

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/332978143>

# KNOCKING ON IVORY TOWER'S DOOR: ACCESS AND INCLUSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION VIA ODL IN PRISON

Conference Paper · April 2019

CITATIONS

0

READS

83

2 authors:



**Muhammad Jeffery Hizwan Bin Said**

Universiti Sains Malaysia

11 PUBLICATIONS 0 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



**Oo Cheng Keat**

Open University Malaysia

4 PUBLICATIONS 0 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Persepsi Mahasiswa Universiti Terbuka Malaysia (OUM) Terhadap Isu Palestin-Israel [View project](#)



Program Pengajian Tinggi Dalam Pemulihan Banduan: Satu Penilaian Dari Perspektif Banduan [View project](#)

## **KNOCKING ON IVORY TOWER DOOR: ACCESS AND INCLUSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION VIA ODL IN PRISON**

**Muhammad Jeffery Hizwan**

Open University Malaysia  
jeffryhizwan@oum.edu.my

**Oo Cheng Keat**

Open University Malaysia  
oochengkeat@oum.edu.my

### **ABSTRACT**

Open and distance learning (ODL) generally provides the opportunity for lifelong learning experience. As a philosophical concept, ODL is viewed as a long-term process beginning at birth and continues throughout one's life. Therefore, ODL has been accepted as the normal way for prisoners to access education while in prison, delivering courses and content resources to students who are unable to undertake face-to-face education. Almost universally, prison administration across the globe has recognised the importance of providing access to higher education to prisoners. However, learning inclusion, based on research has listed several issues, such as accessibility, choice, environment, and structural barriers, that can affect the provision of higher education via ODL in prisons. Prisoners wanting to complete their studies have reported to face a unique set of administrative, social, and academic challenges that have significantly impeded their progress. Even university academics are often unaware of the predicament of their incarcerated students. Written by a prisoner and his university educator, from limited access to the Internet behind prison walls, this paper looked into the experience of prisoners in accessing higher education via ODL while in prison. Using the qualitative autoethnography design, this paper explored the experiences of a group of prisoners in Malaysia who are studying at undergraduate and postgraduate levels via distance learning, while in prison. In particular, this paper focused on the accessibility of higher education via ODL in prison, the values it brings, and the challenges encountered by these prisoner-students. Data were collected from five participants using personal interviews and were analysed using ATLAS.ti software to identify thematic patterns. The study outcomes revealed that despite being given access to higher education in prisons, the prison environment had negatively affected their studies. Nevertheless, the prisoners were found to attach great value to their studies with the hope of using it for employment purposes after completion of their prison sentence.

**Keywords:** *Prisoners, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), Autoethnography, Higher Education, Social Justice*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education is provided in a multitude of platforms, prisons, being one of them. However, prisons form a very specific learning environment with distinct challenges, compared to those in the mainstream higher education platform. Delivering higher education to prisoners is challenging due to the conflicting priorities amongst the multiple divisions controlling prisoner activities (Pike & Adams, 2012). As institution that functions to contain offenders and maintain public safety, security is often prioritised over education.

One way of addressing some of the challenges is through the provision of open educational resources (Willems & Bossu, 2012). According to Giosoos, Mavroidis and Koutsouba (2008), as the trend of modern society in searching for flexible forms of education that meet the needs for lifelong learning, such as open and distance learning (ODL), the research interest was ignited, in looking for the possibilities ODL provide to socially excluded people, such as prisoners. The demand for ODL is increasing due to its flexibility to provide a learning environment in any circumstance. It is this flexibility that offers opportunities to people with special needs, such as prisoners. As reported by UNESCO (2002), there are about 880 million illiterate adults globally who have been deprived of access to education due to their inability to be present in conventional physical classroom situations. ODL can be the solution to such a predicament.

ODL generally provides the opportunity for lifelong learning, as a philosophical concept in which learning is viewed as a long-term process beginning at birth and lasting throughout life (Ogidan, 2008). Therefore, ODL has been traditionally accepted as an option for prisoners to access education, while in prison. ODL provides course content resources to students who are unable to undertake face-to-face education (Salane, 2008). It is a conceptual framework within which the learning needs of people, of different age groups and at different educational and occupational levels may be met, regardless of their circumstances.

The above implication is that ODL promotes educational opportunities and social justice by enabling high-quality education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and show their potential. According to Farley, Pike, Demiray, and Tanglang (2016), converting this vision into practice has resulted in a massive effort by prison institutions around the world, to provide higher education in prisons. Almost universally, prison administrators from around the globe have recognised the value of providing access to education for prisoners.

