



Analysis of practices daily performed by organisations involved in activities aimed at supporting social inclusion and entering in labour market of Prisoners

## **Rationale**

The project is aimed at improving knowledge processes management in organisations dealing with social inclusion and vocational training of people in prison. The approach will be constructivist: we consider learning as a social practice and so knowledge is a shared product of a common process in which each subject shares its skills, know-how, practices, etc.

Main areas of intervention of the project will be:

Improve active social inclusion and entering in labour market of people in prison.

Improve management of our adult education organisations facing the difficulties and stress of social work plaid in prison.

The two areas are strictly linked because stressing situations not well managed, can hardly affect effectiveness and efficacy of social interventions and wellbeing of social workers.

The project comes from staffs needs and wishes. VIP is aimed at recognizing supporting methodologies and exchange good practices among trainers in order to improve the effectiveness of their intervention in their context and their competences and skills in the social inclusion of people in prison.

Often trainers improve their skills by experiences: they need time and space to assess their skills for becoming more and more aware of them, refining them acquiring awareness of what they need to improve.

Further more sometimes trainers don't play managerial role and sometimes is very difficult to share know how from a person to another, because someone is not aware of his/her knowledge learned by experiences. Moreover in organisations – above all in small organisations – there is little time to carry out team building activities because often people play different roles in the same time. Nevertheless awareness is the key word for managing this kind of matter and improving effectiveness of actions performed by trainers.

Otherwise, awareness and peer to peer support/comparison is an important mean in order to overcome stress of social work plaid with people in prison. In

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order to improve management of our adult education organisations, we need to share good practices, methodologies, approaches, tools, for stress management.

## **Methodology**

In order to obtain the right answers, we need to ask for the right questions. This methodology arises from this common reflection. In fact, when we have questions to answer we have possibility to stop for a moment and reflect about what normally we perform daily.

On the other hand, in order to have possibilities to compare different practices, we need to have a shared organisation of the issues we are going to compare.

Here you'll find three different tools that have to be used together. Please, accomplish the requirement of the tools respecting the order of the list. And, please, if possible involve the same persons in all the tools. This way, people will arrive to the focus group prepared and aware of the matter.



## Tool N° 1

### Questionnaire addressed to people working with convicts in prison

At least two different persons have to answer the questionnaire per each organisation. If your organisation is not directly engaged in working in prison, please, contact people working in prison as trainers/guidance providers

**01 Please describe your prisoners typology**

Users are prisoners  
Young people sent to prison for between one week and 7 years

**02 Why has your organisation chosen to work with this typology of users?**

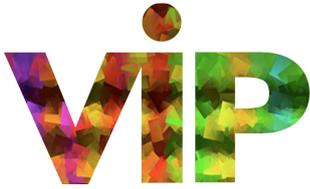
Because of their age < 23; they need (vocational) education.

**03 Does your organisation assess users' needs and expectations? And, if yes, how does it assess them?**

Yes, we do. Because they do the VET in prison there is a check on their former education and they are assessed on their level. This is by marks, diplomas, and individual assessments.

**04 Does your organisation assess context needs in order to organise activity? And, if yes, how does it assess them?**

They do because of their levels and combine the needs and wishes with the contexts needs. This is an individual process consisting of interviews and analyses of the needs.



**05 How is the activity funded?**

By public funds, all by public funding partly through the ministry of education and the ministry of justice.

**06 What is the methodology you use as ground of your activity?**

The VET methodology in combination with the social and psychiatric needs from each individual inmate.

**07 Have you chosen this methodology? Or does it come from your organisation?**

It comes out of the curricula from the ministry of Education and the curricula of the Noorderpoort depending of the VET field the inmate chooses.

**07 bis If the methodology used is chosen entirely by your organisation, Do you change something? What? And Why?**

The ministry of education chooses the methodology . We change the approach in some ways but not largely, this is because we want to give the young inmates the same diploma as the students who follow the “normal” pathway towards a diploma. It is different because of the needs of traineeship experience in the world of work which is sometimes difficult to full fill when you are in prison.

**08 Why has this methodology been chosen for this typology of users?**

Because it is suitable for their age and wants and needs. It will give them a good start once they are back in society to study on or get a job.



**09 Please, describe the activity you are dealing with. Please, do not forget to explain timetable of activities, their frequency within the week, number of users, number of trainers**

Every day from 09.00-15.00. Half an hour break around 12. The curriculum contains general education (Dutch, English; maths) and vocational subjects depending of the choice of the youngster. F.i. restaurant; wood; technics etc.

Frequency of:

Dutch: 2 hours

Maths 2

Vocational subjects: 17

Sport 3

Social skills and citizenship: 1

Number of users: 7 students in one group

Number of trainers: 10 in total

**10 Is the activity plan flexible and adaptable to users individual needs?**

Yes , it is. Groups are quite small and there is a lot of attention for all individual.

