



Transformative Learning through University and Prison Partnership

An Evaluation of the Middlesex University and HMP Wandsworth Prison Module

**Authors: Jenni Ward¹, Natalie Gray and Matt Cracknell
Middlesex University**

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¹ Dept. of Criminology and Sociology, School of Law, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, London NW4 4 BT, UK. j.r.ward@mdx.ac.uk

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Introduction and background to the module evaluation

This report documents findings from an evaluation of the module *'Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice'* delivered in Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Wandsworth, between January and May 2017². The module brought together a cohort of Middlesex University postgraduate students alongside a group of Wandsworth prison students to study a ten week course in criminology. The module followed a criminal justice syllabus engaging in topics such as youth justice, criminal court sentencing, desistance from crime, and comparative prison perspectives. A total of 16 students completed the module; seven from Middlesex and nine from Wandsworth.

The main findings from the evaluation are that it has been a highly successful initiative. This is in terms of the module implementation and delivery at the prison, and the criminology content and learning approach it set out to achieve. Moreover, the collaborative partnership between Middlesex University and Wandsworth Prison is a valuable relationship that both institutions will be advantaged through by investing in over the longer-term.

This evaluation report sets out a description of the Middlesex Wandsworth 'Learning Together' module, the views and experiences of the students who studied on it, and the wider benefits and values that have emerged.

The module forms part of the 'Learning Together' prisons and university educational partnerships led by Cambridge University, and which now operate in a number of English prisons (Armstrong and Ludlow, 2017). The Learning Together approach brings students from within universities and in prisons to learn with, and from each other in a collaborative method of knowledge exchange and discussion. Transformative learning is an underpinning principle of the 'Learning Together' model in that it is learner-centered, participatory, and interactive (Mezirow, 1997 *cited* by Fogerty, 2017). Classroom participation and dialogue are core features of the learning and teaching approach. In this way students are contributing to the co-creation of knowledge that draws from the exchange of perspectives and ideas among a diverse, mixed group of learners.

There is a developing literature on the value of university and prison educational partnerships. Armstrong and Ludlow (2016), founders of the Learning Together project, suggest by bringing prisons to the outside community and the outside community into prisons; in essence delivering 'education across walls', acts of wider social responsibility, societal awareness and acceptance of prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration is enhanced. Darke and Aresti (2016), in writing from their experience in running a university prison partnership argue, 'it not only provides an enriching educational experience, but transcends social barriers and changes the ways that participants can view themselves and the world around them' (*ibid.*: 31).

The UK is currently witnessing a growth in university prison educational partnerships, with a number of initiatives operating in addition to the Learning Together network³. These borrow and develop from programmes established in the USA such as the *Inside-Out* programme operating from Temple University, Philadelphia since 1997, and the 'Prisons to College Pipeline' project in John Jay College, New York (2017). The importance of university and prison

² Dr. Jenni Ward from the Department of Criminology and Sociology, Middlesex University led the module and was assisted throughout by Ms. Natalie Gray (evaluation researcher) and Mr. Matt Cracknell (Graduate Academic Assistant in Criminology).

³ Prison university partnerships are also operating as stand-alone initiatives across a number of other universities, such as Durham University since 2014 (Durham University, 2014), and Kent University since 2015.

educational partnerships is linked to understandings of the factors that most successfully assist re-integration into the community on release from prison.

In the UK, prison and university partnerships can be discussed within the current emphasis on the need for improved educational provision within prisons, so those who are incarcerated can build necessary skills and competence that facilitate re-entry and inclusion in society on release. The 2016 Coates review of education in UK prisons - *'Unlocking Potential: A Review of Education in Prison'* - established the commitment to improve prison education stating 'education should be at the heart of the prison system' and that education provides "the chance to re-enter society successfully, to find work, to live fulfilling lives". The Coates report made reference to the lower rates of re-offending among those who participate in education while in prison. Indeed, the report draws attention to the lack of provision at the higher education level and identified the Learning Together initiative, among others, as examples of good teaching and learning practice (*ibid.*: 43). In pushing for educational reform, Coates called for projects to be more than 'isolated initiatives' and for higher education colleges and universities to ensure that pathways for 'prison learners' into college or university on release⁴ are facilitated (*ibid.*:55).

Discussions on prison education in the UK are part of a wider prisons reform strategy that has been under governmental policy scrutiny, albeit interrupted, and arguably with insufficient progress, since the coalition government of 2010⁵. In 2016, ambitions for prison reform led to six prisons⁶ across the secure estate of England and Wales 'rolled' as 'reform prisons'. These were to be models of radical reform achieved through autonomous management and by empowering prison governors with devolved budgets so that change at the local institutional level could be made more effectively. HMP Wandsworth was designated as one of the six reform prisons, and the Middlesex Wandsworth criminology module was established amidst this prisons reform activity.

Universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK are also in a period of heightened institutional reform. This links to an environment of increased student tuition fees, and intensified competition across the sector, which is placing pressure on universities to consider the full value of the degree programmes they offer. As such, universities are embracing the breadth of their provision, and the employability skills embedded within it, as well as building and strengthening relationships with external and community organizations in order to extend student learning experiences and practice-based opportunities.

