significant heterogeneity and low level of education. In addition, they must use simple speech, listen carefully to the prisoners' speech, show interest in them without evaluating the truth of the allegations, understand that the prisoners' experience affects the learning process in various ways, be guided by the ability to create discussion and dialogue, cooperate with various bodies and so on. The groups of incarcerated learners mainly require a counseling approach and participatory pedagogy. Thus, prison educators must be careful in planning activities, record carefully the evolution of the climate in the group, use a kind of "peer-to-peer method", so that the more educated help the less educated, ensure the active participation of members of the group and especially of those with low education and self-esteem. In terms of techniques, brainstorming, the working groups, the combination of suggestion and questions-answers, the discussion, the role play are particularly preferred.

REFERENCES (valid throughout the paper)

Behan, C. (2014). Learning to Escape: Prison Education, Rehabilitation and the Potential for Transformation. Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, 1, 1, 20-31.

Costelloe, A. (2014). Prison education: Principles, Policies, Provision. In: Tania Czerwinski, Eva König, Tatyana Zaichenko (Eds). Youth and Adult Education in Prisons Experiences from Central Asia, South America, North Africa and Europe. International Perspectives in Adult Education 69.

Costelloe, A. & Warner, K. (2014). Prison Education across Europe: policy, practice, politics. London Review of Education, 12, 2, 175-183.

Council of Europe (1987, 2006). European Prison Rules. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe (1990). Education in Prison. Recommendation No. R (89) 12 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 1989. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

European Commission (2011). Prison education and training in Europe – a review and commentary of existing literature, analysis and evaluation. Brussels: Education and Culture DG

Gasuka, M. (2007) Educational techniques for prisoners and released prisoners. *Educational material for the instructors of theoretical training*, volume II, EKEPIS. Athens

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to Think Like and Adult: Core Concepts of Transformation. In: Mezirow (ed.), Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Papastamatis, A. (2010). Adult Education for vulnerable social groups. Sideris. (in Greek).

Reuss, A. (2005). Prison Education. In: International Encyclopedia of Adult Education. New York, Palgrave-Macmillan.

Rotman, E. (1986). Do Criminal Offenders have a Constitutional Right to Rehabilitation? Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, 77, 29-35.

3. The STEPs project

In this chapter the rationale and the final product of the project, the method STEPs, are described.

3.1. Background

Following are details on the "history" of the project, its idea and its foundations

3.1.1. Looking for an innovative learning environment ...

Our perspective that led us to the proposal and ultimately to the implementation of this project stems from three main starting points: First, from the recommendation of the Council of Europe to provide prisoners with education of exactly the same value as that provided in regular educational institutions outside prison (Council of Europe, 1990); secondly, from the what scholars find to be of value on the type and content of the education to be provided (Reuss, 2005) and, thirdly, from the concept of innovative learning environment. We will now describe in detail the third factor.

Innovative learning environment

The contemporary notion of innovative learning environment is dominant in current educational theory. According to Kalantzis &

Cope (2012), today the educator is considered an expert in pedagogy and a designer of learning environments that give the student an active role in his learning. Nowadays, the purpose is to create environments that allow students to learn by collaborating with each other and with the teacher. The teacher/educator must design programs that touch students with different experiences and identities, based on the idea of attractiveness and usefulness of learning, so that learning and the real world are connected. In this context, the educated themselves produce knowledge of all kinds, while all together they are integrated into a process of planning, implementation and evaluation. At the same time, digital learning systems do not copy traditional educational relationships and practices, but are based on the principle "the medium is not necessarily the message". As can also be seen from the observations of others, the concept of the learning environment is organic and holistic (OECD, 2013). It refers to an open learning ecosystem that includes both the learning that takes place and the setting, the context, the physical and the digital. Therefore, the protagonists enter and take part in it with their own social profile, while the whole process is a mixture of perspectives ranging from traditional direct teaching to discovery learning. In this case the innovation is directly related to the space/place where it is used and implies a change in one or, rather, in all the factors of learning such as: the contents, the resources, the teachers, the educational organization, etc. Of course it is unnecessary to emphasize that the concerns for the new learning environments are also a major theme for the particular field of adult education as well (Bennett & Bell, 2010).

REFERENCES

Bennett, E. & Bell, A. (2010). Paradox and Promise in the Knowledge Society. In: Kasworm, C., Rose, A. & Ross-Gordon, J. (eds). Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education.

Kalantzis, M & Cope, B. (2012). New learning – Elements of a science of education. Cambridge.

OECD, 2013). Innovative Learning Environments. Paris

3.1.2. … that focuses on prisoners' transformation…

Prison is recognized as a very difficult environment, a dystopian one, as it is commonly called, unknown to most people. As has been seen before, the education provided within it is first and foremost - for those who understand it that way - compensation to the prison culture and opportunity to take action for their own good, before anything else. We must not forget that, according to the recommendations of international organizations, in-prison education can be considered even mandatory from one point of view, given that in international declarations, such as of the UN, but also in the constitutions of most countries, education is everyone's right. So, if it is everyone's right, then the state is obliged to offer it. Of course, as mentioned above, educational policies do not share this opinion. The reason is that they ignore the value of education and a basic doctrine according to which: if you become a criminal because you learned it, then the opposite is true as well; you can forget it and learn to be not a criminal (Papastamatis, 2010).

While there is no doubt that the prison curriculum should be broad, in our project we focus on a specific aspect, on its humanitarian character. For humanistic studies can make a person change the way they perceive the world and cultivate a moral conscience in them (Papastamatis, 2010). As prison education should be the same as out-of-prison education, it should aim at the overall development of the student-prisoner. Necessary in this context is the development of the ability to think critically and to prevent the development of dogmatic perceptions. Student-prioners should be aware of alternatives to competitive situations (Papastamatis, 2010). In order to be a full person, one needs to acquire new values that will guide their behavior in the future.

Avoiding moral preaching

It is, in this context, very important to realize that "education cannot be an idealistic preaches, but an awakening in the prisoner of a deep awareness of his relationship with the rest of society, which will lead to a genuine sense of social responsibility" (Rotman, 1986). Therefore, prison education cannot be a correctional procedure that wants to make the prisoner reject his anti-social behavior at once, which is not ruled out. However, it is preferable for education to promote new values, logic and positive attitudes towards life in the prisoner, since in this way prisoners acquire the identity of a citizen and can now also contribute to society's development.

3.1.3.   … in an unconventional way.

What are the components that would be suitable to make up "something" new in order to satisfy the above mentioned goals? Our spectrum of inspiring sources has been wide containing mainly:

- what adult education didactics teaches us about the best ways of teaching adults (primary and secondary learning experience and student- and group-centered teaching)
- the 3D/virtual reality and
- some other fields like the documentary theater, the idea of "rooms" and the (biographical) case method of teaching.

Teaching adults

Adult teaching has been the subject of several textbooks. Our perspective is based on that of Jarvis (2004, 2010), who has provided a comprehensive framework (which is even reproduced in the literature). We believe that this framework is almost entirely valid for the prison education.

Adult teaching - and now all kinds of teaching regardless of age - must be distinguished for its moral character and focus on the development of the learner, in order to develop his own way of

interpreting and understanding the world. This is the basic principle of modern teaching, and from it derives the notion of student-centeredness in education, which needs - but always according to the particular case - to be more pronounced in adult education. Although adult education does not reject the didactic model, student-centeredness has been its main feature (although, on the other hand, it is now argued that not every child is the same as well).

Student-centrism can be group and individual, depending on the case. Experience, as is reasonable, plays an important role in experiential education/teaching and learning. Jarvis (2010) makes the important distinction between primary and secondary experience. Although the limits are not strict, the first form is essentially all daily life, while the second traditionally characterizes education itself. However, the aim of the teacher today is to transfer the idea of the primary experience as best as possible in the educational-school environment. This is, of course is not possible, but can be done to some extent. The narration of a real story by the teacher is e.g. such an instance. In this context, we consider that the virtual reality clearly offers a first-class opportunity for such experiences that approach the primary nature of the experience.

Meanwhile, these observations can be easily combined with a multitude of other approaches (methods, techniques, perspectives, etc.) which are not easily distinguished from each other. We are interested in the following: the problem-solving method, the case study in teaching with an emphasis on a person's biography, teamwork, simulation and role play, psycho-drama and socio-drama.

As is well known, experiential methods are not for everyone. At least some people - perhaps many in number - want their time, but also other conditions (mainly psychological), to be able to participate in experiential learning. Here the educator is called to intervene, who will understand the situation (which is also an important learning experience for himself) and in collaboration with the student will think of a solution. It is clear that if the student does not want to participate, he leaves.

Virtual reality

Virtual Reality is defined as the use of technological means to create an artificial, interactive environment "*which in its optimal form the human-user perceives as real*." Important is the user's ability to interact, through which the environment changes in real time, as it does in the real world. "*The Virtual Environment can be created in correspondence with an existing or imaginary world*". Examples from the literature include: the transfer of a ship's command space to familiarize the crew with the controls, or the creation of an imaginary city in space, which the user can navigate.

The technological means used to create a virtual world include computers (hardware and software for composing and controlling the virtual world) and peripherals (for user interaction), while the interaction can involve all the senses (vision, hearing and touch).

According to the literature (see below) the characteristics of virtual reality can be summarized in 3I (in English): Immersion, Inter-action and Information Intensity. Immersion is the degree to which the user feels that he is really in the virtual environment and not the real one. Communication-Interaction refers to the ability of the computer to "*directly shape the synthetic world depending on the human-user movements*". Interactivity (as a measure of interaction) concerns not only the speed of the computer's response, but also the computer's ability to respond to the natural forms of human-user communication. Finally, Information Intensity refers not only to the abundance of information, but also to the variety of communication channels from which information is offered to the user (optical, audio, tactile, etc.).

Stereoscopic viewing technologies, directly related to virtual reality systems, are being used daily on television for three-dimensional movie watching. Virtual reality technologies are beginning **to find practical application in different areas of everyday life**. "*Systems that allow teleconferencing to a public, virtual space for all participants, presentation of buildings that have not yet been built to prospective buyers, phobia treatment systems,*

applications for better preparation of athletes, etc." Experts believe that in the future there will be both new applications and devices that will leverage virtual reality technologies "*to offer new, more immersive experiences to users.*"

REFERENCE

Lepouras, G., Antoniou, A., Platis, N., Charitos, D. 2015. Introduction into Virtual Reality. In: Lepouras, G., Antoniou, A., Platis, N., Charitos, D. 2015. *Development of virtual reality systems.* [e-book] Athens (http://hdl.handle.net/11419/2547). (In Greek).

Some other inspirations

We describe here a number of other sources that inspired us in our project. One of them is the **documentary theater**. It is clear that our approach is not documentary theater. But it shares with it its basic principle, which is that it is based on authentic material. In other words, just as a documentary play is a play that reflects - often even faithfully - reality and brings it to the viewer, so we would like to offer students - through virtual reality - something authentic, something taken from life itself. To this end, we have decided to collect authentic stories, a process that potentially involves a virtual communication between prisoners in various European countries. So the stories are true and that gives great added value to our attempt.

Finally, the term **room** must be discussed. This term comes from "Situation Rooms", an unconventional and highly politicized live theatre game, created in 2014 by Rimini Protokoll, a leading European pioneering team, which expanded as much as anyone else the concept of documentary theater. It is a team of writers-directors based in Berlin, which works with various theatrical forms in order to reduce or completely eliminate the distance between performers and the audience. "Situation Rooms" brings together 20 people from various continents, whose lives have been shaped by the use of weapons, in a cinematic setting that recreates the globalized world of pistols and grenade launchers, authoritarians and refugees, routes and unexpected encounters. The setting consists of a huge space with autonomous rooms. With the personal narratives of their "residents",

the images begin to move and viewers follow their individual paths through their individual cameras and headphones. They begin to live in the building themselves and live for 90 minutes the lives of others, following the personal perspective of the protagonists. The audience penetrates deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of the cinematic setting and each becomes part of the representation of an elaborate cinematic shoot with multiple simultaneous perspectives. "Situation Rooms" is a fascinating multi-cinema, augmented reality, three-dimensional insofar as only theater can be, and this approach was the basis for proposing STEPs. STEPs is based on the theatrical "Situation Rooms" turning it into Virtual Reality (VR). VR rooms are more flexible for use in school prisons and help-centers for ex-inmates or for related structures. Viewers here live the lives of others, following the perspective of the protagonists through the VR film.

Finding a gap and our desire to fill it - The application for funding

After a long process of pre-exploration and based on what has already been mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, we found out that there were several reasons why it was possible and purposeful to proceed with the construction of a new tool or method. The new method could combine elements from all the approaches to which we referred so far. The goals that we pursued for it were that the prisoners:

- participate in learning and
- collaborate with each other in order
- to reflect as deeply as possible,
- towards, first, forming positive attitudes towards change,
- and then committing themselves to change and
- get, finally, themselves ready for a new life.

In this spirit we applied to the Greek agency for Erasmus+, the IKY. The application was approved.

3.2. A closer focus on STEPS: the project's logic model and theory of change - the STEPs method[3]

The contemporary theory of project design and implementation (Funnel & Rogers, 2011) emphasizes the importance of the construction of the project's logic model, which guides and directs the project, as well as of the clarification of the change that it (a project, an intervention, a social, educational etc. policy) promises (=theory of change). Both of these parameters are important, as it is against them that the impact of the project, especially in the long term, is assessed. In this section we deal with these two aspects. These parameters constitute the philosophy of the project and of the method. This philosophy was contained in the application for funding the program and must be well understood by anyone involved in the project.

The objective: acquiring life skills

Incarceration is meaningful for prisoners as long as they change themselves in order to start a new life. Change and transformation are key-words for prisoners, as we have already shown.