However, prisoners studying higher education via ODL in prison face numerous challenges in their efforts to ameliorate themselves. These challenges include issues such as accessibility to education materials, choice of education courses, prison environment and structural barriers that affect the provision of higher education via ODL in prison. Other than that, they also face a unique set of administrative, social, and academic challenges which can significantly hinder their progress (Farley & Pike, 2018). Even university academicians are often unaware of the circumstances and the challenges faced by these incarcerated students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of educational inclusion and rights to education supports the belief in social justice (Tait, 2013). Applying this concept to prisoners, education is a human right of any prisoner. In democratic societies, equity in access to education is considered a basic human right (Willems & Bossu, 2012). Hence, education for prisoners is important, not only as a basic human right (Emmert & Eur, 2011), but also the fact that there is no justifiable reason to deny these rights to the incarcerated citizens (Shamrahayu Abd Aziz, 2010).

Almost universally, prison administrations around the globe have recognised the importance of providing access to higher education to prisoners. Farley et al., (2016), for example, assessed the delivery of higher education into prisons in Australia, United Kingdom, Turkey, and Nigeria concluding that these countries have extensively provided higher education to prisoners via ODL. Iturralde (2018) and Linardatou and Manousou (2015), on the other hand, reviewed how the two countries of Ecuador and Greece were taking the first steps in providing higher education via ODL to their prisoners. Both researchers suggest that the delivery of higher education in prisons is possible via ODL with the collaboration of local universities. The same development can be seen in Pakistan, Thailand, Philippines, and Malaysia where local universities such as Allama Iqbal Open University (Aziz, Chuadhry, Liaquat & Asim, 2014), Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (Sungkatavat, 2009), University of Southeastern Philippines (Webmaster, 2018) and Open University Malaysia (Rozeman & Mohd Ramli, 2014) have been facilitated higher education into prisons of the countries in which the universities are based in. This suggests that ODL can become the most appropriate, reliable and important method to facilitate higher education behind prison walls (Diana, 2011).

ODL promotes educational opportunities and social justice by enabling the university to provide high-quality education to prisoners in prison (Chigunwe, 2014). ODL enables prisoners to study at their own pace, to learn independently and to have fun while learning (Seelig & Rate, 2014). This could alleviate the stress and boredom that are commonly known as ‘pains of imprisonment’ endured by prisoners (Sykes, 1958), which is particularly significant for prisoners with long sentences or with mental health issues (Farley & Pike, 2016). Thus, the possibility of ODL in providing higher education access to inmates helps to not only address the perennial problem of learning exclusions (Pike & Adams, 2012; Farley & Willems, 2017), but also encourages rehabilitation of prisoners (Forster, 1976; Pike, 2010; Hughes, 2012; Pike & Adams, 2012; Pike, 2014; Costelloe, 2015; Farley & Pike, 2016; Darke & Aresti, 2016; Farley & Hopkins, 2017; Baranger, Rousseau, Mastroilli, & Matesanz, 2018). These researchers agree that those prisoners, who persevered with their higher education learning, developed a positive student identity, reducing isolation from incarceration, having new perspectives in life, and being transformed as a person in some way.

Higher education in prison also frames a universal remedy for a host of ‘social ills’ related to mass incarceration (Castro & Gould, 2018). Higher education in prison is presented as a way to reduce recidivism (Vacca, 2004; Travis, 2011; Farley & Pike, 2018), reduce prison expenditure (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006), ensure safety and security inside prison (Farley & Pike, 2016), assist with integration and the period of post-release (Fabelo, 2002; Bynner, 2009) and to address high rates of unemployment after release from prison (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014; Duwe & Clark, 2014; Costelloe, 2015; Duwe, 2018). This suggests that higher education in prison holds many social benefits that not only benefit prisoners, but also the society.

However, higher education via ODL poses challenges to prisoners who wish to pursue their studies in prison. As a closed institution, prison management always prioritises security, which is the primary concern. Furthermore, there are rules in prison, written or unwritten ones that define how prisoners should behave, what they should have and what they should not have (Schuller, 2009). This radicalising environment (Frolander-Ulf & Yates, 2001) affects the implementation of higher education programmes in prisons where digital technologies and usage of the Internet are severely restricted, thus causing limited access to ODL materials and tutors (Reuss, 1999; Hughes, 2012; Pike & Adams, 2012;



Champion & Edgar, 2013; Hopkins & Farley, 2014). Classes that are already minimal are regularly cancelled for unforeseen reasons, which have fuelled assumptions that the intended purpose is to exert control by thwarting educational progress (Runell, 2016). This hints that higher education in prisons represent a paradox created by the existence of opportunities for educational advancements that are limited by institutional boundaries, designed to repress individuals within, where questioning authorities are not tolerated (Van Gundy, Bryant, & Starks, 2013). This situation is in contrast to higher education environments where colleges and universities are theoretically open places and spaces that encourage questioning (Farley & Pike, 2018). Thus, operating higher education programmes in prison could be complicated as it requires security adaptation (McCarty, 2006) to mitigate the hostile environment in the prisons, where it is designed for containment and punishment (Greg, 2007).