Middlesex University is actively engaged in ways to enhance the career routes and employability chances of its students, and commitment to these ends is embedded within the recently launched five-year strategy (2017-2022). 'Transformation' is a key underpinning theme within the

⁴ Dame Sally Coates (2016) pointed out the current voluntary guidelines in place in respect to the admission procedures of higher education colleges and universities. She states that in relation to assessing the suitability of applicants with criminal records to access further and higher education that 'fair, proportionate and transparent practice' is necessary. She noted how the then Prime Minister David Cameron set out his intention to 'ban the box' for civil service roles so that applicants did not have to declare their criminal convictions at the initial recruitment stage. Coates challenges colleges and universities as recipients of public funds, to match this ambition.

⁵ The *'Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders'* Green Paper (Ministry of Justice, 2010), the more recent *Prisons Safety and Reform* White Paper (Ministry of Justice, 2016a) and the *Courts and Prisons Bill* (H.M. Government, 2016) are some of the prison reform policy documents.

⁶ The autonomous 'reform prisons' were HMP Coldingley, HMP Highdown, HMP Ranby, HMP Holme House, HMP Kirklevington Grange and HMP Wandsworth.

university's vision (Middlesex University, 2017*a*, 2017*b*) as it seeks to locate itself at the fore of providing student experiences that move towards successful careers and which engage with industry and professional practice in meaningful ways.

The Middlesex Wandsworth module fits with the University's approach to enhancing teaching and learning and ensuring the ongoing enrichment of the student academic experience. Moreover the partnership with Wandsworth can be defined as an example of activity in which connections are being made with external partners in efforts to build unique student learning opportunities.

Transformative learning is the underpinning theme of the Learning Together model and is the central analytical concept at the centre of this report.

Outline of the module

The Middlesex Wandsworth Learning Together module was taught at Wandsworth Prison over ten 2.5 hour weekly sessions between January and May 2017. The module focused on the criminal justice system as a series of interlinked institutions, within which ideas of rehabilitation, system reform, and social justice were explored. It followed a criminology syllabus covering topics on crime and deviance, youth justice, criminal court sentencing, desistance, comparative prison perspectives, and race and the criminal justice system. Following the Cambridge University Learning Together design, each class session was based on three course readings, a 25 to 40 minute lecture delivered by a Middlesex criminology lecturer, followed by small group discussions co-ordinated through a group facilitator. Module assessments were based on completion of a weekly learning journal, active participation in class discussions, and a 1500 word written essay.

The first run of the module functioned as a pilot exercise, and was delivered as an extra-curricular activity, rather than a credit bearing module. The different university prison partnerships that are running operate differently, with some delivering the modules as credit bearing, and others as crediting participation as a form of volunteering activity. The future plan for the Middlesex Wandsworth module is that it will form one of the suite of criminology option modules offered to Level 6 and 7 students, and that it is credit bearing for both Middlesex University and the in-prison students.

Despite the module not running as credit bearing on this occasion, it was delivered in the same way it would have, had it generated 20 credit points. Full attendance, consistent and engaged participation, and completion of the module assignments were expected in order to be appraised as successfully passing the module.

The module borrowed heavily from the design of the Cambridge Learning Together criminology module delivered in HMP Grendon since 2015. The approach of the Learning Together network that has developed out of the Cambridge initiative is to share experiences of delivering education within the prison environment, as well as sharing teaching materials in the form of module unit narratives, assessment strategies, student conduct policies, the format and running order of final graduation ceremonies, among other important and sensitive matters that arise. This is so that the teaching and learning that comes under the umbrella of the Learning Together model is delivered to a high standard, and to methods that have been applied in other prison establishments. The Learning Together network as led by Drs. Amy Ludlow and Ruth Armstrong from Cambridge University⁷ is intended as supportive to help bring this bold and

⁷ There is ongoing activity that expands the LT initiative at the national and international level.

ambitious programme of learning to as many university and prison students as possible. At the same time, the difference between individual universities and prisons is acknowledged, so the various partnerships that have emerged can operate with autonomy and be responsive to their own student groups and the institutions to which they are attached.

Aims and objectives of the module evaluation

The purpose of the Middlesex Wandsworth module evaluation reported here was two-fold. The first was *process* related; aiming to document the module's implementation from the initial setting up point, through to completion. Capturing the experience of putting in place an initiative of this nature across the university and with Wandsworth Prison was important. Both establishments are bound by formal protocols and procedures, and prisons by necessity are tightly run, security conscious establishments. We were interested to gauge the process of delivery and to determine the success of the module in the teaching and learning standards it set out to achieve.

Reflective evaluation of module teaching and learning, are usual features of higher education practice and this evaluation fits with the quality assurance requirements asked of universities (HEFCE). It provided important information that can be learned from for the future delivery of the module, and its extension to undergraduate Level 6 students, and indeed for other subject modules Middlesex might consider developing as in-prison education in the future.