**11 Is the activity plan flexible and adaptable to needs arising during the process?**

Yes, it is. Because the duration of the stay is different for each inmate there is the need of a lot of flexibility and we need adaptability during the process. Also depending on the needs of the inmates.

**12 If you have answered yes to 10and/or 11, who adapts activities plan?**

Experts

Trainers

Managers

Users

A team composed by different figures;



Except for the users it is all stakeholders that adapts the activities plan.

**13 If you have answered yes to 10 and/or 11, do users share the adaptation of activities plan?**

Users are not a part of the discussions,

**14 What kind of skills/competences of the prisoners would you like to improve?**

Skills; social skills;  
Employability skills  
Competences:  
Very different, depending on the inmates character

**15 Describe the relation between your organisation and the prison administration, underlining weak and strong points**

The school is within the walls of the prison but is in fact independent. It has his own managers and teachers etc. Portalis, the school, is independent of the prison. But if there is a problem with one of the inmates during the lessons the quards of the prison will be there within a minute. But during the lessons the students/inmates does not see them.  
One of the weak points is that when the young inmates can leave the prison that sometimes there is no care after their imprisonment by the school. Then the school doesn't know if they finish their vocational study elsewhere

**16 Describe the relation between you and the prison staff, underlining weak and strong points**

It is not easy to have contact with the prison staff because both the prison staff and the teachers are simultaneously at work. The management of both the prison staff and the education staff hasn't planned a regular meeting between them. The relation between prison staff en teachers is ok but it can be much better. If there is contact between both the conversation is more informal.



**17 Do you follow a behaviour protocol / ethic code in your relations with convicts? If yes, please describe it**

Behaviour protocol: yes, because staff need a special way of dealing with inmates and their individual problems

**18 Is the behaviour protocol / ethic code prescribed by your institution? Or is something shared in the institution but not aware? Or is it a personal approach?**

There is a behaviour protocol describing the roles and responsibilities of the teaching staff and the security and guarding staff.  
All staff is aware of this but of course sometimes there is also a personal approach. All members and management discuss the approach regularly also taking into consideration the characters and behaviour of the inmates. There is a constant change in the population, because some stay for a very short period and others for a prolonged one.

**19 Has your institution tools in order to assess satisfaction of trainers and other professional engaged? Please, describe it.**

Yes, through a 2 year assessment online for all Noorderpoort staff, including those working at the youth prison.

**20 If satisfaction of trainers and other professional engaged is not high, does organisation carry out action in order to improve it?**

Yes, we do. Because of external changes (closure of 21 prisons in The Netherlands) there has been a lot of stress lately. But because the prison for youngsters we are dealing with within Noorderpoort will stay open things are going back to normal now. Improving the satisfaction of the personnel is always important and part of the daily programs and yearly improvement plans for both the individual teacher and the teams.



**21** What kind of transformation do you suggest in order to improve the activity you are dealing with? (if any)

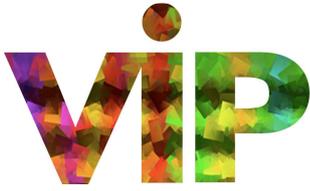
Even more and better relationships with the world of work in order to find better possibilities for traineeships.

**22** The activity you are dealing with is a pilot project (with an end) or is a service?

No, it is not. It is part of the daily structure and procedures. Regular activities.

**23** If the activity is a project with an end, how do you foresee to continue your work here described?

Not applicable.



## Tool N°2

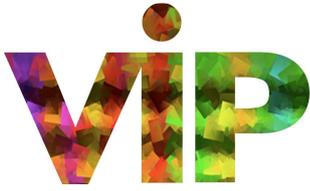
Case Study: Please, describe at least three different cases per each typology.

### Pressure from users

What kind of pressure from users you deal with?

Describe typical situations and describe practices that decrease pressure, and what does not work.

Pressure	Practices that work	Practices that do not work
<i>Example: learner with aggressive attitude (trainer/learner conflict)</i>	<i>Keeping the situation open. Expressing trainer's concern to the trainee. Involving a neutral third party (triangulation) Etc. etc.</i>	<i>Having an aggressive attitude. Absolutely wanting to resolve the conflict only for reasons of credibility in front of the group or for personal pride.</i>
<p>*The inmate/youngsters threatens you because he doesn't want to follow certain lesson's. ("If you send me to thee lesson's you will find out what happens to you).</p> <p>* The youngster received a bad message just before he entered the classroom.</p> <p>* The youngster doesn't want to do a task.</p>	<p>* You have to explain, always, why you are doing things. You need to create understanding for the situation. Let them show their value. And offer them the opportunity to decide partly about their own learning process. Be flexible and offer them , if possible, an alternative during the lessons.</p> <p>Leave him/ her alone for a few minutes and talk to her/him after a while. Give her/him time to think about your conversation.</p> <p>Have a short but effective and good conversation. Tell him what you expect when he performs the task. Give him/her time to think about it. Usually, after a while the youngster is quiet. Then he will start with his task.</p>	<p>* Don't be aggressive. Be open. You can't force them.</p> <p>It can be wrong to ask the youngster to go to work/study immediately.</p> <p>It is a bad decision when the teacher decides that the youngster has to leave the classroom.</p>



## Pressure from colleagues

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What kind of pressure from colleagues you deal with?