Other than these challenges, Adams and Pike (2014), in their research, noticed that prison officials are generally not supportive of higher education programmes in prison. The prison officials are seen to question the need for prisoners to gain diploma and degree qualifications in prisons, and they are even seen to resent or envy prisoners who are able to further their higher education while incarcerated (Adams & Pike, 2014). These sentiments shown by prison officers affect the successful completion of prisoners in their study. Prison officers, are the people who hold authority, play the important role in a prisoner's education as they have the capacity to either encourage or discourage prisoners (Kjelsberg, Skoglund & Emstad, 2007; Moore & Mokhele, 2017). Adding to these problems, prisoners also face financial constraints to pay their tuition fees (Farley & Pike, 2018).

The study was found to be intriguing, as it explored the experiences of prisoners who underwent higher education via ODL in prison. This exploration also offers a unique entry point into the world of prisons or 'inmate society' as referred to by sociologists (Hughes, 2012). By employing qualitative autoethnography approach, the following questions guided this study:

1. Are prisoners in Malaysia given access to pursue higher education via ODL in prison?
2. How do prisoners value higher education via ODL in prison?
3. What challenges did the prisoners encounter while pursuing their higher education via ODL in prison?

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This research was conducted at the Kajang Prison, Selangor, Malaysia by a student-prisoner and his university educator. The fact that the first author is a prisoner, who understands criminal culture and idioms, has put him on the different contexts in comparison to other researchers, thus opening doors to the avenue of investigations that might otherwise be closed (Ross, Jones, Lenza & Richards, 2016). By using personal interviews with other student-prisoners, and also by the first author's own experiences, this study drew on the participants' experiences, views and beliefs regarding their living experiences as incarcerated higher education students. The research findings are presented in three predetermined themes to answer the research questions. In order to protect the identity of the participants, this study refers to participants as; Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4) and Participant 5 (P5). The findings have limited generalisability; however, since they are based on experiences shared by the prisoners, they can potentially enhance the understanding regarding the accessibility of higher education in prison and the benefits it brings, together with the challenges faced by these prisoners.

## Access to Higher Education via ODL in Prison: Knocking on the Ivory Tower Door

The findings show that prisoners in Malaysia are given adequate access to higher education in prison. This can be seen from all the participants who shared their respective journeys, participating in educational programmes in prison. One participant even reported that he was even given the opportunity to study from his post-secondary education until his post-graduate higher education. He is now a Ph.D. candidate with OUM.

*“I’m a BBA and MBA holder which I acquired here in prison. Even my SPM and STPM were taken here” (P5)*

The other participants also expressed that they were given substantial access to higher education via ODL as each participant introduced themselves and informed the researcher the courses they were taking currently and from which university:

*“I’m doing Master in Business Administration with Open University Malaysia... And yes I’m studying through distance learning” (P1)*

*“For now I’m studying Diploma in Management with OUM” (P2)*

*“I just finished doing my BBA [Bachelor of Business Administration] with OUM and currently applying for my Master with USM [Universiti Sains Malaysia] .... I’m doing distance learning for my research paper” (P3)*

The participants also shared that they were allowed to use computers and Internet connection for educational purposes. The allowance of computer and Internet usage enabled prisoners to access educational resources provided by OUM through their main website. From the website, prisoners were able to gather educational material from the digital library, participate in online forums through OUM myINSPIRE and also communicate with e-tutors using the built-in chat functions. Most of the participants agreed that the OUM website was informational and user-friendly, assisting them in studying through ODL:

*“The OUM portal is informative and conducive. I can get everything I need there. There is no doubt OUM has the best educational online portal” (P1)*

*“The online facilities provided by OUM are very good. The website is easy to understand. The learning module also helpful” (P2)*

The ownership and provision of computers, however, are the responsibility of the prisoners themselves. The prison management only provides the classroom and Internet connections for the purpose of the programme. Other necessities such stationery and reading materials need to be provided by the prisoners themselves, as reiterated by the participants:

*“We bought our own facility such computers, stationery, books, and practically everything. Prison only provides the classroom and Internet” (P2)*