The second purpose of the evaluation was *outcome* related. We aimed to explore and document how the students involved in the module experienced this shared learning approach, and how they interpreted their personal development, and knowledge and skills they gained as a result. In terms of evaluating the module's outcomes, at this stage we are only able to report on the short-term impacts of participation. It is our intention to analyse the longer-term impacts for both sets of students, and to find out whether, and how, it influences future educational or employment success. On-going follow-up interviews have been built into the evaluation design. It is hoped we can re-interview students at six or 12 months, and beyond, to learn about longer-term outcomes. Learning Together aims to build 'learning communities' and encourages continuation in the network whereby alumni from earlier cohorts remain involved, and contribute to future programmes as learning mentors. We are working to make this a feature of the Middlesex Wandsworth module.

The module evaluation took place alongside the weekly class sessions delivered in Wandsworth Prison with the everyday practical mechanics and implementation evaluated, together with an appraisal of the students' experiences on the module.

The evaluation was made possible through funds provided by Middlesex University's *Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement* (CAPE). This enabled the employment of a dedicated research assistant (Natalie Gray) to work on the evaluation alongside our weekly teaching in the prison. CAPE's remit is to promote teaching and learning practice that is based on innovation and creativity. The detail set out in this report can be used to demonstrate Middlesex University's drive for creative pedagogy and involvement in advancing pedagogical practice and styles of teaching and learning that push institutional boundaries and achieve important results.

The authors of this report note they were actively involved in the module's delivery, as well as in the evaluation of it. With this dual role, 'distance' and objectivity can be questioned when considering the need for independent and balanced appraisals within evaluation research. However, the evaluation has been carried out with full academic integrity and with a broad commitment to critically reflect upon all aspects of the project, and to identify issues where further consideration and alteration might be necessary. Moreover, the research instruments

were designed in a way that allowed for openness and criticism by respondents. The benefits of actively participating in a programme while simultaneously evaluating it, means guidelines for best practice can be produced for future delivery (Denscombe, 2010). Whilst this participatory approach is self-reflective, the researchers maintained an objective stance to these ends to ensure an independent analysis of the process and outcomes and to avoid any research bias.

Evaluation research methods

A combination of methods was used to evaluate the module. These included end of module evaluation forms completed by all students, one-to-one interviews with students both at the beginning and at the end of the module, interviews with Middlesex lecturers who taught sessions on the module, and focused conversations with the group facilitators and Wandsworth education staff also involved in the module. A fieldwork diary was kept which documented the many and various discussions and meetings held during the setting up phase of the module and throughout its implementation. As this in-prison teaching was a new undertaking for both Middlesex University and Wandsworth Prison, a dynamic process of reflexivity was necessary and documenting detail and nuance has been a valuable part of the process. Classroom observations also formed an important method of evaluation (see later).

In efforts to run the module along the same lines and standards as any other Middlesex module, a peer observation was arranged for one of the class sessions. This was conducted by a Learning Together colleague from Royal Holloway University who similarly runs a module in HM YOI Feltham and is employed at the Prisoners Education Trust (PET). Her comments on the session are in the footnote⁸.

Ethical and risk considerations

Considering the learning space for the module was a classroom on the premises of an inner London Category B and C⁹ male prison, a number of ethical and risk considerations are raised. Prisons by their very nature are high risk and sometimes volatile environments. As with all fieldtrips conducted off the Middlesex University campus, a field trip assessment was required, with all aspects of safety and possible harm from entering a prison environment considered by the students and staff taking part.

To prepare Middlesex staff and students for entry into the prison, a dedicated security talk was held at the start of the module. The purpose of the session, with the Head of Wandsworth's Security, was to inform participants on emergency security procedures, the correct protocol and etiquette around establishing relationships, the observance of appropriate dress, and the illegality of bringing certain items, such as mobile phones, laptops, recording devices *etc.* into the prison. The session emphasized the importance of mindfulness when it comes to the personal

⁸ "This was a very well organised session that clearly worked along the Learning Together values of academic credibility, dialogic learning and equality in the learning space. Students were clearly engaged and had built good relationships throughout the module, particularly in their smaller groups. I was struck by the speed with which the group settled into a learning space at the beginning. Although not enforced, this showed the level to which people were clearly there to engage in learning. The level of the content being delivered I'm sure was challenging to some, however the space to reflect on these issues using academic resources and personal experience was made clearly and effectively and underpinned the smaller group discussions. This was a particular strength of the module'. Some of the challenges of working in this mixed group were met with the structure of the session – keeping small lecture slots, broken up with critical discussion worked well and I'm sure left the students with plenty to reflect on before the following week.

⁹ Prisons in the UK system are categorized according to security risk in an A to D system, whereby category A prisons are high security, with a descending order of security risk moving down to Category D.

relationships that could develop with an initiative such as ours, with it recommended to apply a stance of being “friendly but not friends”.

Issues of confidentiality have been paramount while running this module. Strict adherence to a student conduct policy set out at the beginning of the module was requested. Although a key part of this programme is that we don't focus on individual's criminal offences, in an initiative of this type personal stories are revealed. It was essential for purposes of trust and learning within our classroom space that professionalism and confidentiality was observed at all times, with it collectively agreed that private information did not leave the classroom. Ethical approval for this evaluation research was granted by Middlesex University's ethics review board, with issues of trust and confidentiality, etiquette, and safe data storage, emphasized.