Change and a new life, at least in the form of planning a new life, should start to take place already within prison, so that beginning the new life is possible immediately after release. The danger of recidivism is there and waiting. Life after imprisonment is of course not easy at all, since it depends on many factors. But one important among them is surely the identity of prisoner who now needs to take the right decisions in order to become again a member of society and live in harmony with others.

---

[3] Collaboration with Kalliopi Anagnostopoulou.

All over the world many prisoners remain without help. Suffice to think of prisons where even provision of elementary conditions of living is unimaginable. There, incarceration is simply punishment and we do not want this anymore in the current thinking about correction and rehabilitation.

Prison education seems to be an important factor in correction and should not be considered a luxury. But what can we do?

It is, of course, needless to say that in a prison educational framework we should always look for new ways to help prisoners reflect and change. With this in mind we have sought a new original educational programme - a method for the socio-emotional empowerment of prisoners and their social inclusion, a tool to help prisoners become (re)socialized, members in the society and active citizens. In current educational theory there are a number of terms that correspond to what the method seeks: we talk about social skills, life skills, soft, skills, psychosocial skills, multiple and emotional intelligence, citizenship and more. We do not want to delve into the differences as much as into the similarities among all these concepts, which are the need for today's people, along with knowledge, to acquire the ability to live harmoniously with others, knowing that they can shape the world for the common well-being and the common good. The list of these skills, as we call them, therefore includes (Unicef, 2012, Global evaluation of life skills education programmes, p. 8):

- Cognitive – critical thinking and problem-solving skills for responsible decision-making;
- Personal – skills for awareness and drive and for self management; and
- Interpersonal – skills for communication, negotiation, cooperation and teamwork, and for inclusion, empathy and advocacy.

Our response: a series of steps

To achieve, therefore, this transformation it is necessary that prisoners 1) identify and 2) reject and revise –on their own- the socially negative aspect of their past. The first of these could be called **first step**. But what about the second point?

Sometimes it is very difficult for prison educators and students to engage in a direct process of achievement of it. We think that an indirect and discrete way is better. In this perspective prisoners could experience other prisoners' incarceration stories and "propose" them new life scenarios. In this way they learn how -and are more capable- to (re)plan their own lives.

But this can also turn to be difficult, since prisoners very often do not open themselves easily to others and do not want to narrate their incarceration stories to others (why this happens does not matter here). A meaningful and constructive dialogue is not thus possible and probable.

A solution can be given by exploiting virtual reality. In this way, prisoners experience other, unknown, prisoners' incarceration stories in a framework of virtual reality (=inspiration from documentary theatre) and suggest/propose new life scenarios with new social roles.

A new, innovative learning environment opens itself to us in this way now, an environment which, on the one hand, exploits a technology that is very compatible with prison (virtual reality), and on the other hand, does not dismiss, but, on the contrary, includes, with emphasis, the human contact and the pedagogical relation between prisoner educator and prisoner-educated. Two mottos would direct the method:

➔ (prisoner:) "Looking for a new life for me" and
➔ (educator:) "Helping prisoners change lives".

In experiencing other prisoners' stories, <u>a quasi primary experience (because of virtual reality),</u> prisoners are introduced into realities which are similar to theirs (criminality and incarceration), but not into their own (reality). What matters most, however, is that

they enter a situation of confronting these realities by "scrutinizing" others' biographies (perspective of case study) in a most fruitful way.

With curiosity, but also in a friendly mood, prisoners go deep into other people's "misled" lives by entering 3D "rooms" in which the personal story of a prisoner is developed. They do not simply hear or watch; they experience. The experience is very deep, because due to virtual reality they become the "others" for some minutes.

But during this visit into the rooms, prisoners have also the chance of reflecting and developing an intrinsic discourse. The purpose of this is to identify assumptions, ways of thinking and actions that have led individuals (those "others", but also them as well in a different way) to incarceration and its tragic consequences. They identify wrong decisions of others. These reflections are soon to be externalized in the learning group.

By identifying the wrong decisions of "others", a positive attitude towards change is already being created, which is **a second step** of prisoners towards their personal development.

Afterwards, prisoners form an overall understanding of the other inmates' identities and life frameworks and contexts; they come deeper into the biography of the other person and "study" it in a way. So, they can "suggest" to them ideas about beginning a new life. Prisoners have been given, therefore, a privilege and a right to express their opinion. This gives them the opportunity to commit themselves more strongly to the idea of change. This is **the third step**.

Can they now plan a new life for themselves as well? This is extremely necessary in order to avoid the major problem of recidivism after exiting prison. Now, they have gained in experience and can apply more easily the processes of self-awareness and self-reflection that are presuppositions for planning a new life. At least in words, yes, this is possible. And this is **a fourth step.** Planning the new life and new life itself can really start already in prison.

Prisoners, after having worked in group and reflected, have at least begun to <u>plan</u> a new life. Whether this is going to happen after exiting prison is difficult to say. It suffices that at least the hope arose for **<u>a fifth step.</u>** And steps for life do not stop here!

The relationship of our project with Transformative Learning

The word "transformation" in the subtitle of this Guide causes or may cause readers to make any associations with Transformative Learning. This technical term has become synonymous with adult education in recent decades, according to some, although this doesn't mean that in adult education we do not seek the acquisition of basic knowledge, knowledge that is not intended for change. As is well known, Mezirow (1991), who introduced Transformative Learning, proposed a "philosophy" according to which the adults of today must submit their knowledge to a constant renewal, by which not just technical knowledge is meant, but also perceptions and opinions and so on. This is how the continuous connection with the rapidly changing reality results. This change in attitudes and perceptions is therefore emancipatory, as it frees us from the shackles of our earlier worldview, provided that this earlier worldview happens to be dysfunctional and contrary to the new reality. Emancipation ends up in the individual, but also in the public, good.

Of course, Jarvis (2004, 2010) as well, an avid reader of Mezirow, sees as the ultimate and highest goal of adult education the following: the overcoming of the unsuccessful approach of reality by people, after having been disconnected from the reality due to the new "facts" (the so-called disjuncture).

However, Mezirow even went so far as to suggest a specific process of steps to be followed by a group of adult learners, starting with the so-called disorienting dilemma (which may be raised to the adult learners even by their educators).

Our method interacts with and embraces Transformational Learning, without, however, seeking to incorporate the sequence of steps and principles proposed by Mezirow. Instead, it is more free and eclectic. From what we have seen above, indeed our method starts from a

challenge that is addressed to the inmate. As a matter of facts, there is a disorienting dilemma.

What is this? Those of us who have served prisoner education know that there is no greater disorienting dilemma for the incarcerated learner than to question the crime itself, its value, and its contribution to shaping reality and human life. Often, of course, we hear -in prison environments- that the attitude of the prisoners has changed (that is, that the convict "repented" in the end).

Regardless of how each prisoner really feels about the "value" of the crime, with our method we seek that they radically challenge the crime, that they reject it as a potential choice of behavior in human life. This may seem like a given to the ignorant people, but those of us who have worked with prisoners know that this is not always the case, and that is why the phenomenon of recurrence occurs, why those who are released from prison often commit crimes again. Therefore, we want a strong and explicit questioning of the crime, as far as possible.

But we, proposing our method, do not want to focus on the life of the learning subject, that is, on the members of the learning team (first and foremost for reasons of discretion and objectivity). In fact, we involve case study as a teaching method. Thus, we put our "learner" in the place of another who already "committed a crime". Placement in the place of the other is effected through virtual reality and the other is a real person.

In addition, we do not stop there (which would not make any sense), but we also provoke (and that is why all the following pages have been written wishing to guide our groups towards a structured learning activity) a thoughtful dialogue between the "learners" and their "teachers". The new life plan devised by the learner is the elementary and starting criterion for the success of our method, as mentioned earlier. If, however, critical thinking is not the acquisition of pieces of technical knowledge, but the appreciative understanding of an opinion, of a position, etc., in order to base our future behavior for the personal and common good on it, then it becomes obvious

how and because our project ultimately seeks the development of critical thinking.

REFERENCES

Funnell, S. C. and Rogers, P. J. (2011). Purposeful program theory: effective use of theories of change and logic models. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Jarvis, P. (2004, 2010). Adult education and lifelong learning. Routledge.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. Jossey-Bass

3.3. Building the STEPs method:

We will now take a look at two important processes involved in building, or creating, the method we are proposing in our project. This is necessary to inform the reader and the eventual educators about how we worked.

3.3.1. The process of collecting the authentic prisoners' incarceration stories and...[4]

To obtain and ensure a rich sample of biographical stories from prisoners around Europe, we decided to establish a common framework whose standpoint was a carefully elaborated guide made of questions and themes trainers should have in mind when questioning prisoners and ex-prisoners about their past, present and future lives.

Having this guide as a supporting tool, the trainers from Portugal, Italy and Greece used the flexible and comprehensive method of storytelling to acquire stories. This method was adapted to their particular circumstances (e.g. prison establishments, NGO's facilities) such as time availability, location, resources, (ex)prisoner's emotional and psychological state.

What techniques were used to collect stories and support the storytelling method?

As long as the main goal of story collection was ensured, trainers had some freedom to chose the most suitable techniques to trigger feelings of self awareness, positive thinking and personal development in the narratives shared by the prisoners and ex-prisoners they communicated with.

In that sense, partners implemented the following techniques:

- The Journey Technique - Based on the idea of remembering landmarks on a well-known journey, prisoners were asked about their memories, emotions and "meanings", when certain key phrases were written in a blackboard. What do they think about when we ask them about their lonely journeys? And the journeys they did through their dreams, hopes and obstacles? In other words, *How do their journeys reveal their life stories?*

---

[4] Collaboration with Natália Correlo.

- The Windows Technique - Prisoners are invited to take their minds for a walk through the art of Salvador Dalí, particularly his 1925 oil painting known as *Young Woman at the Window*, and the poetic writings of Nâzım Hikmet. Firstly, they colored a black and white version of Dali's painting, while talking freely; then, they read a poem by Hikmet and selected the words and phrases that touched them the most so they could build a new text together. At the end, they discussed their work and the feelings and thoughts the image they painted elicited in them.

- 5 Life Coaching STEPs (a methodology of 5 techniques) - To facilitate the process of storytelling, the STEPs consortium created a 5 steps guide to help prisoners and ex-prisoners evoke their personal stories. This series of actions started with a group activity followed by three individual activities that resulted in an autobiograpy or narration.

The first step - the group meeting - existed to create a climate of confidence and empowerment amongst the prisoners. Furthermore, it was also the opportunity to explain the process of storytelling and cultivate the interest of those who wanted to be part of STEPS. Consequently, the ones whose interest was captivated were referred to their first individual meeting in which they explored their self perception according to a SWOT analysis and then definied SMART objectives. In their second and third individual meeting, they were first encouraged to revive possible omissions they weren't fully aware of by being asked about their interest in the current world (e.g. Which news do you read? Why do you have an interest in them?); afterwards, in the third meeting, a sketch of their story started to emerge - the heroe(s), the events, the struggles, the consequences, etc. Finally, in the fifth and final step they were ready to tell their stories to the educator who helped them to get to a place of trust and self recognition.

What were the results obtained?

By following the method and techniques explained above, the consortium was able to collect 60 stories which also means 60

prisoners and ex-prisoners were able to develop a process of introspection that contributed to the empowerment of their capacity for self reflection - a fundamental ability in the development and strengthening of their emotional intelligence and self-confidence.

These stories, which will be the contents of a special STEPs booklet, are the raw material for the creation of VR rooms. The stories were collected by male and female prisoners in Greece, Cyprus and Italy, and by ex-prisoners in Portugal.

Last but not least, this storytelling process also contributed to the activation of actors belonging to networks within the realm of prison education, a field that plays a key role in improving the competences of prisoners, but is often overlooked by the State.

3.3.2. .... their transformation in virtual rooms/videos[5]

Let's now see how the raw material (ie the stories recorded in the way described in the previous subsection) was transformed into VR applications.

This was, of course, an evolutionary and multi-layered process that included two partial processes: scripting and developing the VR application itself. We must emphasize that, given that such applications intended either for teaching or other situations is addressed to a specific target group (otherwise it does not make sense), in this whole process we worked after taking into account the particular characteristics of the members of the target group (which in our case are the inmates). The editing was done by a special group of people working in the field of art and informatics / programming (as part of the special subproject of the project), while the selection of stories to become VR stories was the result of a vote by all project collaborators among the stories that were constantly being collected (in the context of another sub-project, see previous subsection).

---

[5] Collaboration with Kyriakos Papadakis

From this point on, the process was to give each story to the screenwriter to adapt it to a script, and then give it to the development team to adapt it to an interactive VR story.

As for making the scripts, we point out that each of the stories is the "real story" of people who, for a variety of reasons, at some point broke the law and experienced arrest and confinement, leaving behind their former life, family, friends, work, and freedom. Each story has its own dynamics, its own images, aspects, messages, emotions, concerns. All of these are essential elements that had to be isolated and highlighted in each VR story. Thus, the main goal of the script was to faithfully reflect each story, but also to put some stimuli and questions in order for each user-prisoner (during the educational process) to experience it and decipher it in the best possible way.

To be frank, each isolated part of the story was treated differently: enriched or stripped. In the end, these pieces were assembled using interactive objects or small successive scenes to complete the provision of "information" through the story.

Our originality in the construction of these stories was the posing of continuous questions which can be answered after watching the following scenes. We believe that in this way the user is not just a spectator in a story that simply evolves in their eyes in a linear way, but that through the questions his thought and imagination are active: they gives answers, explanations or try on their own to find solutions to questions posed by interactive objects.

This is the first approach to the scenario. This approach was followed by several other creating stages. For example, our colleagues who had no previous relation to the story played a very important role in the process. Some of them read the script and the original story and some others just the script. With this feedback, the weak points of the scenario were pointed out and the appropriate interventions are made.