*“Basically the facility like computers, stationery, and reading material are provided by family, not prison official” (P3)*

Participant 5 stressed that every prisoner received the same access to higher education regardless of their courses. This showed that every prisoner had equitable access to higher education via ODL in prison:

*“Everyone here is getting the same facility. It does not count whether you are doing Diploma, Degree, Master or Ph.D. All same” (P5)*

When asked whether prisoners are given the option to choose their desired higher educational courses, most of the participants expressed that they were only allowed to choose what was set by the prison management:

*“No, I’m not given any option other than MBA. Only MBA for prisoners who want to do Master. I really like to study Law by the way” (P1)*

*“During my application, prison official only allowed me to take Diploma in Management. No other courses available for prisoners, only that one” (P2)*

*“The lower management of Prison Department trying to discourage me from choosing the course I like, instead they suggest that I only can choose the course they offered through OUM.... I’m not supposed to choose, but I choose my own part anyway” (P3)*

The findings revealed that prisoners funded their own studies. This is either through the assistance of their families or from financial aid from NGOs or from OUM itself. Most participants also noted that the fees imposed by OUM were reasonable as OUM also assisted by waiving certain fees for the prisoners:

*“My family who the one paid [the fees] for me” (P2)*

*“So far my educational financial is sponsored by NGO. Buddha Light International Association” (P3)*

*“For me, the fees are quite reasonable since they waived the first semester fees for me. It’s really helpful. And now I’m working on scholarship” (P4)*

### **The Values of Higher Education via ODL in Prison Brings: A Lifeline**

Higher education via ODL in prison brings hope in a place that often seems hopeless. All the participants reported that they felt empowered by being able to pursue higher education via ODL in prison. This empowerment was translated by the students’ identity, which they acquired while learning. As expressed by the participants, a sense of belonging to a learning community is important to the development of social identity in prison:

*“Higher education is highly valuable to me here. It helps me to think that I’m not a prisoner but a student. So there is a mindset paradigm shift for me, which keeps motivating me” (P1)*

*“Higher education helps me to review back my confidence as a student” (P3)*

ODL enables prisoners to study independently anytime and anywhere. With this advantage, prisoners can manage their own learning process and ease the ‘pains of imprisonment’ they endure especially in a place where time seems to move slowly. These advantages greatly influence prisoners’ daily lives in prison, as reiterated by participants:

*“I found distance learning is very useful for me because it allows me to study at my own pace” (P3)*

*“Being able to study higher education distance learning make time flies faster and it keeps me busy from thinking about my sentence” (P4)*

*“Through higher education, I can spend my time wisely here. Time flies very fast by studying” (P5)*

One participant even reported that higher education through ODL in prison eased his diagnosed depression. He stated that he no longer depended on his medication after being able to study in prison:

*“I’ve been taking escitalopram and lorazepam since 2011 [prior to his sentence]. I’m too depressed because of my case.... But after a few years in prison, I gradually stop taking my medicine and completely stop after I start my study.... Higher education helps me to think clearly especially for my depression” (P2)*

The transformational values offered by higher education in prison can elevate confidence among prisoners and prepare them for a better future. Apart from sharing how higher education has changed them within, all the participants showed their confidence that they were going to secure a decent job upon release:

*“I’m fairly confident that I can get a good job with my qualification when released” (P2)*

*“Higher education will get me back on track and I really certain with the qualification, I can secure a decent job after release” (P4)*

*“For me, higher education matures me a lot; I know how to differentiate what is good and bad. The knowledge acquired also prepare me for my release and of course for a good job” (P5)*

All the participants perceived themselves to be more confident, determined, focused and empowered by their learning. These values would help them to overcome the barriers which have yet to come.

### **Challenges in Higher Education via ODL in Prison: Overcoming the Wall Barriers**

Many participants reported that they faced many challenges in pursuing their higher education via ODL in prison. One of the main challenges is the prison environment itself, which was negative:

*“Prison environment for me is noisy, annoying and disgusting. Been here almost two decades, bro. I’ve seen everything, hear everything and taste everything. Nothing is good in prison” (P5)*

*“Living around convicts sometimes things can get very hostile or intense very fast.... The restricted environment makes me less accessible to reading materials and resources that I need to study” (P3)*

In a closed environment such as prison, every movement is monitored and controlled. Adding to this problem, prisons are sometimes overcrowded, where the number of prisoners exceed the capacity of the institution. This limitation exerts a large amount of influence on the prisoners, especially in adapting to prison conditions while pursuing higher education via ODL:

*“Prison environment here is packed like inside a sardine can. I’m sharing with other 9 prisoners in my room. For me to study in the room is impossible. Can you imagine 10 people sharing one toilet? I have to wake up as early 3.30 in the morning every day to shower because the room’s door opens at 7.00 o’clock sharp. How to study at night?” (P4)*

*“Everything in prison is limited especially to my movement. Limited movement limits my freedom to study because I cannot use the education facility whenever I needed. For example, I don’t have easy access to my PC [The computers is located in the classroom where prisoners only allowed to use at the designated time on weekdays]. I have to write in my cell room before I can type it on my PC. Remember, there is no table and chair in my room; I have to write on the floor. It’s very tedious and painful” (P1)*

The interviews also revealed that prisoners faced discrimination from the prison official, who are supposed to protect, serve and help rehabilitate prisoners so that they can become better people:

*“..... Prison officers also always provoke me and condemn me for no reasons” (P2)*

*“There are two types of prison officers; upper management and lower management. The lower management officers always create problem with the prisoners here causing us unable to study or make us stressful. They always pressure us in a way that they always try to find our mistakes and punish us all. The upper management, on the other hand, made our life worst when they always turned down our request [for educational needs]. They even denied my request for my stationeries” (P4)*

Other than having problems with the prison officers, prisoners pursuing higher education via ODL in prison also faced problems among themselves:

*“There are certain persons here [the other prisoners] who always bullying other people, ragging and pick a fight on everyone. It’s like living in the jungle.... Those troublemakers are not even study. They use the program [higher education programme] just to spend their time here” (P2)*

*“Some of the prisoners are really troublesome. They are not here to study, they even admitted themselves, they are not shy of it, and they really proud to be the troublemakers in the program [higher education programme]” (P3)*

## **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The findings suggest that prisoners in Malaysia are given adequate access to higher education via ODL in prisons despite several shortcomings. Most data captured revealed that prisoners had substantial or equal access to higher educational opportunities. This adequate access was expressed by all participants. All participants also informed that they were given permission to use computers and Internet connection for the purpose to study. The permission to use the computer and Internet connection for educational purposes did affect their progress positively in the programme. This digital access enabled the prisoners to connect with the online resources via ODL, while in prison. Hence, the ODL programmes served as a medium to bridge the gap between face-to-face classes and being able to study without leaving the prison premises. This was also advantageous as security risks were minimised due to the non-physical contact with university academicians. Moreover, the digital medium allowed for students to progress, even when and if the prisoners were transferred to other prisons or even when they were released from the prison. Thus, the findings suggest that the open access and online blended learning have become the backbone of ODL; enabling prisoners to pursue higher education in prison despite all the circumstances.

The research findings also revealed that most prisoners funded their own higher education studies. This showed that the government was able to save costs in not being required to pay for prisoners’ education. Costing in this area, of prison ODL education, when compared to other rehabilitation programmes that incur millions of ringgit of taxpayers’ money (Hakimah Yaacob, 2012), was hence, nil. The willingness of prisoners to fund their own studies also implied that instead of being ‘pushed’ to embark on higher education via ODL in prison, they could work towards the intrinsic ‘pull-factor’ for prisoners, to rehabilitate themselves.

The findings showed that all the participants attached a great value to higher education via ODL in prison. Hence, higher education via ODL in prisons offered many social benefits that did not only help to boost the confidence among the prisoners, but also to transform their lives and prepare them for a better future. It also has the capacity to encourage prisoners to take some control over their lives and to change their identity – from seeing themselves as a ‘criminal’ or a ‘failure’ to someone who is worthy. The first author himself had experienced the transformational values of higher education via ODL in

prison where he believed that higher education stimulated and motivated him as a prisoner to live up to his potential, as a useful human being. The first author narrated that he did not have much confidence in his ability to learn before prison sentence. In fact, he described himself as lazy and insecure. The education he received in prison somewhat boosted his confidence and proved that he was capable of learning, which he did not believe he could earlier (Hizwan, 2018, pg. 4). In many respects, the first author compared this experience to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. For most part of the time in prison, the first author believed that he was living in a 'cave' and his every action, behaviour, and attitude was reflective of this cave, a cave that he was not even aware of, had existed. As he began his journey in higher education via ODL in prison, awareness of the cave began to surface. The struggle of the learning process, in many aspects, brought him 'outside' the cave, exposing him to a world he did not know existed. Similar to many other participants in this study, this outside world gave him hope in a place that seemed hopeless. To the first author, he was never again a prisoner of the cave.