Access to HMP Wandsworth

Gaining acceptance to deliver a module, which brings community-based university students into a prison to learn alongside prison students, is a position of privilege and came about through a previously established institutional relationship with the then Wandsworth governor Mr. Ian Bickers. As noted, HMP Wandsworth was included as one of the six 'reform prisons' established with the government's prison reform strategy in attempts to bring about operational improvements within individual prisons (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Following a discussion in July 2016 with Ian Bickers about piloting a criminology module at HMP Wandsworth, the arrangements were set in motion and prepared for delivery from January 2017.

The Wandsworth prison education provider, NOVUS, became responsible for the operational management of the module with it essentially becoming a part of the suite of educational provision within Wandsworth Prison. NOVUS is a not-for-profit social enterprise¹⁰ and is the current contracted education provider for HMP Wandsworth. Their mission statement is to 'reduce re-offending rates by transforming people's lives through learning and skills'. The successful running of the module was in large part due to the commitment and support of the NOVUS education staff. They took responsibility for escorting the men to and from their cell blocks to the classroom each week, and supported our class sessions in a range of important ways. The positive feedback about the module communicated to us by NOVUS staff from their conversations and contact with the men on the wings, and on the escorts to and from the classroom was encouraging, and confirmed the motivation we were seeing each week in class.

Student recruitment to the module

Following agreement from HMP Wandsworth to accommodate the module, as well as the approval from Middlesex University they were willing to support it; expressions of interest were invited from potential students at both establishments.

In respect to this first run of the module functioning as a pilot, it was decided to offer it to Middlesex postgraduate students only. Offering it to postgraduate students in the first instance was connected to their older age and perceived higher level of maturity compared to undergraduate students who are on average between 18 and 21 years old. As such, expressions of interest were invited from Masters or PhD level students across the School of Law. This included those reading Criminology, Sociology, Politics, Law or Psychology. Potential applicants at HMP Wandsworth received an invitation to sign up to the module via a course 'flyer' posted under the cell doors, as well as through information made available from the prison education department. A radio interview about the module was also recorded through Wandsworth's media team (Kevin Field and Aidan Judd) and broadcast over 'Radio Wannu'.

¹⁰ NOVUS was launched in 2015, following 20 years of operating as The Manchester College.

Both sets of students were required to complete an application form and were engaged in a one-to-one interview to assess their suitability to study on the module. The interviews with the Middlesex students took place on campus and the Wandsworth students' interviews took place within the education department of the prison, and were conducted by the Middlesex module team.

The pre-module interview for both sets of students was to gain insights into the reasons for wanting to study a module of this nature. It was important from the outset that students expressing an interest demonstrated a clear understanding of the principles of Learning Together as a shared and collaborative learning approach. A commitment to engage fully with the ten-week programme to ensure course continuity, and so that individual participation, which is a core part of the course could be successfully measured. In particular, it was essential to gauge the correct intentions of Middlesex students, and that interest was genuine to the enhancement of education and skill building, and not linked to a sense of voyeurism, or excitement at visiting a prison. Sensitivity and respect towards the prison system and the incarcerated population to whom we were joining, was paramount.

With regard to the Wandsworth students, the pre-module interview process was to consider the motivation and desire to learn on a criminology module of this type. It was also important to explore what they wanted to gain from the module, whether they had any concerns with regards to studying alongside community-based students, and how they hoped learning on the module would benefit them in the future.

Discussions were held early on in the set-up preparations about pre-requisites to study at the postgraduate level. Seeing the module was being delivered as a pilot, single module, rather than forming part of a programme, it was decided the pre-requisites to study at the postgraduate level¹¹ would be waived. It was the case though that a number of the HMP Wandsworth applicants held undergraduate degrees, or were in the middle of studying an Open University course. Any applicant who demonstrated enthusiasm to participate and commitment to take the study programme seriously, in addition to having a competent level of literacy and comprehension was considered. Given a core objective of the module was the co-creation of knowledge through the exchange of ideas and perspectives among a group of students with different life experiences, it was assumed the module learning outcomes would be easily achieved.

The main motivations expressed by the Wandsworth students included a keenness to learn, with particular interest shown to the subject of criminology, and the criminal legal process. It was apparent from both the application forms and interviews that a number of the men were keen to understand with more clarity, the underpinning rationale of the UK justice system with an interest in sentencing, disparity in sentence lengths and comparative prison systems. Moreover, the Wandsworth students saw themselves as having something valuable to contribute to a module of this nature, with personal experiences able to illuminate the theoretical perspectives that link to criminal justice. This is expressed in the following comments:

“I feel there are many contentious issues that have not been addressed or are pending that need to be brought to light about the prison system.”

¹¹ Pre-requisites to study on a postgraduate programme state candidates should be in receipt of an undergraduate degree of a lower second classification or above, or have relevant practice experience.

“I feel like my personal journey of life experience would give better balance than most in regards to the sociological and psychological elements of the lecture.”

The benefits of studying at a higher education level and the perceived impact it could have on navigating reintegration into society on release from prison was also a reason for applying:

“This module will help me grow as an individual and be a very influential part of my rehabilitation.”

