

Education for inmates in Norwegian prisons – obstacles and opportunities under COVID-19 restrictions

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Short facts: prisons (and prison population):

Prison capacity: approx. 3700 inmates

- - Approx. 50 prisons (biggest prison with 300 inmates, smallest with 15 inmates)
- - 2 institutions for juveniles (up to 18 years)
- - Approx. 30 percent foreigners from 120 different nations
- - 7 - 8 percent women



Who is responsible for education for inmates?

Education for prisoners based on «The Import model»:

- all non-penal functions are placed within bodies outside the prison
- the school authorities are responsible for prison education
- the teaching is organized and carried out by an upper secondary school (a school nearby the prison facilities; both vocational training and general subjects)
- the principle of normalisation is underlined in the Norwegian Education Act: *(Section 13-2 a): The duty of the county authority to provide primary, lower and upper secondary education in prisons. The county authority is responsible for complying with the right to primary, lower and upper secondary education pursuant to this Act for prisoners in that county's prisons. When education takes place in a prison, the Norwegian Correctional Services must provide the necessary premises*



Short facts: education for inmates:

- Capacity: 1400 students every day (fulltime and part-time)
- Teachers: approx. 420 (fulltime and part-time – approx. 280 full time labour year)
- Capacity, types of education and results:
 - lower-secondary program: 1,2%
 - upper-secondary program (both vocational - and general studies as Programmes for Specialisation in General Studies, Music, Dance and Drama, Building and Construction, Restaurant and Food Processing, Technical and Industrial Production etc.): 50 %



Continued... short facts: education for inmates:

Capacity, types of education and results:

- Shorter courses (based on curricula from upper secondary) 30 %
- Other courses (shorter motivational courses as; art education, music, theater, etc.), ICT, arts and crafts, 13 %
- University/college, 5 %



What happens when the schools are closed down (the COVID-19 shutdown)?

- near all traditional education for prisoners stopped (school departments and school workshops closed)

The alternatives:

- Paper (letters sent between teachers and pupils)
- The use of telephones
- The use of memory sticks
- The use of Dictaphones
- The introduction of iPads: direct counselling (video talk (e.g. Skype))
- Opening up the closed ICT systems. Makes it possible for teachers to digitally access inmates (digital work)



The COVID-19 shutdown and moves for the future

The shutdown underlined the gap between the digital possibilities inside vs outside prison walls.

- It has opened up for digital communication between teachers outside prison walls with prisoners inside prisons
- It started cooperated work for better digital tools: better integration with systems outside prisons walls (within the limits of communication control of the correctional services)
- iPads (with keyboard) to all prisoners attending school?