Once the script was completed in a format approved by the project team and the VR application subgroup, the "design team" began creating the 3D spaces and 3D materials envisaged by the script.

The collection of photographs from prisons operating in the states that participate in the project allowed the group to find common ground and render the prison spaces as faithfully as possible. Thus, the elements that each "space" had to have were selected. This VR "space" was then invested with various objects and other photorealistic textures, in order to take the final form.

In addition, the programming team gave life to the stage and the objects, planning all the interactive objects and events of each scene. At the same time, either via the professional studios that have a wide range of voices from professional actors, or via amateur theater groups, we searched for the actors who were to "lend" their voice to the heroes of the story. After the first selection of actors, the first rehearsal was held in the studio to show how their voices really "write" and how they can play the role.

The actors selected each time were informed about the story, the conditions in which the heroes lived, their mental state, their emotional charge in each scene and -after discussion and teaching that was done to them, until the desired result was achieve- they entered the studio to record their role. Each piece of the story could be recorded several times until the purpose of the whole story was fulfilled. Several times, after the film was completed, it happened that some tracks were re-recorded, so that they could be performed better and tied better with the visual effect. In the end, all the pieces were composed in scenes, which went through further testing and improvements, until it was documented that they fulfilled their goal. The composition continued until the entire VR story was completed.
Finally, even before the final distribution of the application for use, a group of users "experienced", that is, tried in practice, the VR story with the equipment that was installed in the laboratory. Thus, feedback, re-inspection and any further interventions were made to improve the functional, aesthetic, interactive quality of the final product.

4.   Application of the method

This chapter deals with the practical side of our method.

We assume that a prisoner educator learns, e.g. by navigating on the internet, the existence of the project and its ambitious proposal. What is (s)he going to do; How will (s)he work?

In any case, we recommend them reading this guide, which we consider to be a thorough introduction for the instructor in our philosophy. All the contents of the guide up to this point were for this purpose. In this chapter we present our proposal on what can be done with the material we have prepared. We emphasize that the logical model of the project and its theory of the desired change must always be in the mind of anyone who wants to involve the method in his teaching work. The flowing contents provide the necessary background that an educator should have for the method.

Before going on, it is necessary to repeat some of the points made by Jarvis (2004, 2010) on learning. According to this scholar, non-learning does also exist in humans. Not everyone learns the same way or not everyone wants to learn, and ultimately not all people learn. The reasons are many and need not be mentioned here, while they are obviously related to everyone's life world or to other circumstances under which an individual happens to be at a moment. However, it should be emphasized, especially for those who will eventually critique it, that any method makes a suggestion for solving problems and does not solve problems at once. This, after all, is the way science goes.

Therefore, the general principle is that before using the method, the instructor should conduct a rich negotiation process with his detained students, in order to track their deeper needs and demands and to inform them about what it is about, about the purposed goals and about the possible outcomes, and to inform them that their participation in the educational program is not mandatory (learning contract). Truly, this is an idea, a proposition or suggestion and not an obligatory process.

Our method, always in the logic of an (innovative) learning environment, has an open and flexible character. It can be used according to what any group of students and educators think bus as

long as the basic philosophy has been adopted before. However, it should be noted that the educator first and foremost needs, as the literature suggests (Papastamatis, 2010), to be dedicated and to believe in his work, especially in its transformational dimension.

Therefore, it was not possible, and we did not seek, to anticipate all the possible behaviors (opinions, emotions, feeling, appraisals etc.) of the educational groups that the implementation of the method would trigger. These are issues that will appear in practice and any feedback is welcome.

However, as in this project it is about biographies and identities and any identification can evoke emotions and trigger processes that will not be easy to manage without the knowledge of mental health professionals, it would be good to carry out the actions with the participation of a psychologist. The best combination of facilitators is both an experienced adult educator and a well-trained mental health professional, who are able to manage situations that are in a very delicate balance between the educational and the psychological dimension of the project. For example, a story that refers to child abuse (Carla's story) can be a trigger for situations that the educator / facilitator should be very able to handle.

After all, it is not enough for the instructor just to have studied the scenarios before starting the implementation. Participation in transformational processes presupposes that there is an already developed learning group and that there is trust among the participants. Although our suggestion for groups of 4 is good, the group should already be mature, as the project entails identifications that, to be expressed, require good bonding of the group, trust, respect and acceptance among its members. Therefore, it would be better to enrich our method with more experiential activities in order to prepare learners to the use of 3D stories, because otherwise it may be weak in terms of the goal of transformation. Transformation can occur either through a disorienting dilemma or occur cumulatively through experiential and reflective experiences. If the stories work in one direction or another, the appropriate support of the trainees by the properly trained educators is needed, in order to follow the

principles of experiential learning as described in this guide. Also, the cooperation with psychologists can ensure the proper management of difficult situations that may arise along the way. Moreover, the educator -or educators- should think, after having studied all the scenarios / rooms, whether it is good to have a specific plan/order for the use of the rooms that can best satisfy the goals.

REFERENCES

Jarvis, P. (2004, 2010). Adult education and lifelong learning. Routledge.

Karalis, Th. (2005). Design, administration, assessment of adult education programmes. Band B. Design. Band C. Assessment. Greek Open University(in Greek).

4.1. Description and structure

The STEPS project introduces an original method that aims to empower and enhance the psychosocial skills of prisoners or ex-prisoners, through their participation in virtual reality experiences, by means of which they acquire voice and become protagonists of life. The development of the psychosocial skills of prisoners, which, in our opinion, is ideally done only in an experiential way and not through preaching, is a burning issue in the education of prisoners and other populations (Beyer, 2017).

Virtual reality is perceived as a particular teaching aid (Valakas, 1999). As it is known, by using such teaching aids the educator activates more senses at the same time, clearly conveys concepts, relationships and phenomena, attracts attention and stimulates interest, represents reality. However, experts draw attention to the following (Valakas, 1999): teaching aids should be instruments of presentation, "teaching collaborators" and means of creative application; they should not used just to offer some "spectacle". We consider virtual reality, as we described it in the subsection 3.1.1, especially suitable for all this.

The method consists of 6 virtual reality stories, the so-called rooms (their creation was described in Chapter 3.3., while their plots

are presented in section 4.4.), proposing the conduct of 6 corresponding educational activities. Therefore, it is an educational programme comprising of 6 learning activities that normally takes place in an educational environment or in another place within a prison or in the premises of organizations and services that deal with the reintegration and rehabilitation of released prisoners. The stories have as central person (the so-called protagonist) male and female prisoners and ex-prisoners from various European countries. In total we have three "women's" stories and three "men's" stories.

The philosophy of the method is for the incarcerated or released to experience a secondary life experience, but as close as possible to the primary one, which in terms of content is not fantastic, but authentic and even comes from people living in different European countries. In this way, the prisoner/user is called to feel present in a composite, virtual world that is - ontologically only - away from the reality and to experience a "tele-presence". So, (s)he acquires thought and reason within this "foreign" story and then (s)he is called, in a group context, to think and talk, at least, about what he felt and maybe about the role he played, even if unconsciously, in this original "virtual real life theater". In this process, which per room is good to last up to 4 teaching hours in the same day, the user-inmate or ex-prisoner is supported through reflection and the general context to connect with **positive thinking** and in the long run to proceed with the transformation.

Ideal form of use of the method

Each of the 6 educational activities should be perceived as a learning experience consisting of two main parts. The first part focuses on experiencing virtual experience/VR history, while the second focuses on educational exploitation. More specifically, in the first part, trainees, incarcerated or released (for which we will henceforth use the term "users", meaning the use of technological equipment), are properly prepared to experience the VR story. In the second part, the group engages in further activities and semi-structured discussion with the help of a facilitator in order to identify a new life role for the protagonist of the story they watched.

As we calculate the duration of an educational activity up to 3-4 teaching hours, we would say that our program can have a total duration (with the same group of trainees) of 24 hours in 6 weeks (1 room/story per week) or in 3 weeks (2 rooms/stories per week). Specifically, a four-person training team can complete the program in 6 days (better not in successive days). So if the educator receives the interest of 12 persons, (s)he should calculate about 18 days of his/her time.

It should be understood that the method is not for everyone (prisoner), because there is really no such method absolutely suitable for everyone ("one size fits all") and it is totally acceptable that some inmates may refuse to participate or give up etc. This is often the case at the experiential learning approaches. In any case, the educator is obliged to have studied everything related to the method before applying it, as well as to his group. This, first and foremost, means that the educator must have carefully watched all the rooms on his own and that he has already drawn up a first plan for their use (Gasouka, 1999). The management of reality is in the "hand" of the educator and the educated, not in the method itself. Next section makes all this more clear.

REFERENCES

Beyer, L. N. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning and Traditionally Underserved Populations. American Youth Policy Forum.

Valakas, G. (1999). "Educational aids and educational space" in: Programme of training (Adult) Educators. Band III. EKEPIS

4.2. Technical instructions[6]

VR rooms use VIVE (tm) Headset device and controllers. Although other VR devices may be used, VR Rooms are optimized for this particular set.

---

[6] Collaboration with Thanassis Malamos

Joystick   (1)   Joystick

(2)

Trigger   Trigger

The student wears the headset (1) and catches the controllers (2) (L) left and (R) with the right hand respectively.

The moves of the students' head as well as his/her moves inside the real-world are translated into viewpoint rotations and moves inside the virtual space (Rooms). The moves of the controllers are translated into the moves of a pair of red/black gloves which are the avatar of the user hands (controllers) inside the Rooms.

The student, according to the scenario, should be standing or sitting on a chair. Some students may feel some kind of dizziness by the VR system. That's why a dedicated demo VR movie is also available, in case the teacher decides to familiarize the students to the VR headset first (suggested). The educator should always stand behind the student and take care of him/her.

Before the beginning of the first VR Room, the educator should give some basic instructions about the VR Rooms interfaces and how the user should interact with the objects and follow the scenario.

Once the student wears the Headset and handles the two controllers, the VR Room starts with the language selection screen.

Language selection is effected through a green laser beam which the user enables by using the "gun like" trigger in the controller. After language selection, student enters the VR Rooms.

The student has two main ways to interact with the objects inside the rooms.

1. By pointing with a green laser beam. To do so, the student pushes the controller's trigger (same as in language selection) and keeps it pushed until to target to the object they want to interact with. The objects that are interacting with green laser beam are always sufficiently illuminated by a spot light in order to be distinguished from the environment.

2. By catching (grabbing) an object. Some objects have an illuminating "light" ball very close to them. This "light" ball signifies that this object may be "caught" by the user. The student has to move towards the object and, when the glove (controller avatar) is very close, he can catch it with the glove by pushing the trigger.
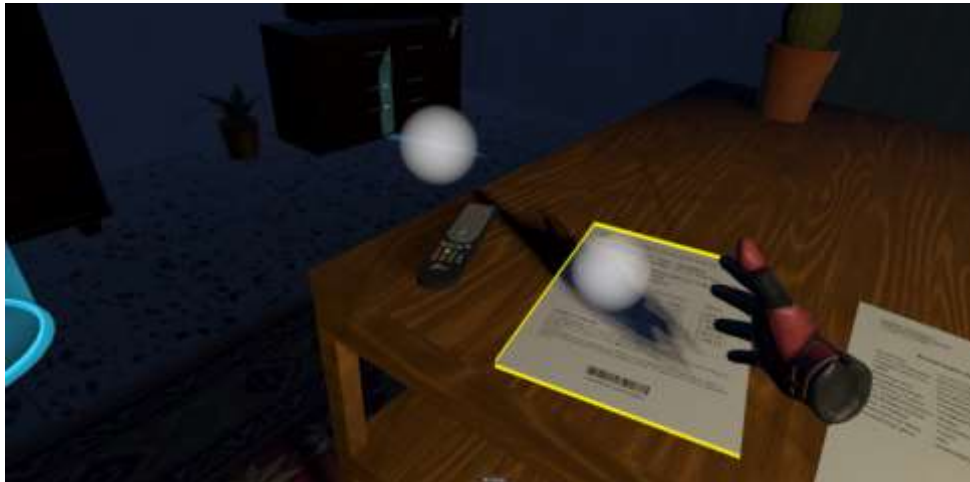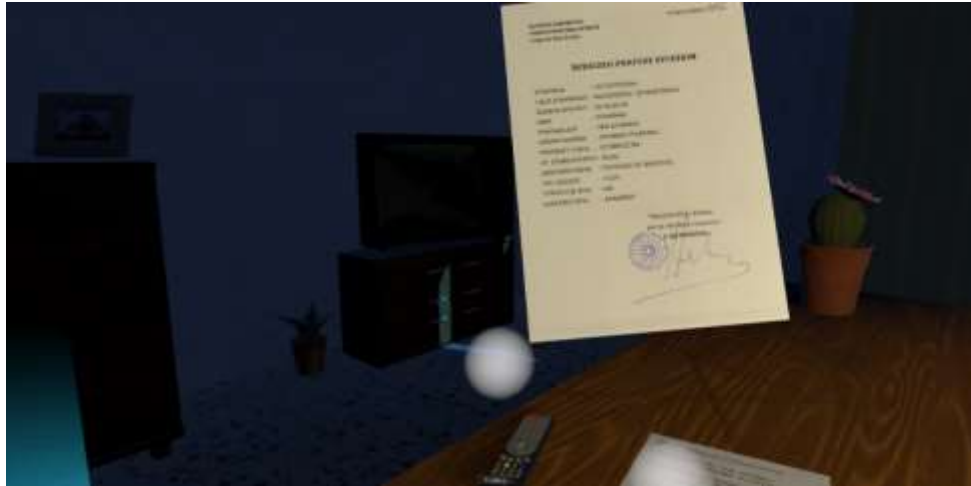
If the user (=student) is grabbing the object, then he/she can move it, read it, in case it is a piece of paper, and in general may interact with it.