The main inspiration for the Middlesex University students to study on the module included an interest in studying a course delivered in the unique field setting of a prison. Though, in many ways the Middlesex students’ enthusiasm related to their existing research, and professional practice interests. Two students were studying ‘restorative justice’ as part of their PhD studies, and one currently worked with homeless young adults. Gaining employment within the criminal justice system was mentioned, as was advancing current knowledge by applying classroom theoretical learning to real life.

January to May 2017 student cohort

Expressions of interest to study on the module were received from 16 men at Wandsworth and ten Middlesex students (n=26). Of these, the module commenced with 22 students (eight from Middlesex and 14 from Wandsworth), eventually finishing with 16 students – seven from Middlesex and nine from Wandsworth.

Five of the 14 Wandsworth students who started withdrew at different points in the course for reasons such as, commitments to other in-prison study courses, re-categorisation and lower security status enabling transfer to a different prison, and quite simply not being in the right mental and emotional space to continue the module at that time. In discussing levels of attrition, it must be noted that prisons by their very nature are transient places. HMP Wandsworth is a ‘local’ prison, and with this has a high turnover of men coming in and being transferred out to other prisons. One Middlesex student, to great disappointment, was unable to continue on the module due to medical reasons. The valuable contribution these five students made during their time on the module is acknowledged.

Three of the seven Middlesex students were PhD candidates in Law, Politics and Criminology, and four were on criminology Masters programmes¹². The prison students came from a variety of educational backgrounds with a mixture of those who had left school without formal qualifications, and those who had achieved GCSEs, A Levels and Bachelor degrees. Three were currently studying for Open University degrees. Most of the men were employed in the prison in roles including as a gym orderly, in health care, as peer mentors, in the prison ‘Listener’ scheme, and in catering.

Module assessment and achievement

The module assessment comprised three main tasks. One was a weekly ‘reflective learning log’ to be completed by each student based on each week’s readings and teaching sessions. These also served as a reference point for task based on individual contributions in the small group discussions. These two assessment accounted for 50 percent of the overall grade. Group facilitators kept a note of individual participation in the group discussions and each student received a short report appraising their contribution, development, and perceived potential at the

¹² One was on the MA Criminology programme and three studied the MSc. Criminology with Forensic Psychology.

end of the course. The second assessment comprising the other 50 percent involved a 1500 word written. The essay was intended to draw from the various lectures, thus engaging with issues such as youth justice, criminal court sentencing, offender rehabilitation and desistance, and comparative prison perspectives *etc.* All students completed the learning logs with relevant critical questioning incorporated throughout. Moreover, the learning logs provided useful information relating to the themes, concepts, and theories students most effectively related to.

All but three of the 16 students completed the final essay. Reflections on the impediments to prison students are included in the final section of this report. Both sets of students demonstrated within the essay thorough engagement with the module drawing upon theoretical concepts introduced in the different lectures. Exceptional results were achieved in a handful of submissions. The highest scoring student was from HMP Wandsworth.

Based on the commitment and total engagement with the module over its 10 week duration, all students were graded as passing the module. Of the 16 students who completed it three received distinction grades, eight achieved merit grades, four accomplished pass grades, and one Middlesex student's work was judged as a marginal pass. A number of the Wandsworth students were studying Open University degree courses at the same time as studying our Learning Together module, and all the Middlesex students were studying the module in addition to their Masters or PhD study programme. For a couple of the Wandsworth men it appeared this double demand had a bearing on their capacity to complete the final essay, and for some Middlesex students other module deadlines took priority.

Group facilitators

A key part of the module was the role of the small group facilitators. Based on the student cohort size and the aim to have no more than five students in the small discussion group, four group facilitators were recruited to perform this role. Their responsibility was to lead and effectively manage the small group discussions that followed each week's lecture and in line with the assessed component of the module, appraise each student's contribution to these discussions.

Mirroring the Learning Together model, group facilitators were engaged in the programme on a voluntary basis, and were drawn from known contacts of Middlesex's Criminology Department, specifically the recent pool of postgraduate students. Given the short time frame in getting the module set up, students known to hold an interest in prison issues, and/or who worked in related jobs were contacted to take part. Natalie Gray doubled up her role as module evaluator with performing as a group facilitator role. One group facilitator was recommended as a colleague of one other. The professional backgrounds among them comprised a probation officer working for a London-based probation agency (*i.e.* Community Resettlement Company – CRC). She was also an hourly-paid seminar tutor at Middlesex University; one was working as a homeless charity worker at HMP Bronzefield, and one was an employee of a CRC working at HMP Bronzefield.

Their interest in the role was mainly to expand their current experience of prison work and working with offenders, particularly within the positive nature of providing education within the prison estate. Each facilitator was aware of what was expected of them in terms of this particular learning environment, bringing together different groups of students, and that a safe environment was necessary for creating an atmosphere of trust and openness to facilitate knowledge exchange, creation and learning.

It is envisaged that the next Middlesex Wandsworth module run will recruit group facilitators from the first cohort of learners. A few have expressed interest in taking this on, and would indeed be suited and valuable in this role.

Evaluation methods expanded

The following section provides more detail on the purpose and benefits of the different methods used to evaluate the module. As noted, these included module feedback forms, one-to-one interviews, and classroom observations.

