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Conference Abstract

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Cloud created by:

Nicole Capon
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Presentation title: Offender learning: Riding the new digital wave

Presentation focus: How to utilise 'in cell' technology for offender learning

Presenter: Nicole Capon

Venue: Open University H818 Online Conference

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Learning digital skills as an offender in prison, traditionally consists of class-based session with a tutor to support and monitor achievement. The sessions themselves were limited to skills about basic packages such as word-processing skills or simulation programmes that enable some interactive elements such as testing and pre-programmed feedback.

Although there has been success working within these accepted limits, the digital world has moved on at an unprecedented pace. Recently released prisoners are dealing with having to adapt to life in a society dominated by rapid technological changes (Agrawal, 2016). For those offenders serving a long prison sentence, there would be no opportunity to learn now every skills such as using a touch screen, knowing how to find online information or sending a tweet. This lack of opportunity to learn new skills to support integration into the community, is seen in part to increase the risk of recidivism.

Enter 'through the gates' software programmes. Selected prisons - Wayland and Berwyn, are trailing 'going digital' with improved access to an intranet that is secure and safe to host selected apps and programmes. Virtual Campus, Socrates 360 software and MegaNexus are three such programmes that enable offenders in prisons or secure settings the ability to learn new digital skills as well as access to wider communication tools that support community interaction and engagement.

Through meta-analysis and software trials with offenders, this presentation will provide the background to my project to support other teachers in offender learning, to learn how one of the software programmes - Socrates 360 Software, can support learning in prisons and secure settings. I will discuss the short-term and longer-term benefits of the software; how open course development can improve the opportunities for learning for offenders and concerns around in-cell technology use.

The Governments' '*Transforming Rehabilitation'* programme, lists education, training and employment as a key objective, yet '*no prisoners were helped to enter education*' (Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, 2017).Providing offenders with the opportunity to access learning through technology in cells and the wider prison estate, provides opportunity for them to gain digital skills as well as other course specific skills, continue learning from a structured in prison class or learn independently and reduce isolation from long periods spent in their cells. Being able to use the software effectively can open a new digital world for offenders. One that is practical, engaging and inclusive.

Word count 430

References

Agrawal, M. 2019. Digital Prisons. 9th May. Berkeleyedu. [Online]. [23 January 2019]. Available from: https://bpr.berkeley.edu/2016/05/09/digital-prisons/

Criminal Justice Joint Inspection, (2017), An Inspection of Through the Gate Resettlement Services for Prisoners Serving 12 Months or More, Manchester, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, [Online]. [23 January 2019]. Available from: https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cjji/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/06/Through-the-Gate-phase-2-report.pdf

[Dr Simon Ball](#)
4:09pm 18 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Hi Nicole

Well done on a great presentation! Here is a summary of the comments and questions you received following your presentation (including those you may have addressed verbally). Please respond in whatever way you choose - I suspect you may wish to deal with the first few in one response!

Best wishes

Simon

> - So interesting to hear that 'in-cell learning' is actually happening now - I was involved in some projects in this area about 6 years ago and remember the restrictions well.
> - Is there any secueity issues, as linking to internet means anything!
> - Do employers share pre-employment courses with offenders through this? I'm aware some employers are very positive re recruiting from this population e.g. Timpson.
> - What motivates educators to share their courses?
> - What is the cost implication for prisons?
> - Have you had any feedback from colleagues/students on your project
> - What is your role with Socrates? Are you facilitating?
> - How to motivate prisoners can be quite difficult
> - Is there any literature on acquiring education and its impact on their life lateron?

[Nicole Capon](#)
5:41pm 22 February 2019 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Simon,

> - So interesting to hear that 'in-cell learning' is actually happening now - I was involved in some projects in this area about 6 years ago and remember the restrictions well.

Yes, its good it seems that things are finally moving forward
> - Is there any secueity issues, as linking to internet means anything!

The connection to the Socrates 360 system, logs onto a higher secure network. No other devices can connect to it. All incoming/and outgoing messages are monitored.
> - Do employers share pre-employment courses with offenders through this? I'm aware some employers are very positive re recruiting from this population e.g. Timpson.

Yes, Employers can share pre-employment courses on this platform

> What motivates educators to share their courses?

When working in teams, we tend to share courses/course materials anyway. For others, the sharing aspect allows people to be able to add to the resources available for their client group. In my field of digital skills, there was very little 'easily accessible' content and spent a long time searching and devising new content. This is something that has been mirrored with other teachers in different sectors. We all value the ability to find and use resources to add variety and quality to our sessions.

> What is the cost implication for prisons?
> The intial cost will depend on how many tablets they wish to purchase, however, use of the tablets has show to reduce the amount of paper used for learning and sending messages. This will reduce the environmental cost as well as the cost for the paper itself. There is also the human cost saving in terms of time to print stacks of paper for workbooks and exercises, to relay messages to/from prisoners to other staff members or family.
> Have you had any feedback from colleagues/students on your project
> Colleagues are keen to use the tablets and embed them into offender learning.
> What is your role with Socrates? Are you facilitating?
> I do not have a role in Socrates - I'm just a tutor who has seen the potential for offender learners and offender educators
> How to motivate prisoners can be quite difficult

Yes- however the tablet/software enables more communication and connection to others as well as proving opportunities for learning
> Is there any literature on acquiring education and its impact on their life lateron?

Yes - Studies from Criminal Justice has shown a decline in reoffending.