The student also is able to move inside VR Rooms, according to the scenario. In this case the user may move with "teleporting". This is done with the joystick in the top of the VR controller. Once the joystick is pushed in front, a red curved beam appears and in the floor appear some light-blue spots (circles) showing the possible moves (teleports) the user may choose. If the red beam is matching to a light-blue spot, they are both becoming green and a green arrow is showing the exact position of teleporting.
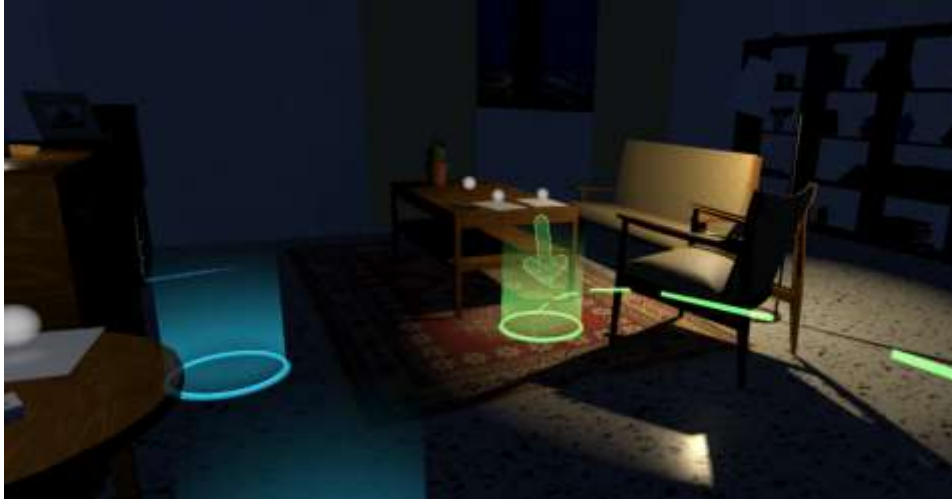
Then by releasing the joystick the teleport is taking place. The user then is moving to another point inside the room.

According to the scenario, sometimes the user may have the feeling of moving inside that virtual world. This happens, because some of the movements are automated in order to simplify interactivity and make the VR Rooms friendlier to all users.

We suggest that educators do quite a lot of training on their own, before using the software "in classroom" in order to gain experience and make their students/teams etc. feel confident with the general climate. Various technological issues should be examined and dealt with beforehand, so that nothing interrupts the learning process. This is necessary, because according to our experience such issues may prove embarrassing in the time of practical usage and damage the learning purposes. Generally, the educators have to watch all the films/rooms and train themselves thoroughly. We are sure that experience will steadily increase with the continual use of STEPs, while also any problems arising during the first sessions will fade as the usage progresses.

4.3. A proposal for doing the activity
(collaboration with Kelly Gerostergiou)

In this section we describe the structure of the educational activity as a framework common for all of them. The proposed

actions have an experiential profile and are inspired from the group-collaborative pedagogical approach, of which the advantages are known and especially desired by our method. However, where this is not possible, or where necessary, a personalized approach can be used. In an environment outside of a detention center, such as a group/organization/reintegration service, it is necessary to make an effort to form groups in order to enhance more social skills. Regarding the size of the group, we believe that the ideal number is 4 people. It should also be noted that the method could be used - or, in fact, it would be appropriate to be used- in a frame of cooperation between teachers and of co-teaching, that is to be connected with practices whose usefulness in education has been well documented (Oikonomou, 2016).

As already suggested, the proposed activity has a **three-part structure**.

The **first part** is called "before and during the experience of virtual reality" and is the part of the method that essentially prepares the students for the experience of virtual reality and even includes its watching. We suggest two activities. The first is entitled "Exploring the sides of myself" and is intended for the case of individual participation. The second is called "The course of my life in prison" and is intended for group use, ie in the case that a group together wants to implement this first part, accepting the waiting times that result from the existence of just a single piece of equipment.

The **second part** is called "after experiencing virtual reality". Here we suggest an activity which should be done in a group framework, as long as there are a few people to participate. It goes without saying that this activity can only be done by people who have completed the first part (and have seen the VR story). In this second part we essentially deal with the application of the logical model of the project as presented in previous section.

To the second part we have added another, **third phase,** which inevitably focuses on the evaluation. It is called "integration: evaluating participants from participating in the VR experience."

The issue of **evaluation** is very important and is related to the also important problem of **effectiveness** (of a program, a method,

etc., Karalis, 2005, Stamboulis, 2017). Regarding the issue of evaluation, we expose the following thoughts:

- The "performance" of the participants –by saying performance we do not simply mean their satisfaction ("I liked it/I did not like it", without explaining why), which, of course, is fully necessary - can be evaluated by the educators at the end of the activity according to the objectives/criteria, which were set out in the section on the project's logical model, as well as throughout the present chapter, or in accordance with any other specific objectives (see the paragraph "criterion of success" below). A general conclusion about "how it went" can be communicated to the participants at the end. In any case, it is commonplace in the literature that assessing the acquisition of socio-emotional skills is very difficult and should be done carefully. In our case, it is not easy to understand if a student is really moving towards change, approaching it, achieving it, etc. This is very likely, of course. And we may have relevant clues every day, beyond what we have seen our students say and during "the lesson" (direct outputs). It is true that in general the behavior of the prisoner in the school, in the prison itself, etc., can provide such indications (medium-term outcomes). Of course, the most important indication of success (impact) is life after release (=avoidance of recurrence). This does not mean that any improvement already during the time of incarceration is not a significant priority ((medium-term outcomes). As it is understood, therefore, it is good to distinguish between direct outputs, medium-term outcomes and long-term impact.

- Based on the same criteria, participants can evaluate themselves. This increases their ability to think and also helps the educator to continue.

- Teachers themselves can evaluate their teaching by taking into account the various other assessments (of students, etc.) and by reflecting on questions such as: "What was good, what was bad, what went well in the activity and what did not? How did I feel? "

- Any kind of evaluation is important for the continuing use of the method by the educator and for how further planning should be done. We recommend that the educator deal deeply with this process, as well as record a lot of information (for example, through his own observation, or by collecting the answers of the students), since it is based on this material that he can be a researcher of his/her own work.

- To help assess "what the students learned" we included in the third part a series of short activities. The activities are much focused and therefore can be used as the main assessment tool for learners. They should be included in the design.

- It is very important to evaluate the educational program both in part and in its entirety after its completion. Here we must mention the so-called *counterfactual impact analysis*, which would show how and how much the program helps in the real change of prisoners, especially after release (by comparing some who used the STEPs method with others who did not use it). This certainly requires long-term research planning, which is not within our intentions. In fact, this is very difficult, especially in the education of prisoners.

Main criterion of success

We consider it appropriate to dedicate a paragraph here to define what will show us that the team as a whole and its members individually "did well", what is the criterion of success (if we can use this expression).

It is obvious that our method does not seek to find a "correct answer", since it is not about learning a language or math exercises. The only answer that can be considered correct (and this is not necessary, either) is for the trainees to design and present a life plan for the person in the story they watched where crime has gone from the foreground, where the person acts and acts for their own good and for the good of society, where decisions are far from delinquent behavior. However, in this context, since there is no black and white

in life, many proposals can be made, as long as the emancipation of our student from crime is visible and clear.

The construction, therefore, of a robust life scenario with these characteristics is the direct result of the method we seek.

Important remarks

Our suggestions that follow in the following pages are a guide and a source of inspiration for the instructor and are adapted or differentiated according to the context each time or the content of each VR story. It is a range of actions. The method is distinguished by a variety of flexibility. For example, it is possible to confine to only one story (to a single activity), if e.g. there is no time. Also, the educator can work with a single student, because there is only one piece of equipment or because just one student wishes to implement the method.

So, if we confine to only one story -either with one person or with a group of persons- it is wise to pursue all the activities proposed here. But if we perceive the STEPs method as a full program comprising of 6 sessions (which is our desire), we should - whether working with one person or a group- apply all the activities suggested here at the first session, but in the remaining sessions we can choose some of them (or create new ones, similar to them). However, always remember <u>that, for the remaining sessions, steps 1, 2, 5, 6, 7 of the second part and one of the activities of the integration phase are absolutely necessary.</u>

As it will be understood when reading the following pages, the content of our proposals should be considered indicative to some extent. This means that it can be modified depending on the occasion. For example, in the first (individual) activity of the first part (remember that the first part has the role of introduction and preparation) it is not necessary to do all the exercises (SWOT, SMART etc.) and we can only be limited to the table.

Moreover, it should be noted that the duration of the above activities cannot be prescribed, as long as all this is not a test. This is a parameter that will depend on the practice and on those involved.

Finally, an important parameter that should concern foremost the educators and their teams are issues related to prison culture: the prison world is not the same as the "outside" world, given that, according to our experience, the multiple distortions of "outside" society, such as various divisions, inequalities, contrasts and other problems, are being exacerbated inside the prison. We do not need to expand further here on these issues, which so far have not bothered research a lot. Let us, however, insist on the issue of gender, which, especially in men's prisons, may take a frightening dimension. Therefore, some male inmates may not want to deal with our so-called "women's" stories, and this is a completely respectable right of theirs. Of course, the opposite also occurs. As mentioned above, the educator and their teams are free to decide on a case-by-case basis, regarding not only this, but also many other issues.

FIRST PART:
Before and during the experience of virtual reality

Individual activity: "Exploring the sides of myself"

Frame:
Each student participates individually. The activity can take place the day before the main activity, e.g. by four students at four different times (within the same day). The term individual activity means that the educator works with a group of up to 4 people at different moments, because there is only one piece of technological equipment. But all these people finally "meet" in the second part, which is group done. Following this activity, however, we suggest another one for the case that the students want to perform the first part in a group context and do not have problem with waiting and participating in turns (this is why they are involved in a time-covering activity).

Objectives:

The students

- ✓ To receive an impetus for the desired self-improvement
- ✓ To be prepared for the VR experience.

Steps:

__Step 1: Exploring myself__

(This step may be omitted if the educator already knows the inmate or released prisoner or, if not omitted, may be suggested to the participant for implementation in his or her own place and time).
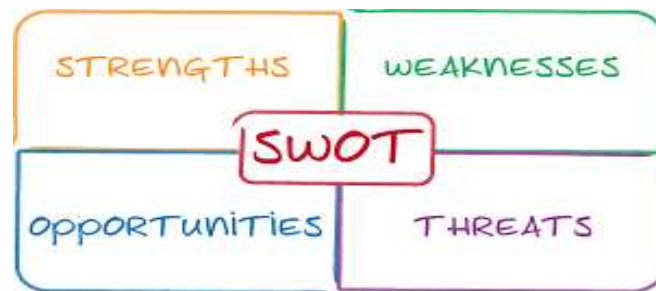
Strengths / My positive aspects and how do I exploit them	Weaknesses / My negative aspects and what do I do to handle them
1. …………………………………… 2. …………………………………… 3. ……………………………………	1. ……………………………………………… 2. ……………………………………………. 3. …………………………………………….
Feeling….	
What or who can help me both inside and outside the prison (support nets)	Which hurdles do I face with both inside and outside of prison regarding the way of my life management

1. ………………………………….	1. ……………………………………………
2. …………………………………	2. …………………………………………………
3. …………………………………	3. ………………………………………….

Implementation of step 1:

• The educator works on the above tables together with the student.

• Encourages him/her to return to them to his/her own time.

• It is possible to refer also to the definition of the so called SMART goals (the English term may vary in different languages)

Important note: Ideally this exercise is not completed in a few minutes or a day, although this does not mean that it cannot be done in this way. However, a multi-day process and much time are recommended for the student to return to it in order to set the criteria that will help him/her. It is recommended to use cardboard and post it in a visible place. Thus, "what should I do" will become an everyday experience that can gradually lead to self-improvement.

Step 2: just before the experience

The educator coordinates the student/user's preparation for what is to follow. In particular, the educator:

✓ emphasizes that (s)he is going to watch a story on their own and will try to experience the content with their own eyes

- ✓ briefly informs about the equipment, terminology and procedures of the activities that will follow,
- ✓ lays the groundwork for participation in virtual experience with the help of questions such as the following:

> • *Why are you interested in our current activity? What do you expect from this?*
>
> • *Do you like to watch or deal with other people's stories?*
>
> • *Have you ever tried to put yourself in someone else's shoes?*
>
> • *Are you interested in other people and their luck?*
>
> • *How much do other people's experiences affect you?*
>
> • *Do you tend to give your opinion or give advice to others?*

- ✓ employs demo of using VR

Step 3: Completion - watching the VR story

The educator, who is familiar with the project's electronic system, helps the user to watch the story, staying inside or outside the classroom. There is no in-depth discussion before the second part begins.

Group activity: "The course of my life in prison"

Frame:
Group of four students, VR equipment for 1 person, 1 classroom, educational materials (board, projector, A4 or A3 papers, colored markers, colored stickers, large cardboard 50x70).

Objectives:
The team members to:

- ✓ receive impetus for the desired self-improvement
- ✓ be prepared for the VR experience
- ✓ express themselves through art by recording their course in prison,
- ✓ focus on what pleases them most in their relationships with others,
- ✓ have hope and strengthen positive thinking,
- ✓ collaborate, share and compose their thoughts with others.

Steps:

Step 1: before the experience

The educator coordinates the user's preparation for what is to follow. In particular, the educator:

- ✓ emphasizes that everyone will watch a story on their own and will try to experience its contents with their own eyes (for example, a draw takes place about the order),
- ✓ briefly informs about the equipment, terminology and procedures of the activities that will follow,
- ✓ lays the groundwork for participation in virtual experience with the help of questions such as the following:
  - • *Why are you interested in our current activity? What do you expect from this?*
  - • *Do you like to watch or deal with other people's stories?*
  - • *Have you ever tried to put yourself in someone else's shoes?*
  - • *Are you interested in other people and their luck?*
  - • *How much do other people's experiences affect you?*
  - • *Do you tend to give your opinion or give advice to others?*

- ✓ employs demo of using VR.