Describe typical situations and describe practices that decrease pressure, and what does not work.

Pressure	Practices that work	Practices that do not work
<i>Example: you and your colleague do not share the same assessment about one user</i>	<i>Keeping the situation open. Listening to the colleague (the reason is not in only one place) Use active listening Ask for a third party as mediator (both the persons have to trust the mediator) Etc. etc.</i>	<i>Having an aggressive attitude. Absolutely wanting to resolve the conflict only for reasons of credibility in front of the group or for personal pride.</i>
We have deadlines concerning the Individualized Education Program (IEP).	There is a special commission for guidance issues. You have to talk with them	Quarrelling with your colleagues
It can happen that a colleague is absent. Then you have to work with more youngsters in your classroom.	A "way-out" employee can help you.	
During some lessons safety is required. (technics) In classrooms of some colleagues is safety less necessarily (f.i. social skills)	Keep talking with your colleagues about the differences in safety in the classroom.	Don't talk with your colleagues And acting as if you are not interested in the safety problem of your colleague

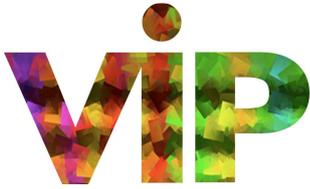
## Pressure from your organisation

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What kind of pressure from your organisation you deal with?

Describe typical situations and describe practices that decrease pressure, and what does not work.

Pressure	Practices that work	Practices that do not work
<i>Example: Too much pressure for getting positive results</i>	<i>Involving the organization about your work. Explaining clearly your job, its specificities, its difficulties (sometimes managers don't know precisely what is your</i>	<i>Considering that your organization can't understand your situation and never communicate with it.</i>



	<i>job).</i>	
Besides the lessons you have to do a lot of administration	Convincing your manager that your job is more than only teaching. More than 50% is administrative.	It is wrong not to discuss the pressure you feel with your manager.

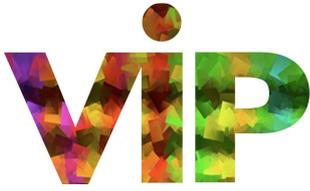
## Pressure from penitentiary administration

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What kind of pressure from penitentiary administration you deal with?

Describe typical situations and describe practices that decrease pressure, and what does not work.

Pressure	Practices that work	Practices that do not work
<i>Example: interference of the administration in your work</i>	<i>Keep calm, explain the reasons of your choices and approach of the work in prison, try to get a mediation in every way, use of non violence techniques for the solution of the problem</i>	<i>Cut off the relation with the administration, Not to accept mediation</i>
See last question		



## Tools N°3

Carry out a (light) focus group with at least 3 persons working with people in prison

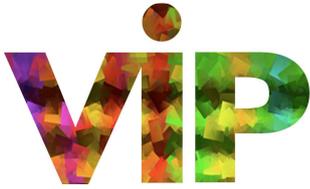
Track for the focus group:

- 1) what obstacles do you daily cope in your work? How do you overcome them?
  - Sometimes a youngster is suddenly absent because she/he has to go to the court or she/he gets a special therapy.
  - cooperation with the prison. In Holland there is a distinction between the prison and the school (only for youngsters). Although the school is inside the walls of the prison.
  
- 2) How can I improve effectiveness, efficacy and satisfaction of my work in prison?
  - a. Tools: collegiality, solidarity, knowing the perspective, (social)security
  - b. Competences: be easy every time, humor, understanding, empathy, how to deal with aggression
  - c. Flexibility of relations:
    - every day is a new day. The feelings, the behaviour of the youngsters can be different from day to day.
  
- 3) How to improve the relations with:
  - a. Penitentiary administration:

The administration has to cut the budget. But there is no clearness about it. So it is possible that there are next year fewer teachers.
  - b. Prison staff: Nowadays there is a lot of solidarity. We need no improvements in our relation with the staff.

But it would be better to have more meetings together so we can discuss the behaviour of some youngsters.
  - c. Convicts.

We have to realize that the youngsters are no volunteers.  
We have to continue to appoint their positive qualities in order to seek opportunities for them.



d. Colleagues.

The relation between colleagues is ok. All the colleagues needs no improvements when we look at the relations between them.

But it would be a good ideas to arrange more meetings between the teachers to tune the educational program a little bit better.

e. Organisation:

The staff wants information about the cuts en the consequences.

4) What kind of expectation have you about your work/career?

There is a lot of uncertainty as a result of the cuts. The staff (teachers) does not know what kind of work they are doing next year.

But working with the target group (juvenile) all the colleagues like it.