The module feedback forms were an essential component of the evaluation and were valuable for recording students' thoughts, feelings and aspirations based on this learning experience. The feedback asked how students related to the weekly readings, so to gauge understanding and interest in the set texts, and whether criminological concepts were sufficiently explained with relevant practical examples. Students were also asked to appraise the small group discussions and whether they helped link the lecture and readings to the group dialogue; the relevance of the subjects to students' experiences and knowledge, and finally whether the session helped students' think in new ways.

The end of module interviews carried out with both sets of students was a key component of the evaluation design. Not all students were able to participate, but three Middlesex and seven Wandsworth (n=10) students took part. The purpose of the interviews with the Wandsworth men was to capture their overall experience of studying the module, and how it altered the way they viewed their study capabilities. In essence, it was to grasp how the Learning Together style enables a process of change, and what this can mean in terms of the transformative effects of higher education in prison, and the unique aspect of learning through partnership.

The purpose of the interviews with Middlesex students was to explore similar ideas and concepts of transformative learning with a slightly different focus. Again, these centred on the overall experience of the Learning Together module; how this different learning environment may have enhanced criminological knowledge, enriched their student experience, and fostered future aspirations in employment or study routes. The idea of the co-creation of knowledge was explored and how bringing together personal experience, criminal justice theory, and knowledge sharing can be a powerful way to improve understanding.

The interviews with the criminology lecturers and group facilitators also captured personal overall experiences of involvement in the module, and what they gained from this as teaching practitioners and academics. This also enquired into views on whether they considered it an important learning environment and element to be added to current Middlesex pedagogy, and whether it is beneficial to students in terms of enhancing their knowledge, skills, and longer term employability chances.

The purpose of the classroom observations was to gain insight into the overall alignment of the module sessions. Although the teaching aspect of the Learning Together module was formulated along similar lines to modules taught at Middlesex University, it was important to take into account the different setting the staff and students were operating within, as well as the dynamics of how two student groups with different background experiences worked and engaged with each other. It was therefore important to observe each session: how these created debates and discussion; the extent to which students engaged with the readings and the lecture content, and whether the level and subject matter of each session was appropriate (and sensitive) to the audience. This is in a way over half of the students were experiencing the 'lived reality' of prison and to what extent the formula, in terms of the students' own knowledge and through dialogue

and exchange worked. The different discussions and interchanges between members of the groups were noted as far as possible to ensure parity, in that everyone had an equal voice, and that everyone was comfortable within the boundaries set in the first introductory session.

The purpose of the classroom observations were not, therefore, only to inform the delivery of future module runs, but were a dynamic indicator as to how each session was delivered and experienced on a session by session basis. As this was a pilot course, in a unique environment, and somewhat time sensitive, in terms of the 10 week period, it was important that the way the sessions were run was continually flexible. A review session at week four was helpful for informing how well the module was being received. In addition, this session provided students with an element of agency in the way they would like the remainder of the module to run: student ownership over the learning space and learning environment.

The report now moves to draw out the main findings from the evaluation.

Evaluation findings: outcomes and analysis

As discussed earlier in this report transformation is an underpinning theme of this evaluation. Indeed, a core purpose of this teaching and learning approach is that it is individually aspirational and socially transformative in nurturing individual growth, and in challenging social disadvantage as a barrier to higher education. The evaluation of the module has included qualitative data analysis to interpret the immediate impact of this transformational learning on students. Findings are discussed within the broad themes of positive, enriching learning spaces, the co-creation of knowledge, ‘normalization’ in prison education as a facilitator of change, and the immediate transformative effects the module has on individuals, institutions and broader social views.

Learning Together as an enriching learning environment

Overall the module was received by all who were involved as an extremely positive and valuable experience. The positive, enriching experience was in terms of the interesting and stimulating topics covered, the individual learning achievements, and the wider benefits in terms of the personal cognitive change in motivation and ambition. This extended across all students who studied the module, the different Middlesex lecturers who ran specialist subject sessions, the volunteer group facilitators, the Wandsworth education staff, and senior governors of the prison. Moreover, as the course progressed, reports of its success filtered back to Middlesex University with accompanying pride among senior colleagues who supported the delivery of this initiative from the outset.

As illustrated in the following comments, student reflections centred on points such as the sense of challenge and achievement they derived from participating and successfully completing the module, as well as commenting on the unique learning model applied. The Middlesex students especially commented on the gratifying opportunity they had been given to learn alongside people in prison. To them, this was an enriching experience they emphasized could never be achieved through any subject expert, or specialist criminal justice texts. These benefits are summed up in the following comments provided by Middlesex participants:

“Overall I think it was fantastic. ...one of the main things that drew me to it was the fact that it was going to be this very immersive experience that had two elements of society that don’t necessarily overlap very frequently.”
(Middlesex University)

“It was an invaluable lesson being with those that have been through the criminal justice system...we wouldn’t have had this any other way.” (Middlesex University)

“This kind of experience is not replaceable...from talking to those students (Wandsworth)...that is something I could never get from a book...” (Middlesex University)

“This course enables students from all walks of life to discuss, interpret and get to know more about experience of the inmates, pre, during and post their time in prison, which helped me have an open mind and look at things from different perspectives. The group discussions were very insightful, and with this sort of reflective discussions and learning, I have come out of the module with more awareness and knowledge about the field of study.” (Middlesex University)