Note for step 1:

This step can be reduced, modified and omitted in case there is already developed team dynamics, or in the case that the same group of students- users go on using all 6 rooms.

It is also noted that before using each new room it is necessary to reflect on the previous meeting of the group. This while must be calculated by the facilitator in the total time available.

Step 2: Prepare for the virtual experience

This step describes the process of using the virtual experience and suggests a safe way to frame it, to fill the gaps that arise from the existence of a single piece of equipment.

Step 2a: the VR experience

- The first user starts and it will take about 10 or 15 minutes. The equipment can be used in the room where the STEPs group is present or elsewhere.

- The same will happen with the other users that will follow.

Step 2b: "the ideal path"

The other 3 paint a path as follows. Everyone:

> • Paints their own path, which symbolizes their journey in prison from the beginning until now.
>
> • Adds symbols or words representing the important moments he experienced along the way.
>
> • Imagines and plans where this path will lead.
>
> • Reaches the day of release and reflects on issues such as "an ideal day of my life – the day I am released" or "an ideal society as I would like to see it when I am released". The reference to the ideal society is made in terms of family structure, personal and social relations, economic system, institutions, institutions, etc. It is emphasized by the instructor that the ideal must be close to reality and be

feasible. Also, learners should not occupy themselves with practical difficulties at this stage, but just focus on the dream.

• If it is the turn of the 2nd user or the 3rd user etc. but has not completed his work, (s)he can continue this work afterwards.

• *An important note for covering the time void and the absence: The educator coordinates the time and progress of the activity and emphasizes that the absence of a team member for 10 minutes symbolizes the objective difficulties that arise when a team breaks and some roles are lost or weakened, even for a short time.*

Step 3: Positive Thinking

After all 4 members of the group have gathered in the room after experiencing the VR, the students share their work with each other and a discussion follows about the positive change and the effort to compose a common dream on a large piece of cardboard. Then, there is a break.

SECOND PART:
After experiencing virtual reality

<div style="border:1px solid">

Group activity: "Searching for the role"

</div>

Frame:

A group of 4 students who have watched a VR story out of the 6 available.

Objectives:

The team members to:

- ✓ express themselves through art by recording their virtual experience,
- ✓ enhance empathy,
- ✓ give their own solution and their own message,
- ✓ collaborate, share, compare and compose their thoughts on each other about the faces and the state of the story they lived through,
- ✓ create a common ideal role for another person,
- ✓ develop a sense of solidarity, social affection, interest in fellow human beings, skills that contribute to imprisonment and lead to a reduction in crime inside and outside prison.

Steps:

Step 1: Tacit knowledge after the VR experience

After all participants have experienced the VR story, the educator asks them to remain silent, to close their eyes and to think about the story they experienced in order to achieve a kind of tacit knowledge. Silence leads to tacit knowledge, to knowledge bymeans of the spirit. In order to achieve this situation of tacit knowledge, one must impose absolute silence in themselves.

Step 2: Approach through art

The educator gives to all the members of the team a cardboard piece of about 50x70 and to each member a sheet of A4 paper for taking notes. The educator asks the group to draw a train and a railway line from one side of the piece to the other, using colors (the use of colors reveals unconsciousness and emotions). Team members can, if they wish, cover the remaining space with houses, trees, etc.

Step 3: Internal process

When the group painting is completed, the instructor asks everyone to think for themselves before the virtual experience so far.

Step 4: Key points with comparisons

The educator asks the members of the group, starting from left to right, to mark stations with dots on the cardboard, with whatever color everyone chooses (but different color each one). These symbolize the points that impressed them or touched them, or where they would differentiate their own behavior; and especially those points (if any) in which they felt that they were one of the protagonists, choosing a role (the central one or another). Students also note what they think that represents the end and the central message of the story. In particular, regardless of the actual end of the story, the student fancies his own end to the story (based on its own temperament).

Step 5: Experience sharing

At this point, one by one explains what he noted to the others.

Step 6: semi-structured discussion

The educator comments, asks questions for clarification, encourages the team for further discussion with positive messages, based on the following questions:

- ✓ *What came to your mind when you saw the first pictures in the VR story?*
- ✓ *Were you present in the virtual world? Did you take the place of the main character or another hero? / Did you become one of the protagonists yourself?*
- ✓ *Does the situation in some aspects represent you? And if so, how?*
- ✓ *Is there something that has driven you to particular reflection?*
- ✓ *What would you do differently in a supposed situation of your own and at which points?*
- ✓ *Why do people have passions and weaknesses? How do you think one can control them?*
- ✓ *What do you think is the central message of the story and what are your conclusions?*

Step 7: Reaching the top: the ideal role

The whole team is trying - ideally together, but disagreements are certainly acceptable - to compose the ideal role that the protagonist will play (in their perspective). We don't know if it will really happen; but this is how the positive thinking of the students can occur; and how this can lead to legal behavior and finally to the redemption.

INTEGRATION:
Evaluating participants

<div style="text-align:center">

1st proposed activity:
"Unraveling the tangle"

</div>

Frame:

The same as before

Objectives:

The team members to:

- ✓ describe in two sentences freely the experience they had, focusing on what they learned
- ✓ present their dominant feelings about the process
- ✓ listen to their own expectations for the future

Steps:

1) Members sit in chairs in a circle arrangement.

2) The educator holds a skein and throws it at one of the participants holding the tip in his hand.

3) The participant says a few words about what he learned and how he felt in the process and throws the tangle at another

participant, always holding the edge. This continues until the tangle is passed on to all participants.

4) The last one who has the tangle in his hands turns it back to the one from whom he got it by saying a word and / or a expectation or wish he has for his future and / or it was created by the process he lived.

5) The answers can be recorded.

<div style="border:1px solid black;">

2nd proposed activity:
"Taking a position…"

</div>

Objectives:

The team members to:

- ✓ Recognize myths and realities in relation to life issues.
- ✓ Further think about issues they have already heard or thought about.
- ✓ Be boosted to take a personal position.
- ✓ Evaluate their own views and compare them with the views of others.
- ✓ Confront with each other, if needed.

Steps:

1) Participants stand in a circle around the room

2) The educator divides the room into 4 quarters with a tape.

3) A cross with 4 points is created.

4) On sheets of A4 paper there are already written the words I AGREE, I DISAGREE, MAYBE, NO ANSWER. The sheets are placed in the 4 points of the circle.

5) The educator mentions a list of key points regarding the VR story: e.g.

- my participation helped me to take the place of the other,

- my participation made me think about my own life differently,

- My involvement made me think about my future in prison,

- this experience will affect my life and my behavior in prison,

- I learned new things,

- I will have to say about this experience μου

- or something related to the plot of the story that the educator considers important etc.

6) The answers can be recorded.

7) In each sentence that the participants hear from the educator, they must take a position in the circle, depending on what they believe, e.g. I AGREE, I DISAGREE, MAYBE, NO ANSWER.

8) The educator asks the participants to justify the reason they took the specific position and each answer gives food for comment and even a mini debate between the participants and / or the educator.

9) Then, for each opinion, the educator anazlyzes his own point of view, recapitulating what was heard.

<div style="border:1px solid black; text-align:center;">

3rd proposed activity:
"Feelings"

</div>

Objectives:

The team members to:

- ✓ Highlight key points in the story that influenced them and what they learned from them.
- ✓ Show emotions before and after the overall activity…
- ✓ Make projections in the future by emphasizing optimistic messages or possible transformations…

✓ Be motivated for self-reflection.

Steps:

1) From each story the educator selects 4 important points and photographs them (screenshots).

2) The photos are placed on the floor of the room and the students are invited to choose one. The photos can be printed 4 times each (so that some people can choose the same photo, if they wish).

3) If there is no space, the photos instead of the floor are placed on a table and the trainees are asked to choose one each, the one that impressed them. They need to justify why they chose it (how they felt at that point, how it affected them, if it reminds them of something in someone else's life or if they have something else to suggest etc.)

Alternatively: "Wake up the words from the floor", and activity with the same goals and the following steps:

1) Instead of photographs, the educator may think of a key message from each story, such as "prison education is a window to freedom, etc." or may think of a poem or verse related to the basic message of each history.

2) The educator writes each word on A4 glue and places the words confused on the floor.

3) The students are invited in groups to make a sentence or sentences with the words they see. It is not necessary for them to discover the poem or the message that the educator had in mind, as long as they create a sentence or sentences with the words they see.

4) The sentences that will be created are recorded in the table, the original poem or message is revealed and a discussion about the content follows.

5) The messages that result from this process are usually astonishing, as they enrich the original goals and highlight feelings and attitudes of transformation and self-reflection.

Overview

The previous pages presented a range of actions that compose, ideally in our opinion, what the STEPs method perceives as an educational activity. The STEPs method is not limited - nor could it be done - in simply inmates watching some 3D movies. That would make absolutely no sense. In contrast, the method advocates structuring an educational activity, in the centre of which is the virtual reality, with its strong impact. This means that virtual reality is framed by other processes that give it a rich educational meaning. We gave our proposal for this frame in the previous pages.

If we read them carefully, we understand that we have a cycle of experiential learning. We start from the problematic present of the prisoners and invite them to a reflection, either individually or in a group context (**first part: first step**). But we do not immediately ask them to think about their future. Instead, we seek this by inviting them to participate in the life of Other, in the virtual reality, and in an educational suite that follows it up (**second part: second, third step etc**.). This is neither indiscretion nor rudeness. On the contrary; it is a way of ensuring the objectivity and reliability of their thought. So the prisoner tries to interpret someone else's wrong decisions and then suggests a new life role, a new life scenario. We do not care if the illegality of the Other resembles -or does not resemble- that of our students. We care that the prisoners build decision capital on their own. This capital may refer to someone else at the moment. But that doesn't matter. The positive thinking that our students form may become their own very soon. And the ultimate goal is to create a life scenario for themselves, inside and outside the prison.

REFERENCES

Gasouka, M. (1999). "Educational techniques for incarcerated and ex-incarcerated" in: Programme of training (Adult) educators, Band II. EKEPIS (in Greek).
Kokkos, A. (1999). Chapter 4 "The first session" and chapter 5 «Educational Techniques» in: Programme of training (Adult) educators, Band II. EKEPIS (in Greek).
Fillips, N. (2006). The contribution of Experiential Learning in developing social competences: Greek Open University (in Greek).

4.4. The rooms and their plots

Story of Marios: "Back together"

Mario lived with his wife and two children in a large Macedonian village. He started as an unskilled worker in a company but soon his appetite for work and the skills he had, made him the right hand of Nikos, his boss.

His wife was fond of working and being creative and independent. The two pregnancies and the village kept her away from work, a fact that brought grievances to the couple. They opened a business, a gyros fast food shop, as they called it, but due to mishandling it did not go well and they began to owe. Suppliers were pushing, and expenses were rising.

Mario's boss opened his business during the crisis and a heavy bill remained unpaid, so the business where Mario was working shut down and Mario became jobless. But the big blow came from another direction. His son, his lad, was diagnosed with a disease that required a lot of money to treat.

He sold everything they owned, such as gold, car, and furniture. He borrowed etc., but nothing could compensate for the debts that had been accumulated. A random conversation one night in the cafe with two well-known crooks led him to a robbery. This act of his would change both his life and that of his family. He was sentenced to 15.5 years in prison.

His family lived through difficult years with no income and many debts and expenses because of their son, who needed money for his medicines and treatments. Mario was unable to help his wife in any way and she had to tackle all the problems of the family. This drove him crazier day by day. However, the good behavior he showed and an appeal he had filed led him after 6,5 years out of prison and back to his family.

The story of "Bibi"

Bibi was born in Brazil 30 years ago. Her family was wealthy, her father being a businessman, owner of one of the most famous bookstores in the city. The greatest writers of contemporary Brazilian literature were friends of her father and grandfather.

Her house was overflowing with culture. But her father was a violent man. Bibi grew up "breathing" out anger, humiliation and violence. She started dating "bad" boys, groups of violent young people who used and traded drugs. She became the boss's girlfriend.

During a trip to Italy, she is arrested as an "international drug trafficker"...

The story of "Pistolas" (=gunman)

"Pistolas", as his boss would call him, was found at a young age from Canada to Portugal.

At the age of 11 he tried drugs and at 16 he made use of heroin and cocaine. He joined the racket and quickly became the "pawn" and the "straw man": the one who would stay in prison so as to satisfy the other members of the racket.

He tried several times to disengage himself, but it was impossible. After many years he managed to escape and now lives in a coenobium with 4 other people.

He has entered a detox program, talks to psychologists, works and tries to make up for lost time with studying.

"I found my freedom in prison"

A death, a child abuse, a "girlfriend" as bait, a suitcase and an intercontinental trip.

Carla on her first trip from Brazil to Italy...

This is the story of Carla, a story of thousands of other women like she. She says:

"Hours later I went to prison... everything was terrible there. I will never forget it, as well as the awe I felt, deep inside me. I spent a lot of time sleeping and crying, but every time I woke up I was there," she says.

She went to the Art High School. For one of her works, "The Red Angel", she was awarded a prize by the Italian Minister of Culture. Now, he has been released and has become the "red angel" for many other girls who found themselves in the same position.

The story of Eva

"I grew up in a slum. On the edge of the city, a place full of rats, weeds, garbage, swarms of children fighting for food ... I was eating roots, from the ground. I still have the traces of the fights I used to give for a piece of dry bread. I was always hungry, walking around with rags, my big eyes being full of tears, with an empty stomach and bare scratched legs ... At ten I made a promise to myself: when I grow up, I will not be poor. I will have made so much money, that I can redeem all the misery that humiliated me".