Studying higher education via ODL in prison, nonetheless, could be challenging given the noise, chaos, and overcrowding issues that typically reflect the prison facilities. As pointed out by the participants, such negative environment had an adverse impact on their progress in pursuing their studies in prison. Adding to the obstacles, the participants also claimed that prison officers were uncooperative and discriminated prisoners who participated in the programme. While the prison officers should play a pivotal role in directing participants towards higher education through their routine exercise or broad discretionary powers, this was not always the case. Their actions and behaviour were characterised by the Prison Department's main priority, which was to maintain order. Hence, higher education via ODL in prisons was classed as a pastime and an unpaid recreational activity that helped to maintain order, instead of serving as a means of rehabilitation. It should also be mentioned that there is a political dimension to the provision of higher education in prisons, which exists beyond the institutional level. It could be said that higher education, instead of being a tool for living, can also be a weapon of control in the hands of the prison authorities (Fitzgerald & Sim, 1979).

The participants reported that some prisoners in the programme showed lack of genuine commitment to studies, hence causing distractions to the learning process. It is understandable that the prison sub-culture may negatively influence prisoners' attitude and behaviour towards the programme. However, it should be noted that this lackadaisical attitude may also be a result from distressed feelings over various elements of confinement involving excessive control and blocked efforts to enjoy earned privilege in pursuing higher education via ODL in prison. Consequently, some of these prisoners abandoned their efforts to study in prison and started to abuse the educational facilities, under the excuse of doing so, as a coping mechanism, to avoid "chasing 'carrots' that might not be obtained" (Crewe, 2011, pg. 458).

Despite all these challenges, prisoners pursuing their higher education via ODL in prison remained very positive about the benefits of their studies for future employment and opportunities. This study revealed that they were indeed motivated and committed to their studies as they strived to keep on learning despite the limited and hostile environment of the prison. They held onto their students' identity, which they acquired through the learning process as a lifeline in getting through their sentence in prison. These transformational values are fundamental to successful settlement on release and therefore, can become the focus for future longitudinal research, based on this preliminary study.

## CONCLUSION

Written by a prisoner and his university educator from the limited access of the Internet behind a firewall in prison, this study explored the experience of prisoners in accessing higher education via ODL in prison. Through the method of personal interviews with other incarcerated students, and the first author's own experience, this study probed into the values of higher education via ODL in prison in transforming prisoners to be better individuals, thus preparing them for their future. Despite all the challenges faced by the prisoners who pursued their higher education via ODL in prison, they still attached great values to their studies and hoped to use them to secure employment upon their release. Ultimately, ODL in prison has the potential to transform the lives of prisoners. As once highlighted by Nelson Mandela, 'education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world' (Mandela, 2003).

## REFERENCES

- Adams, T. E., Jones, H. S., & Ellis, C. (2015). *Autoethnography: Understanding qualitative research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006). Evidence-based public policy options to reduce future prison construction, criminal justice costs, and crime rates. *Federal Sentencing Report Vol. 19. No. 4*. 275. Retrieved from: [http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/952/Wsipp\\_Evidence-Based-Public-Policy-Options-to-Reduce-Future-Prison-Construction-Criminal-Justice-Costs-and-Crime-Rates\\_Full-Report.pdf](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/952/Wsipp_Evidence-Based-Public-Policy-Options-to-Reduce-Future-Prison-Construction-Criminal-Justice-Costs-and-Crime-Rates_Full-Report.pdf)
- Aziz, T., Chuadhry, M. A., Kiani, A., Liaquat, S., & Ali, A. (2014). Need assessment of inmates of prisons through distance education. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 15(4), 322–331. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.86246>
- Baranger, J., Rousseau, D., Mastrorilli, M. E., & Matesanz, J. (2018). Doing time wisely: The social and personal benefits of higher education in prison. *Prison Journal*, 98(4), 490–513. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885518776380>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Class 5 – Braun & Clarke: Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bynner, J. (2009). *Lifelong learning and crime: A life-course perspective*. National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE).
- Chigunwe, G. (2014). Access and inclusion of inmates to education through Open and Distance Learning mode. *Greener Journal of Education Research. Vol.4 (1)*, 001–010. Retrieved from: <http://lis.zou.ac.zw:8080/dspace/handle/0/188>
- Castro, E. L., & Gould, M. R. (2018). What is higher education in prison? *Critical Education*, 9(10), 1–16. Retrieved from <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/criticaled/article/view/186439>
- Champion, N., & Edgar, K. (2013). *Through the gateway: How computers can transform rehabilitation*. Prison Reform Trust and Prisoners' Education Trust. Retrieved from: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Through%20the%20gateway.pdf>
- Costelloe, A. (2015). Learning for liberation, teaching for transformation: Can education in prison prepare prisoners for active citizenship? *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies*, 14(1), 1393–7022. <https://doi.org/10.21427/D7TM7H>