Equally, the Wandsworth students were highly praising of their study experience in terms of the confidence and pride it had left them with, but also for the opportunity given to them to study in a university style environment while in prison. As noted, the provision of higher education above Level 3 in prisons is limited (Coates, 2016). For some Wandsworth students who reported early school leaving, studying the module was a chance to test their capabilities and enthusiasm for this higher level of education. The following comment illustrates the ambition garnered from one young man’s involvement:

“It was fantastic and I enjoyed challenging myself, my opinions and others’ opinions... [it gave] a sense of achievement. I want to do the best I can and get the highest mark” (HMP Wandsworth)

Much of the purpose of Learning Together was to enhance and expand upon theoretical understandings of criminology and criminal justice issues. A key motivation and common theme for most students joining the module was a keenness to learn and to apply criminology and theoretical understandings to a real life setting. What emerged from the evaluation data was that the Wandsworth students particularly appreciated receiving education that emulated university with specialist lecturers, academic journal readings, and set critical questions relating to each session. Comment on the immediate impact of the module included what they enjoyed learning within the sessions. One Wandsworth student said when asked one thing he had been left with at the end of the course was “a broader knowledge of criminology”. Another student said the “course opened my mind on how the criminal justice system and procedures work.”

Co-creating knowledge

The ethos on which the Learning Together programme is founded, is based on the partnership between prisons and universities where students learn with, and from each other. Part of the model centres on the knowledge that is co-created among study participants. In drawing specific examples and learning points from the *‘Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice’* module, we contribute to the literature and evidence base on the co-creation of knowledge by learners (Oliver, 2015; Trencher *et al*, 2015; Haggis, 2006), specifically relating to criminology. The theme of co-creating knowledge through embedding personal life experience meant students from HMP Wandsworth were able to share their ‘insider’ knowledge of prison and the criminal justice system. In a range of instances it greatly helped the application of theoretical content used within the module. It is important to point out that careful attention was paid not to allow the Wandsworth students to become a special focus of interest due to their daily lived experience of

prison, and the detailed stories they could impart. It was important however, that effort was put into keeping discussions rooted in analytical debate, space was given over to those who wanted to share personal experiences.

The co-creation of knowledge through dialogue that was interpreted by the students as “fruitful” was evidenced in a number of topic areas covered in the sessions. One in particular was the session on *Desistance and Desistance Theory* and the discussion the role the probation service plays in this process. Students from Wandsworth discussed their experiences of working with probation and the fact that, partly due to their immense caseloads, but also relating to the risk assessment methods that dominate current practice, the relationship between probation officers’ and their clients is often lacking, with views held that meetings with probation staff had become ‘box-ticking exercises’. This reality was verified by our group facilitators who themselves work in the reorganized, and often criticized probation service of England and Wales¹³. In the main, this relates to the high client caseloads, which impacts negatively on the practical help that can be provided to those it is supposed to support. One of the Wandsworth students recounted his previous release from prison and being housed in a hostel miles away from his family. The idea of the ‘relational process’, and that family should be central to rehabilitation and resettlement processes as included in the recent prison reform objectives, does not work on a practical level.

Students were able to use the desistance session to make alternative proposals, including engaging ‘sponsors’ from the community to help with processes of reintegration upon release, and in monitoring rehabilitation successes. Providing practical help, such as writing references for employment, or for further study were suggested as useful support. The co-creation of knowledge as it worked in our classroom was specifically noted by the Middlesex students as beneficial for comprehending processes and procedures embedded within different parts of the criminal justice system, and the issues and challenges the system faces, that went well beyond what could be learned from text books.

“I learned about the criminal justice system in the UK, its advantages and shortcomings, its benefits and flaws, not just from an academic perspective, but also from a real life, lived experiences as related to us by the men at HMP Wandsworth. Up until now, the knowledge we received...was a theoretical, academic one.” (Middlesex University)

Another example of the way knowledge is co-created within a module of this type followed from the session on *Sentencing and the Criminal Courts*. Students talked about the impact the ‘prison recall’ policy¹⁴ is having on the prison population, and to issues of overcrowding. The prison recall population has increased significantly since the early 2000s, and sharply in the last two years (Ministry of Justice, 2016b; Hardwick, 2017)¹⁵. The knowledge passed from the

¹³ Under the various criminal justice reforms that have occurred under the Conservative-led UK government since 2010, the probation service has been radically reorganized to that which some argue is having devastating consequences in terms of insufficient resources to effectively manage and assist offenders attempting to reintegrate into society on release from prison (Ministry of Justice, Transforming Rehabilitation).

¹⁴ Prison recall policy has been altered under various legislative Acts such as the *Criminal Justice Act 2003*, the *Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008*, and the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*. This latter Act means anyone sentenced to over a day in custody will be placed on 12 month’s community supervision on release from prison. If a person released from prison on temporary license (ROTL) breaches their conditions they can be recalled back to prison to serve an additional 28 days, or the remainder of their license (Ministry of Justice, 2016). This is having a significant impact on the proportion of the prison population who are there as recalled prisoners.