This girl got revenge. She became the youngest and most up-and-coming entrepreneur in the art of making money.

"I lost my mind with the married man, penniless and unfaithful, but charming and very well networked."

He involved her in money laundering and she ended up in prison in Italy.

"The price of hospitality"

Giannis was born in Albania and moved to Greece when he was 13 years old. He is married with two children, has his own job and is a legal resident of Greece.

One summer day, he received a visit by a childhood friend from Albania. Giannis knew that this friend had some problems with the law in the past but he thought it was something past.

One night, his friend disappears. He was phone-called several times but the phone remained switched off. On the morning they learn that he was involved in a robbery and that the police arrested several members of the gang.

But it is Giannis' name that was given to the police by the leader of the gang … to save himself, and so Giannis ends up in prison for some years.

Today, he lives with his family again and tries to forget his adventure and rebuild his life.

5. Documenting our method

This chapter provides with a view of implementing the method, as it was formed through various processes that we undertook for this purpose during our project.

Educators narrate the implementation

In this section we quote some cases of application of the method as recorded by the educators. It should be noted that each feedback was a key factor in the process of developing the method. The reason we publish these case studies is not only this, but also the fact that the eventual educator can draw various ideas, concerns, etc. on them.

Pilot study

The pilot study took place after the construction of the first room/video was completed and was carried out in early autumn 2021. It was implemented in almost the same period in all the partner countries of the project in order to provide a comparative assessment (it was scheduled for the spring, but due to the health crisis of COVID it was forced to be postponed).

The pilot study was conducted based on the following questionnaire. This questionnaire has a central place and should be seen as a guide for the next users of the method. It contains all the important issues and questions that can occupy the heart and mind of the educators. The answers provided during the pilots (of which the questionnaire is a part) provide some added value to the effort.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS IN THE PILOT STUDY

The first rooms are ready to be used. All partners of the project are going to implement the first activity in their countries. This first activity is very important, since it is a pilot study. Answering this questionnaire is necessary for the effectiveness of the method and the implementation of the project. At the same time your answers will build a rich collection of case studies that will be included in the Guide.

The questionnaire guides you to record fully your experience. You have to study it carefully before answering and the answers must be detailed (not less than 1500 words in total). The questionnaire is so constructed, that it helps you produce a continuing narration, which is what we need. It has 5 sections and none of the questions should remain unanswered.

In order to answer, you need to use various data collection techniques during the activity, since it is based on these that you will write your answers. We recommend most of all that you do <u>observation</u> of the process (and take notes), as well as record the students' oral testimonies and collect their written materials, some of which it would be good to quote in this report. Don't forget, if you have the opportunity and are allowed, to take pictures (from the whole process and from students' materials) and attach them.

We emphasize again that what you have to do is to implement an as full as possible application as described in chapter 4 of this guide focused on the first room. Your role is important both as an educator and as a researcher. Good luck!

1. DESIGN OF THE ACTIVITY

1.1. Explain when, where, with whom or which group of people and why you used the method.

How did you present your initiative of using the method to your colleagues?

1.2. How did you motivate your students to get interested in your work with STEPS?

1.3. Did your students want to participate and why? Describe their expectations.

1.4. What educational goals did you define for this room and why?

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITY

Describe in detail the implementation of the activity, its structure and duration. Did you work with colleagues before, during and after it? If so, describe the reasons for the usefulness of the collaboration and how it went.

3. LEARNERS

3.1. How did you evaluate the students' performance (immediate results=outputs)?

3.2. Describe in detail the immediate results (outputs) of the learning activity that you implemented.

4. EDUCATORS

4.1. Did you assess your teaching or ask other colleagues' or friends' for their opinion? How did you do this and what were the results?

4.2. After your experience, do you think the 3D element has added value to the effectiveness of the learning that we seek to achieve? Comment on this issue.

4.3. Has there been any benefit for you from the experience and which?

5. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE METHOD

5.1. In your opinion as the person who has already applied the method, how do you perceive the effectiveness of STEPs method? Please, refer to students, educators and to prisoners' education in general.

Describe any other results that you think arose or can arise from the method.

With what arguments would you suggest or would you not suggest the use of the method in other schools of prisoners etc.?

5.2. Could the STEPS method be used in prisons that do not have an educational structure and teaching staff? If so, why and in what way?

5.3. Submit any comments that were not covered above.

Results of pilots

PORTUGAL

1. DESIGN OF THE ACTIVITY

1.1. Explain when, where, with whom or which group of people and why you used the method.

How did you present your initiative of using the method to your colleagues?

The pilot study in Portugal was conducted in October 2021, in a 3-hour session, with low-skilled adults, men and women, who were attending training to increase their educational level. And 2 adult educators. Virtual environment interaction was used, using devices suitable for VR, such as visualization helmets, gloves, three-dimensional mice, positioning sensors, among others, which were presented at the beginning of the session.

The presentation of the STEPS method was presented to fellow trainers in a meeting/session the week before this session, explaining the methodology to be applied to trainees and where fellow trainers were able to clarify their doubts about it and give suggestions.

The VR application was used because of the face-to-face or immersed characteristic of the system's user, relative to his sensations in the real world, as a consequence of what he experiences in the virtual world, which will have a considerable impact when the goal is to provoke, above all, self-reflection.

1.3. How did you motivate your students to get interested in your work with STEPS?

To motivate students to become interested in the work developed in the STEPS project, first, a presentation of the project was made, based on the Guide made for the project. The objectives of

the project, its priorities and the materials developed were presented. After this presentation, and focusing on the fact that the material developed will be for use by teachers and trainers and that it aims to help repress the negative feelings of prisoners and contribute to their reintegration into society, the students expressed total interest and curiosity about the project.

1.4. Did your students want to participate and why? Describe their expectations.

As already mentioned, the students showed a lot of interest and curiosity about the project, because they consider it to be an innovative project, because of the importance of the intervention in this specific target audience, because they consider that this form of intervention can also be applied to other audiences (like them, for example). The students wanted to better understand what real impact this method can have, even because all of them have heard some story or have a relative or acquaintance who has gone through the experience of a prisoner who could benefit from the application of this method. Another reason is that the application of this method in this target group can bring many advantages in terms of social intervention, as it helps them in their reintegration.

1.5. What educational goals did you define for this room and why?

For this class, the educational objectives set for the trainees were:

General Objective: To identify the strengths and weaknesses of the applicability of the STEPS method.

Specific Objectives:

- Know how to use the Virtual Reality equipment;

- Description and Reflection of the story experienced through the VR "Back Together";

- Description of the experience (feelings, sensations, difficulties encountered, etc.)

- Identify advantages of the experienced method;

- Propose suggestions, diversified alternatives of application of the method;

By developing the session focusing on these objectives, we will have a clear perception of what will be more effective, what can be selected, adapted and applied in future sessions.

2.   IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITY

Describe in detail the implementation of the activity, its structure and duration. Did you work with colleagues before, during and after it? If so, describe the reasons for the usefulness of the collaboration and how it went.

The evaluation recommended to assess the degree of mastery of the competencies targeted by the training, by the participants, within the scope of the defined objectives, was based on the active participation of the trainees, appealing to their ability to reflect and share on the theme and experience.

The trainees were guided by the trainer, and were always supported in the course of the session and in the application of the method.

After the virtual experience, each trainee makes a brief comment about the virtual experience, taking into account what he felt, what he liked the most, the main difficulties and what impact he had with it.

Then, there is a group activity, with 4 elements, to analyze and reflect about the experienced virtual activity, divided in two parts:

1.	Analysis of the virtual experience itself, discussing: equipment used, sensations experienced, images visualized, sounds heard, and the whole context of the experience;

2.	In the second part, a Case Study is carried out, to analyze the story experienced virtually, identifying behaviors that they consider wrong, correct behaviors, attitudes, decision making of the characters in the story, identifying alternatives.

Participants are asked, to answer the questions:

• 	What do I identify as wrong behaviors/decisions?

• 	What do I identify as correct behaviors/decisions?

• 	What would I change? What would I do?

• 	What are the alternatives to the visualized decisions/behaviors? How could I change/ have avoided the worst outcome?

• 	What now? What would I do? How would I act to overcome this situation?

• 	Identification of steps to take, taking into account your future.

At the end of this activity, there was a presentation of the results of the work done, with an oral presentation of the results of what was discussed, making a reflection together and where the trainer also added some points for discussion, encouraging trainees to give positive answers, regarding:

What came to your mind when you saw the first pictures in the VR story?

Were you present in the virtual world? Did you take the place of the main character or another hero? / Did you become one of the protagonists yourself?

Does the situation in some aspects represent you? And if so, how?

Is there something that has driven you to particular reflection?

What would you do differently in a supposed situation of your own and at which points?

Why do people have passions and weaknesses? How do you think one can control them?

What do you think is the central message of the story and what are your conclusions?

At the end of the training, by way of conclusion, a reflection was made to evaluate the session, taking into account the objectives initially defined and where each participant was also asked for suggestions for improvement to adapt the method to the target audience, asking the participants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the session, in order to collect feedback.

3.   LEARNERS

3.1. How did you evaluate the students' performance (immediate results=outputs)?

The evaluation recommended to assess the degree of mastery of the competencies targeted by the training, by the participants, within the scope of the defined objectives, was based on the active participation of the trainees, appealing to their ability to reflect and share on the theme and experience.

Evaluation was also carried out through group work and the presentation of the results and consequent final reflection.

Through the activities developed and the use of this new technology, it was verified, during the session, the understanding of the use of the new technology, sensitization to put themselves in the other's place, development of the ability to reflect on the explored theme, and development of the critical capacity, taking into account the different points of view of a certain situation.

3.2. Describe in detail the immediate results (outputs) of the learning activity that you implemented.

This session allowed students to recognize and reflect on one of the basic pillars of citizenship, such as Justice, and how it is urgent to provide it in learning devices, recognizing that skills are also acquired in non-formal contexts. Regardless of the nature, culture and mission of the STEPS methodology, innovation was envisioned as a central and pedagogical process.

4.   EDUCATORS

4.1. Did you assess your teaching or ask other colleagues' or friends' for their opinion? How did you do this and what were the results?

My teaching was evaluated by oral feedback, gathered from trainees and colleagues, Adult Educators who participated in the session and by self-assessment, taking into account the various other evaluations (from students, etc.) and reflecting on questions such as, "What was good, what was bad, what went well in the activity and what didn't? How did I feel?"

All participants maintained their enthusiasm throughout the session, which was manifested through participation and questions throughout the session.

According to the Adult Education colleagues who participated in the activity, these sessions capture the interest of adults in general, even those with lower qualifications, because they are dynamic, interactive sessions in which they actively participate. In addition, they are innovative, using virtual technology as a means to develop skills and acquire knowledge.

4.2. After your experience, do you think the 3D element has added value to the effectiveness of the learning that we seek to achieve? Comment on this issue.

3D adds value, in the sense that, besides being an innovation and this in itself already captures the interest, it helps in the emotional development and development of self-confidence, key aspects when it comes to our target audience, prisoners and ex-prisoners.

4.3. Has there been any benefit for you from the experience and which?

As a professional in Adult Education, I can say that the use of this technology is an asset to be used not only with prisoners, but with all adults who are in training and who belong to disadvantaged groups, so that they can increase and develop skills, including emotional, personal and social and self-confidence, and thus be able to improve their professional situation more easily.

3D, besides arousing the curiosity of adults, also facilitates understanding.

This technology is still somewhat new, but its potential is incalculable.

5. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE METHOD

5.1.   In your opinion as the person who has already applied the method, how do you perceive the effectiveness of STEPs method? Please, refer to students, educators and to prisoners' education in general.

The productivity frontier can be considered the best reference in this project regarding product quality, in this case, specifically, Virtual Reality games in permanent operations, internal or external benchmarking, leading to the importance of good behavior by citizens.

Describe any other results that you think arose or can arise from the method.

A growing interest and curiosity on the part of adults and adult educators to experience new sensations with an expectation of results that reflect the development of their personal, social, professional and learning skills. One more incentive for them to continue Lifelong Learning.

On the other hand, it allows us to look at training, in an innovative perspective, consistent, in admitting first of all that the user, as well as his formative relations that he expects, allow the design of something eventually new and different.

With what arguments would you suggest or would you not suggest the use of the method in other schools of prisoners etc.?

The transfer of good skills favors the identification and development of professional profiles, related to the transferability of good practices, the repetition of these models in other contexts, and the integration of these methods for trainers, training managers, animators, rehabilitation and social insertion mediators, tutors,

psychologists, supervisors, whose permanent training must be reflected in the training scenarios.

5.2.   Could the STEPS method be used in prisons that do not have an educational structure and teaching staff? If so, why and in what way?

This method can be used in prisons that do not have an educational structure and teaching staff if they are willing and open to create partnerships with schools or entities that provide adult education, so that they organize training using this STEPS method.

5.3.   Submit any comments that were not covered above.

In the educational context, there are many successful cases, combining information and communication technologies similar to the STEPS project.

The technology used in STEPS, can promote improvements in knowledge sharing between students and teachers/adult educators. Based on the results obtained through this activity, it is clear that the main driver for using Virtual Reality is to aid in the understanding of the taught content, as well as the motivation of the students.

As a less positive aspect, the difficulty of teachers/trainers to develop the used activities stands out, as well as, in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the teaching/learning processes, being also up to the school/formal education, not to accompany the students in relation to the use of the methodology, staying at the margin that the student has outside the school.

The students/trainees of the 21st century are very different from those for whom the school/formal education model was

created. Thus, the use of these new technologies can be an important ally to motivate students in educational processes.