- Crewe, B. (2011). Soft power in prison: Implications for staff-prisoner relationships, liberty, and legitimacy. *European Journal of Criminology*, 8(6), 455–468. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370811413805>
- Darke, S., & Aresti, A. (2016). Connecting prisons and universities through higher education. *Prison Service Journal. Issue 225*, 26–32.
- Diana, P. (2011). Ethnographic approach and collaborative e-learning in prison. In M. Tomita & L. Baciu (Eds.), *Selected Proceedings of the second international conference "Social work perspectives on the quasi-coercive treatment of offenders"* (pp. 152–161). Bucarest: S. C. Universul Juridic srl.
- Duwe, G., & Clark, V. (2014). The effects of prison-based educational programming on recidivism and employment. *The Prison Journal*, 94(4), 454–478. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885514548009>
- Duwe, G. (2018). *The effectiveness of education and employment programming for prisoners*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute.
- Emmert, S., & Eur, L. L. M. (2011). Education in terms of human rights. In *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences (Vol. 12, pp. 346–361)*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.02.044>
- Fabelo, T. (2002). The impact of prison education on community reintegration of inmates: The Texas case. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 106–110.
- Farley, H. & Pike, A. (2016). Engaging prisoners in education: Reducing risk and recidivism. *Advancing Corrections Journal of the International Corrections and Prison Associations*, 1 pp. 65–73.
- Farley, H., Pike, A., Demiray, U., & Tanglang, N. (2016). Delivering digital higher education into prisons: the cases of four universities in Australia, UK, Turkey, and Nigeria. *GLOKALde*, 2(2), 147–166.
- Farley, H., & Hopkins, S. (2017). The prison is another country: incarcerated students and (im) mobility in Australian prisons. *Critical Studies in Education*, 58(2), 150–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2016.1255240>
- Farley, H., & Willems, J. (2017). Digital equity: Diversity, inclusion, and access for incarcerated students in a digital age. In *ASCILITE 2017 (pp. 68–72)*. ASCILITE//University of Southern Queensland. Retrieved from: <http://2017conference.ascilite.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Concise-FARLEY.pdf>
- Farley, H., & Pike, A. (2018). Research on the inside: overcoming obstacles to completing a postgraduate degree in prison. *Postgraduate Education in Higher Education*, 1–24.
- Fitzgerald M. and Sim J. (1979). *British Prisons*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Forster, W. (1976). *The higher education of prisoners*. Department of Adult Education, University of Leicester.
- Frolander -Ulf, M. & Yates, M. (2001). Teaching in Prison. *Monthly review*. 53(3).
- Giossos, I., Mavroidis E., & Koutsouba, M. (2008). Research in distance education: review and perspectives. In Open Education. *The Journal for Open and Distance Education and Educational Technology*, 4(1).



- Greg, P. (2007). *The Crum: Inside the Crumlin road prison*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd.
- Hakimah Yaacob (2012). Cost-benefit analysis: Transforming Malaysian Prison Department toward income generating through Islamic finance products. *Prosiding PERKEM VII, Jilid 2* (2012) 1494-1501. ISSN: 2231-962x.
- Hayano, D. M. (1979). Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems, and prospects. *Human organization, 38*(1), 99–104.
- Hizwan, M. J. (2018, pg. 4). *My rites of passage*. OUM Education: Open University Malaysia. Retrieved from: <http://oumeducation.oum.edu.my/magazines/2018/sep-oct-2018/>
- Hopkins, S., & Farley, H. (2014). A Prisoners' Island: Teaching Australian incarcerated students in the digital age. *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, 1*(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.15845/jper.v1i1.631>
- Hughes, E. (2012). *Education in prison: Studying through distance learning*. Farham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Iturralde Duran, C. A. (2018). The higher education in prisons. The first steps of Ecuador. *Alteridad- revista de Educacion, 13*(1), 82–92.
- Kjelsberg, E., Skoglund, T. H., & Rustad, A. B. (2007). Attitudes towards prisoners, as reported by prison inmates, prison employees and college students. *BMC Public Health, 7*(1), 71. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-7-71>
- Linardatou, C., & Manousou, E. (2015). The role of Open and Distance higher education in detainees in Greek Detention Facilities. *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-learning, 18*(1), 1–14.
- Mandela, N. (ed.) (2003). *An address at the Planetarium, Johannesburg, South Africa, July 16th, 2003*.
- McCarty, H. J. (2006). Educating felons: Reflections on higher education in prison. *Radical History Review, 2006*(96), 87–94.
- Moeller, M., Day, S. & Rivera, B. (2004). How is education perceived on the inside? A preliminary study of adult males in a correctional setting. *The Journal of Correctional Education, (55)*1, 40–59.
- Moore, C. A., & Mokhele, M. L. (2017). Learning behind bars: The experiences of undergraduate students in A South African Prison. *e-Bangi, Special Issue 2 (2017): 001-011, ISSN: 1823-884x*.
- Nally, J., Lockwood, S., Ho, T. & Knutson, K. (2014). Indiana industry sectors that hire ex-offenders: Implications to correctional education programs. *The Journal of Correctional Education, 65*(3), 43–65. Retrieved from: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=99273310&site=ehost-live>
- Newbold, G., Ian Ross, J., Jones, R. S., Richards, S. C., & Lenza, M. (2014). Prison research from the inside: The role of convict autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry, 20*(4), 439–448. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413516269>