ITALY

1.   DESIGN OF THE ACTIVITY

1.1.   Explain when, where, with whom or which group of people and why you used the method.

CPIA 1 has not yet been able to install the VR in its final location at the CCF in Rebibbia where the stories of the rooms have been collected and we planned from the beginning of the project to use them. The closure started in March 2020 and ended in September, with the beginning of the lessons with the inmates.

Our VR is not yet placed at the CCF, where we lack the ability to update it online with the latest stories in progress. We will only be able to bring them in when all six rooms are active and tested. Lw activities are in progress but not completed. We are also waiting for the authorization and the identification of a suitable activity space by the Penitentiary Institute that hosts the school.

At the reopening of the school activities in September 2021 we have put in place the first VR in the external location of CPIA1 waiting to install them as soon as ready to use them ala CCF planning to experiment them individually

1. In case studies with former inmates in foster care and students of the CPIA1 network in the area

This activity was planned in June by the project staff in order to build up a small list of ex-prisoners whose cases we were aware of. It was a small group of women of different ages, foreigners or Italians, some mothers, temporarily entrusted to social services and on probation, some waiting for documents for expatriation, others waiting for measures of the magistrate and in more or less restrictive regimes, or

already independent but housed in protected facilities, or returned to the family or the usual contexts of life and rehabilitation programs.

We planned how to establish an initial contact in order to know their willingness to participate and motivate them through an initial individual motivational interview and to ask them to participate in a moment of discussion with the teachers and then in a group of comparison and sharing. for the gender considerations set out in this guide we also decided to start with female stories and then discuss whether to introduce male stories.

We thought about the possibility of forming a small group of observers, teachers and participants for a test of the pedagogical functioning of VR, to record its emotions and design its future use with prisoners, we chose to start with a female story.

In September at the beginning of the year not everyone was available anymore, mostly returned to their foreign countries or transferred and living too far from Rome. Moreover, we had not reckoned with the self-censorship, shame and desire to forget felt by former prisoners when they returned to their families, found their friends and sometimes their old jobs. None of them, in fact, wanted to expose themselves to the suffering of retracing mistakes they considered outdated and did not want to think about the past anymore as they were sure they had changed their lives forever even if they had participated in the collection of the stories in teaching or individually.

2. With enrolled in CPIA1 courses, adults from CPIA1 headquarters identified as borderline and at risk of ending up in petty crime, reported by their teachers.

The planning and method are deferred to the actual presence of such people and the possibility of hooking them up, currently none present the requirements.

3.   With mixed groups of students and teachers observers and to collect their experiences and evaluations and proposals for use on the rehabilitative impact to broaden the knowledge of the prison environment by those who have little information about prison and prisoners. In addition, the stories of others intrigue and solicit immedesimation or interesting distance to be made explicit for educational purposes.

However, it has been impossible for us so far to identify at-risk students or groups of observers in the CPIA1 courses, which have been distributed among many difficulties, for less than three months, after the distance learning activities, and still in an emergency phase. All this has taught the staff to change and redesign themselves continuously and has made necessary an in-progress planning for the VRs that are still waiting to work on school in prison.

For the planned activities with the prisoners when, in January, we count to install the VR in the prison and structure a biweekly workshop of activities with the groups with the proposals of the guide adapted to the contexts and the participants.

Of the target, identified in June 2021 described above, only one woman, a former prisoner now free, graduated, working, engaged in a new life, was available and represented the first case we experienced and observed with the VR3 of the story "In prison I found my freedom". However, her case is a very particular and somehow unique case. In fact, the girl is the protagonist of the story

of room n.4 and she did not want to hide in anonymity when, as a STEPs participant entrusted to social services, an art high school student and a guest in a foster home, she wrote her own life story to make it public in order to make people think and encourage other prisoners to change.

So she consciously chose to enter "her" story, to talk about it and to allow the video shooting from which the video Carla's Story was taken, which we presented at the final event to document it. She chose it for herself and for all the others like her.

His participation was an opportunity for us to better understand the scope of the immersion in the room and to identify some of its crucialities. (see point 2)

We have not yet worked with groups of when the VRs will finally be in their final location in January we planned to experiment them in the groups of the first level course and to include the activity in the planned Professional School Orientation. A second phase of collaboration with the educational area of the I.P. will be realized later with a specific common project, as anticipated in the final event of 28.10.2021

How did you present your initiative to use the method to your colleagues?

Over the three years, CPIA1 teachers have been regularly updated on the progress of the STEPs project and many have participated in the workshops offered as part of FIERIDA (September 2019 and May 2020) where we have presented what we have achieved in teaching stories for virtual reality in rehabilitation in institutional education pathways.

The activity with VR was described to the teachers' board and proposed in its general lines, it was welcomed with interest by the teachers. Some teachers declared themselves available to identify the most suitable students and to plan the actual activity with the room after a motivational interview. This possibility has not yet been realized because of the impossibility of identifying suitable students.

1.2. How did you motivate your students to be interested in your work with STEPS?

We are motivating and arousing interest by using the experience of teaching stories: in the workshops we use autobiographical and narrative moments, discovering the pleasure and the healing power of stories; we learn the richness of different points of view in group work and we use as much as possible different expressive languages, despite the anti Covid restrictions.

For VR Our first step was to show on the international day against gender violence the docufiction Save the Face made in 2017 with female student prisoners that shows a path of empowerment and reorientation that ends the protagonist of Carla's story saying "in prison I found my freedom".

Then each person shared their emotions and pointed out a significant moment. The key words were then collected on a poster. The next activity involves putting ourselves in the shoes of the women in the film and imagining a future for them outside the prison walls.

1.3. Did your students want to participate and why? Describe their expectations.

Activities with VR raise many expectations: curiosity first and foremost. Among our members many have no experience of virtual environments, of technology beyond the use of social, WhatsApp or phone messaging. They are all now waiting to put on their helmets, goggles and handlebars and enter virtual reality!

1.4. What educational goals have you defined for this room and why?

General objectives

- Acquire tools to know oneself and others, define and express emotions, feelings, thoughts.
- Shifting the point of view
- Improving social skills, listening, confrontation, self-reflection and meta-reflection
- Scholastic and professional orientation; activating positive thinking and planning skills
- Expressive and linguistic objectives Identification of narrative structure and key points
- identifying with the lives of others to
- Orientation purposes

Objective of the first observation with VR4 carried out with the protagonist

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITY

Describe in detail the implementation of the activity, its structure and duration. Did you work with colleagues before, during and after it? If so, describe the reasons for the usefulness of the collaboration and how it went.

2.1 In the classroom with women prisoners (ongoing *activity)*

a. stimulation

For VR Our first step was to show on the international day against gender-based violence the docufiction *Save the Face* made in 2017 with female student prisoners that shows a path of empowerment and reorientation that ends the protagonist of Carla's story, in her first year of prison and school, who says "in prison I found my freedom". (see above)

Then each person shared their emotions and pointed out a significant moment. The key words were then collected on a poster. The next activity involves putting ourselves in the shoes of the women in the film and imagining a future from the prison walls.

Duration 4 hours

Rationale:

Group vision of the video Carla's story in continuity with the vision of the docufiction

Listening to feedback and discussion

Identification of the key points of his change and new life (see later)

a. Technical education

Only with VR present will we teach the group and individually what it is and how to use it, also using the play aspect

Basic structure

   b. Identification of a tutor to guide navigation

c. Individualized experiences

d.   Group work of sharing articulated in more phases, as indicated by the guidelines to analyze one's own involvement or non-involvement; the shift of point of view in living the experience of another, advice or suggestions; identification of the turning points of the narrative ... similarities and differences ...

e.   Personal writings, the imagery of a possible new life

f.   Construction of a life project and the steps to implement it

g.   Telling the group about your project

VR4 CASE STUDY

a.   Identification of the tutor for navigation

b.   Presentation to the tutor of the student protagonist of the story

c.   Technical instruction (by the tutor)

d.   Division of observation and documentation tasks

e.   Common identification of test objectives and issues

f.   Development of key questions (maieutic methodology)

g.   Listening to feedback

h.   Comparison of comments, viewing of documentation

i.   Final return

j.   Staff evaluation of the experience

Describe in detail the implementation of the activity, its structure and duration. Did you work with colleagues before, during, and after? If yes, describe the reasons for the usefulness of the collaboration and how it went.

3. LEARNERS

1. How did you assess student performance (immediate results = output)?

*Not assessable for a group (*see above)

The only performance carried out was evaluated very positively by the staff

3.2. Describe in detail the immediate results (output) of the learning activity you implemented.

The immediate result, even within the limits of our direct experience with VR, was to arouse interest, curiosity, motivation

4. EDUCATORS

4.1. Did you evaluate your teaching or ask other colleagues "or friends" for their opinion? How did you do this and what were the results?

The method and the first results of STEPs were presented at the conference in an articulate way and aroused great interest in all colleagues and teachers and managers of other schools.

4.2. After your experience, do you think the 3D element has added value to the learning effectiveness we are trying to achieve? Comment on this issue.

We are not yet able to evaluate its effectiveness. For now, thanks to the only test carried out, I can say that browsing in a specially created virtual environment with real life stories is extremely seductive and involving, provoking disorientation and curiosity without excluding a very interesting playful aspect.

For our VR4 witness 3D reality was very effective because it "*makes you see*" what you can hear or say or remember ... but looking at it is all different". She really relived and saw her own dramatic experience: she was moved and wished she could caress the face of the imprisoned girl, the one from before, touch her, hug her... she couldn't do it, she cried. We suspended for a while to listen to her and let her decide. The identification was very strong and shocking, she didn't expect such an intense emotion. Neither did we teachers. Then she wanted to continue. One of her sculptures made at school in the prison caught her eye, it was a joy for her to see it that surprised her and made her discover interactivity after the initial disappointment. Yes she could move around the room now! From the outside we could see her getting up on her tiptoes to push a button, laughing and having fun in the very unusual space and then getting excited again, finding herself so strong and determined and on her way to that new life that is just now taking shape and every day is more and more real.

At the end we collected and transcribed keywords:

EMOTION-INVOLVEMENT-CURIOSITY-DIFFICULTY-EXPULSION-INTEREST-AMUSEMENT

You can listen to the original Italian version in the video where they were documented, available on the CPIA1 website.

- "I know my life and my story well. I have already said it many times in front of others and even from a microphone, I know that it was right to do so since I began to remember at school in prison of me as a child and to understand that in the abuse suffered and in the deep devaluation of myself that followed

and that was resurfacing in my memory, was the origin of my error and my crime and all the pain and not understanding me that was destroying me. Precisely for this reason today I did not expect such intense emotions, in fact I had never seen myself so well ... as I looked at myself and together I was me. Inside and outside together. I felt happiness seeing my virtual self coming out of the prison. Like me even if a little differently.... I'm even more proud of my path, I'm ready to let go of this story, to let go of it for the others, to give them confidence and say that you can have done a very serious crime and without justification in the eyes of others. But if you are able to understand yourself and recognize your deep motivations, you will not win innocence but you can make peace with yourself and find your chance to redeem yourself forever. Now there is no need for me to tell it, my story can go free on its own without me for others, because there will never be others like me again".

Result achieved, we teachers think, through his conquered new life, still excited in our turn.

4.3. Has there been any benefit to you from the experience and which one?

Beneficial motives considered the value of the experience of Carla's story that we will soon show to the current members continuing the activity started and described previously here.

5. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE METHOD

5.1. According to you, as a person who has already applied the method, how do you perceive the effectiveness of the STEPs method? Please refer to students, educators and prisoners' education in general.

Our experience with VR is too limited to assess its effectiveness

Describe any other results that you believe have arisen or may arise from the method.

I think that the method favours listening and sociability, supports the overcoming of prejudice and mistrust towards the other, opportunely inserted in activities programmed in a flexible way can contribute to overcome bullying, racism. But above all it helps the acceptance of the other and or the recognition of a similarity.

Brings you closer to innovative technology

By what arguments would you suggest or not suggest the use of the method in other schools of prisoners etc.?

With the experience of the project and ours that we hope to implement and disseminate as soon as possible in all appropriate venues and that has aroused great interest in those who participated in the recent conference and final event of STEPs CPIA1

5.2. Can the STEPS method be used in prisons that do not have an educational structure and teaching staff? If so, why and how?

No, I think for now that it should be "accompanied" by tutors and mediators such as teachers and educators trained for the purpose.

5.3. Send any comments that have not been addressed

As described above CPIA1 staff at the moment just started Sin here we find it interesting, and effective. We hope to implement it and document it through CPIA1 and blog channels as soon as possible, but after STEPs is finished unfortunately.

GREECE

1.   DESIGN OF THE ACTIVITY

1.1.   Explain when, where, with whom or which group of people and why you used the method.

How did you present your initiative of using the method to your colleagues?

The method was used in the 2nd SDE of Larissa Prison. A group of 4 detainees participated in the pilot application. SDE teachers were informed and attended part of the process themselves. The reason that the STEPs method was used is because we believe that the inmates of the 2nd SDE of Larissa - due to their familiarity with experiential approaches - could participate and interact with the STEPs product giving a clear picture of its effectiveness. The partners of the "STEPS" partnership work together to create an innovative training material, based on technology and the use of experiential experiences of incarcerated or released prisoners, to provide support to detainees in prisons to prepare the person for their transition from prison to society the necessary supplies to continue as equal citizens, with obligations and rights. STEPS has as its main goal the transformation and personal development of the population of prisoners, freeing them from ignorance, social clumsiness and "disability" and offering them support and remedial experiences to escape the vicious circle of marginalization, crime and unemployment. The way to break this cycle is to cultivate confidence in themselves and in society, so that they can survive by using legal means and avoid relapse. In this context, a special role is given to trainers and program managers as facilitators, animators and

supporters, as well as to prisoners who act as role models and partners, having the role of mentor to other inmates or prisoners.

1.3.   How did you motivate your students to get interested in your work with STEPS?

We described the project to the detainees and stimulated their initial interest with virtual reality and the use of equipment. Some had no such experience before and found it an extremely interesting opportunity. Then we talked about real stories and how they could influence their own thoughts and feelings, through an experiential approach.

1.4.   Did your students want to participate and why? Describe their expectations.

The trainees wanted to participate, as we already mentioned in the previous answer. The expectations can be summarized as follows: development of technological skills, fun, participation with the opportunity to express their opinion, anxiety to see how this whole project could affect their own lives.

1.5.   What educational goals did you define for this room and why?

We chose the story "Together again". After the end of the policy implementation the trainees will be able to: • actively participate in learning • cooperate with each other for a purpose • develop a positive attitude towards change • prepare and think of a new life.

2.   <u>IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITY</u>

Describe in detail the implementation of the activity, its structure and duration. Did you work with colleagues before, during

and after it? If so, describe the reasons for the usefulness of the collaboration and how it went.

• We informed the SDE teachers about our method • She proposed 4 prisoners • We set 4 teaching hours for a pilot application of the method • The detainees were prepared by us on a psychological level, using warm-up questions and on a technical level. • Each prisoner individually saw the story "Together again" (10 'each). The other 3 detainees were working on experiential exercises related to exploring themselves and their own path in prison. • When all 4 detainees gained virtual reality experience, they entered a circle and were asked to close their eyes in order for the "silent knowledge" and the internal process to occur. • Followed a series of experiential activities, as provided in the Project guide. The semi-structured discussion that took place in relation to the story they attended gave the impetus for the learners to unlock themselves, to go deep into the other's life, to identify mistakes and to be led to cooperation in the ideal role. It should be noted that the cooperation with the fellow teachers of SDE was very important as they themselves became acquainted with the method and can apply it with other prisoners in the future.

3.	LEARNERS

3.1.	How did you evaluate the students' performance (immediate results=outputs)?

What impressed us and is evaluated positively was the immediate response of the trainees to the series of activities BEFORE - AGAINST - AFTER the experience of virtual reality. For the evaluation we used the learning activity of the CIRCLE, as it is described in the guide, as through it emotions emerged and the

prisoners showed that they got a significant impetus to think about planning their own life from the beginning.

3.2. Describe in detail the immediate results (outputs) of the learning activity that you implemented.

As we said, the prisoners who participated were prepared for the experience they will live. They did not just watch or just hear the story of virtual reality, but experienced it. The experience, that is, was deep, as, due to virtual reality, they became the "others" for about 10 'of the hour. Each participant had the opportunity to reflect and develop an internal dialogue about the story. Then, on the occasion of the story that they would watch and through experiential approaches, group activities lasting about 3 hours were implemented. In particular, the way they entered deep into the "wrong" life of the other, entering the three-dimensional "rooms", was analyzed, in order to identify cases, ways of thinking and actions that led the hero to confinement and its consequences. They recognized the wrong decisions of the hero and through the activities they had the opportunity to externalize their thoughts. They went deeper into the biography of the "other" and "studied" wrong moves. Thus, they were able to "suggest" ideas for starting a new life. In other words, the prisoners were given the privilege and the right to express their opinion and to find the "ideal role" for the hero / heroine. The ultimate goal is to explore themselves and encourage the development of an internal process that leads to their improvement and change. Empowering prisoners to think and improve themselves, to redesign their lives on another basis, trying to think positively, is the key.

4.   EDUCATORS

4.1. Did you assess your teaching or ask other colleagues' or friends' for their opinion? How did you do this and what were the results?

My teaching was evaluated by the prisoners with the "Pandora's box". They threw pieces of paper in this box and wrote down their impressions.

4.2. After your experience, do you think the 3D element has added value to the effectiveness of the learning that we seek to achieve? Comment on this issue.

It has added value as thus exploited a kind of art that gives impetus to spend unconsciously important messages to the participants.

4.3. Has there been any benefit for you from the experience and which?

Significant benefit as I found that prisoners can still dream.

5. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE METHOD

5.1. In your opinion as the person who has already applied the method, how do you perceive the effectiveness of STEPs method? Please, refer to students, educators and to prisoners' education in general.

It is a method that initially impresses because of the equipment and the virtual reality approach on which it is based. However, in the process, one finds that with a story as an occasion and with the possibility of the prisoners to "get into each other's shoes" horizons are opened for them to see things from a different perspective, to start thinking about their own life from point zero that marked them, from the point where they remember telling their own story and looking for mistakes, omissions and ways to improve even now. To

redesign their own path even in detention conditions, improving their lives inside the walls and preparing for tomorrow outside prison.

Describe any other results that you think arose or can arise from the method.

I found that this method could be used in non-detainees, eg relatives of detainees or the general population, in order to be able to enter their psychology and get to know this world, developing empathy and social awareness. With what arguments would you suggest or would you not suggest the use of the method in other schools of prisoners etc.? • Avant-garde • Technological skills • Empathy and awareness • 'Push for thinking and learning for action

5.2. Could the STEPS method be used in prisons that do not have an educational structure and teaching staff? If so, why and in what way?

It could be by selecting prisoners from the Prison Administration. Prisoners do not have to be schoolchildren. On the contrary, an application to people unfamiliar with educational processes may have given results that can be used in different ways.

5.3. Submit any comments that were not covered above.

Everything is covered.

Analysis of cases

Previous case studies are presented here in a 4-axis analysis which are as follows: Preparation: taking the initiative, existence and motivation, setting goals, etc. Implementation: implementation process, any collaborations, etc. Benefits for learners: ways of

evaluation and immediate results Teacher reflection: activity self-evaluation, teacher benefits, method effectiveness

FIRST AXIS

In general, the teachers who took part in the pilot studies showed significant interest in their implementation, as well as in its application in a pilot test. A major problem was the pandemic which certainly limited the ease of carrying out actions like this, bringing to the fore many other obstacles (eg permanent closure of a prison in Italy). All the participating educators considered it important to prepare the activity as fully as possible, while at the same time they had high expectations for the possible benefits. However, various groups were used, such as in Italy (but also elsewhere), where former prisoners, teachers and so on were used. In fact, Italians and Greeks cooperated mainly with prisoners, while the Portuguese with former prisoners. The participants motivated in the best possible way the prospective learners of the method by making references to the history and philosophy of the project. Various more formal events were also used to arouse interest, persuasion as to the value of biographical discussion, and virtual reality itself clearly played an important role. Therefore, the students/learners who were informed and accepted the offer of participation showed every possible interest to take part in the activity. The learners wanted to see what benefit they could get and how much they could be helped. We would say that their expectations were subsumed in a holistic attitude which contained short-term and long-term goals such as: immediate impact, cooperation with the team, personal benefits. Through the pilot test the participating teachers wanted to see different things in

terms of the applicability of the method: what difficulties may arise, what problems will arise, etc. However, they sought to see what the method itself offers in practice such as: meeting social and emotional goals, helping learners to gain self-knowledge and strength, trying to plan their new life, etc.

SECOND AXIS

The participants planned, as can be seen from the above narratives, the execution of the activity very carefully. We notice that the Portuguese partner designed a very well-structured action, inspired by this guide. Thus, we read

The trainees were guided by the trainer, and were always supported in the course of the session and in the application of the method.

After the virtual experience, each trainee makes a brief comment about the virtual experience, taking into account what he felt, what he liked the most, the main difficulties and what impact he had with it.

Then, there is a group activity, with 4 elements, to analyze and reflect about the experienced virtual activity, divided in two parts:

1. Analysis of the virtual experience itself, discussing: equipment used, sensations experienced, images visualized, sounds heard, and the whole context of the experience;

2. In the second part, a Case Study is carried out, to analyze the story experienced virtually, identifying behaviors that they consider wrong, correct behaviors, attitudes, decision making of the characters in the story, identifying alternatives.

Participants are asked, to answer the questions:

• What do I identify as wrong behaviors/decisions?

• What do I identify as correct behaviors/decisions?

• What would I change? What would I do?

• What are the alternatives to the visualized decisions/behaviors? How could I change/ have avoided the worst outcome?

- *What now? What would I do? How would I act to overcome this situation?*

- *Identification of steps to take, taking into account your future.*

At the end of this activity, there was a presentation of the results of the work done, with an oral presentation of the results of what was discussed, making a reflection together and where the trainer also added some points for discussion, encouraging trainees to give positive answers, regarding:

What came to your mind when you saw the first pictures in the VR story?

Were you present in the virtual world? Did you take the place of the main character or another hero? / Did you become one of the protagonists yourself?

Does the situation in some aspects represent you? And if so, how?

Is there something that has driven you to particular reflection?

What would you do differently in a supposed situation of your own and at which points?

Why do people have passions and weaknesses? How do you think one can control them?

What do you think is the central message of the story and what are your conclusions?

At the end of the training, by way of conclusion, a reflection was made to evaluate the session, taking into account the objectives initially defined and where each participant was also asked for suggestions for improvement to adapt the method to the target audience, asking the participants to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the session, in order to collect feedback.

The other partners were inspired and acted in a similar way. This is why we believe that this guide should always be carefully studied before implementation.

THIRD AXIS

Evaluation was an ongoing process, as it seems. The trainers/educators were constantly evaluating what was happening, in the context of the set goals. They were interested to see if the

trainees think and act. The main benefit (recorded by the Portuguese partner, for example) is that the trainee took the place of the "other" and expressed an opinion in a safe context. This created interest, curiosity and motivation in the participating learnes. The virtual reality experience itself was assessed as very important by the Greek partner who jotted down the following interest points:

As we said, the prisoners who participated were prepared for the experience they will live. They did not just watch or just hear the story of virtual reality, but experienced it. The experience, that is, was deep, as, due to virtual reality, they became the "others" for about 10 'of the hour. Each participant had the opportunity to reflect and develop an internal dialogue about the story. Then, on the occasion of the story that they would watch and through experiential approaches, group activities lasting about 3 hours were implemented. In particular, the way they entered deep into the "wrong" life of the other, entering the three-dimensional "rooms", was analyzed, in order to identify cases, ways of thinking and actions that led the hero to confinement and its consequences. They recognized the wrong decisions of the hero and through the activities they had the opportunity to externalize their thoughts. They went deeper into the biography of the "other" and "studied" wrong moves. Thus, they were able to "suggest" ideas for starting a new life. In other words, the prisoners were given the privilege and the right to express their opinion and to find the "ideal role" for the hero / heroine. The ultimate goal is to explore themselves and encourage the development of an internal process that leads to their improvement and change. Empowering prisoners to think and improve themselves, to redesign their lives on another basis, trying to think positively, is the key.

It is of course self-evident and absolutely understandable that just one test is not enough to prove everything. The first picture is clearly positive and there is a sense that continued use of the method may help learners in the long run.

FOURTH AXIS

Participating teachers collected a variety of feedback such as verbal comments, peer comments, and more. An important indication was the maintenance of enthusiasm on the part of the trainees. According to the Portuguese, the resulting process was very dynamic, due to both technology and interaction. All partners agree that 3D has added a lot of value to educational materials, as it boosts participation and motivation. Therefore, simply telling a story, which is the rule in prison, is not such a good quality choice. The Portuguese insist that the pilot test proved how useful the technology is to at-risk adults. The participating teachers also benefited, because they found themselves in a very original educational environment. At the same time, the trainees benefit. As the Italian partner observes

For our VR4 witness 3D reality was very effective because it "makes you see" what you can hear or say or remember ... but looking at it is all different". She really relived and saw her own dramatic experience: she was moved and wished she could caress the face of the imprisoned girl, the one from before, touch her, hug her... she couldn't do it, she cried. We suspended for a while to listen to her and let her decide. The identification was very strong and shocking, she didn't expect such an intense emotion. Neither did we teachers. Then she wanted to continue. One of her sculptures made at school in the prison caught her eye, it was a joy for her to see it that surprised her and made her discover interactivity after the initial disappointment. Yes she could move around the room now! From the outside we could see her getting up on her tiptoes to push a button, laughing and having fun in the very unusual space and then getting excited again, finding herself so strong and determined and on her way to that new life that is just now taking shape and every day is more and more real.

At the end we collected and transcribed keywords:

EMOTION-INVOLVEMENT-CURIOSITY-DIFFICULTY-EXPULSION-INTEREST-AMUSEMENT

You can listen to the original Italian version in the video where they were documented, available on the CPIA1 website.

- *"I know my life and my story well. I have already said it many times in front of others and even from a microphone, I know that it was right to do so since I began to remember at school in prison of me as a child and to understand that in the abuse suffered and in the deep devaluation of myself that followed and that was resurfacing in my memory, was the origin of my error and my crime and all the pain and not understanding me that was destroying me. Precisely for this reason today I did not expect such intense emotions, in fact I had never seen myself so well ... as I looked at myself and together I was me. Inside and outside together. I felt happiness seeing my virtual self coming out of the prison. Like me even if a little differently.... I'm even more proud of my path, I'm ready to let go of this story, to let go of it for the others, to give them confidence and say that you can have done a very serious crime and without justification in the eyes of others. But if you are able to understand yourself and recognize your deep motivations, you will not win innocence but you can make peace with yourself and find your chance to redeem yourself forever. Now there is no need for me to tell it, my story can go free on its own without me for others, because there will never be others like me again".*
 Result achieved, we teachers think, through his conquered new life, still excited in our turn.

Finally, it should be noted that the participating partners consider that the method is suitable for use in prisons that do not have an educational structure, as long as there is the appropriate staff, such as an educator or psychologist. Collaborations between prisons and other educational organizations may also be developed for this purpose. In general, the pilot test gave many positive signs for the value of the STEPs method. The corporate scheme therefore expresses its satisfaction and expects the continuation of projects in this direction.