- Ogidan R. J. (2008). *The Role of Open and Distance-Learning Institution in Providing Access to Learning Among Prison inmates*. Wikieducator. Retrieved from: [https://wikieducator.org/images/9/90/PID\\_140.pdf](https://wikieducator.org/images/9/90/PID_140.pdf)
- Pike, A., & Adams, A. (2012). Digital exclusion or learning exclusion? An ethnographic study of adult male distance learners in English prisons. *Research in Learning Technology*, 20(4), 363–376. <https://doi.org/10.3402/rlt.v20i0.18620>
- Pike, Anne. (2014). Prison-based transformative learning and its role in life after release. Ph.D. thesis The Open University.
- Reuss, A. (1999). Prison(er) Education. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(2), 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2311.00121>
- Ross, J. I., Jones, R. S., Lenza, M., & Richards, S. C. (2016). Convict criminology and the struggle for inclusion. *Critical Criminology*, 24(4), 489–501. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-016-9332-9>
- Rozeman Abu Hassan & Mohd Azhar. (2014). *Lifelong learning for inmates*. Widyatama International Seminar. February 2014. Retrieved from: <http://library.oum.edu.my/repository/934/>
- Runell, L. L. (2016). Doing time and college: An examination of carceral influences on experiences in postsecondary correctional education. *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*, 3(2), 92–105. <https://doi.org/10.15845/jper.v3i1.1035>
- Salane, F. (2008). Distance education in prisons: an educational right or a privilege. *Distances et savoirs*, 6(3), 413–436.
- Schuller, T. (2009). *Crime and lifelong learning*. IFLL Thematic paper 5. NIACE: Leicester.
- Seelig, C., & Rate, L. (2014). The role distance learning has to play in offender education. *Journal of Learning for Development*, 1(1). Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1106110.pdf>
- Shamrahayu Abd Aziz, S. (2010). Hak asasi banduan dan undang-undang di Malaysia: analisis permulaan. *Kanun: Jurnal Undang-Undang Malaysia*, 22(3), 1–21.
- Sungkatavat, P. (2009). The provision of education for prisoners by Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. *ASEAN Journal of Open and Distance Learning*, 1(1), 35–39.
- Sykes, G. M. (1958/2007). *The pains of imprisonment. The society of captives: A study of a maximum security prison*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Tait, A. (2013). Distance and e-learning, social justice, and development: The relevance of capability approaches to the mission of open universities. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 14(4), 1–18. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i4.1526>
- Travis, J. (2011, February). Rethinking prison education in the era of mass incarceration. *In University Faculty Senate Conference on Higher Education in the Prisons* (City University Graduate Center, New York City, 4 February 2011) (Vol. 4).
- UNESCO. (2002). *Education for All: Is the world on track? EFA Global Monitoring Report 2002*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(03\)00099-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(03)00099-3)
- Vacca, J. S. (2004). Educated prisoners are less likely to return to prison. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 55(4) 297–305. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1582-4934.2008.00406.x>

- Van Gundy, A., Bryant, A., & Starks, B. C. (2013). Pushing the envelope for evolution and social change: Critical challenges for teaching inside-out. *The Prison Journal*, 93(2), 189–210.
- Wall, S. (2016). Toward a moderate autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 15 (1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916674966>
- Webmaster. (2018). *USEP to co-host int'l confab on inmates' transformative education*. The University of Southeastern Philippines. Retrieved from: <http://www.usep.edu.ph/blog/2018/05/09/usep-to-co-host-intl-confab-on-inmates-transformative-education/>
- Willems, J., & Bossu, C. (2012). *Equity considerations for open educational resources in the glocalization of education*. *Distance Education*, 33(2), 185–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2012.692051>