Wandsworth students shed light on how easy it is to unintentionally breach the conditions of a license, such as missing, or being late for an appointment. For a number of Wandsworth students, this session was personal and some men experienced difficulty in separating their own experiences from the wider literature being discussed. However, it was through this session that we could learn the real impact of this government policy, and the wider implications on the system.

A final example of the co-creation of knowledge as it occurred on our module related to the session on *Comparative Prison Perspectives*. This focused on the ‘Nordic model’ of imprisonment and the concept of ‘penal exceptionalism’ (Pratt, 2008*a*, 2008*b*; Ugelivik, 2016). The Nordic model is typically referred to for its underpinning values of ‘normalization’ in efforts towards effective rehabilitation. Students discussed the advantages of a penal model based on welfare and ‘normalisation’ (Wright, 2014), such as Norway’s. A Wandsworth student provided knowledge through personal experience, and could give a critique of how the Nordic model can be challenged in regard to the differential treatment of Foreign National Prisoners (FPN) (*cf.* Barker, 2012). This added a new dimension that would not have occurred outside the prison setting, and contributed to a broader appreciation of the way model types are devised in academic theorizing, and indeed the limitations they can hold.

The explanations based on real-life experiences added richness to the theories discussed and brought to light a number of issues that contributed to students’ understanding of the criminal justice system. From this, ideas were essentially created within the group on how challenges could be met, and alternatives considered. In this way, it can be stated the Middlesex Learning Together module is embedding relevant and current problem-solving skills among its students. Problem-solving skills are a key pedagogical approach promoted in higher education. This is for the value it can bring to decisions and leadership in contemporary, workplace settings.

This is highlighted in the following quote:

“I’m not a student of criminology...So for me it was an incredibly humbling experience to be able to learn from people in society that I don’t necessarily come across in my day to day life and also to speak to them on such a level that was so insightful in terms of their own experiences, and the fact that they were open to speak of those experiences...the discussions were so fruitful...that could help narrate changes within the criminal justice system.”
(Middlesex University)

Normalisation

One consequence of the Learning Together module, working alongside students from ‘outside’ of the prison establishment is that it presents an element of normalization. The concept of normalisation as it is applied to prison management is that it aims to bring prison life as close as possible to normal life outside of the prison (Rentzmann, 1996). Wandsworth prison has conveyed a commitment to the principle of normalization in working towards more effective rehabilitation of the men in their care, as far as can be practicably achieved (Wandsworth Reform Prison, 2016). By creating social spaces for people in prison that replicate normal life so that ‘self-identities typical of everyday life on the outside’ can be constructed, normalisation theorists believe this facilitates successful reintegration into the community (Wright, 2014). In reference to

¹⁵ Professor Nick Hardwick Chair of the Parole Board in England and Wales since 2016 in speaking at the 2017 Middlesex University prisons roundtable on reform and prison population size said “the bar is too low for recall and it is too high for release on parole”.

the Learning Together module, in some ways the classroom provided a respite from the everyday reality of being in prison, where normal life does not exist. Daily prison life is regimented, restricted, and highly dependent. Attending our weekly classroom space was looked forward to, with the normalizing aspect of it frequently referred. The Wandsworth students expressed the classroom did not feel like prison over the two and a half hours learning among the Middlesex students. No prison officers were present and an environment of trust was cultivated from the start. Complete equity between the students was established in that all were studying a Middlesex University module, with no interest in personal histories or prior educational background favoured. The atmosphere of complete parity created in the classroom between the learners, and the way it was experienced by the men as studying in a “normal environment” can be interpreted as helping the Wandsworth men to move from the status of a prisoner, to a more empowering and hopeful self-identity as a student.

There was appreciation of the sense of inclusion created within the classroom space. One Wandsworth student said involvement in the module gave him the feeling of being “back to the community again.” A theme that emerged from the application forms and interviews with the Wandsworth men was a level of consciousness of how they would be perceived by people from the ‘outside’. One man noted when asked if he had any concerns about taking part in a module - “only the possibility of being stigmatized.” It was clear from the outset, and from the post-module interviews that the sense of inclusion was uniquely powerful in the way “the university accepted us as one of them”. This undoubtedly helped with the cohesion and confidence established among the group, which was so pivotal for these learners to put forward their beliefs and opinions in a non-judgmental fashion and allowing for the dynamic interrogation of ideas. The following comment demonstrates the powerful reminder of the sense of stigma that is carried, which will need to be overcome while navigating community reintegration.

“Their reaction to me as a prisoner gives me confidence there will be some people who will accept me (on the outside).” (HMP Wandsworth)

Academics undertaking prison education work tend to be committed to wider prison reform and prisoners’ rights issues, and endeavor to perform and mobilise change where possible. The emphasis paid here to ‘normalization’ and our contribution to providing a learning space that develops and utilizes existing talent and the competence of people in prison, rather than wasting it during periods of incarceration can be said to relate to these wider beliefs and values. This links to the articulated interest as set out in the Coates review (2016) on the need to capitalize on the educational capabilities of people in prison.

This recognition was powerfully articulated at the end of module graduation ceremony by one of the Wandsworth men, who expressed the collective sentiment of the men and appreciation at being given the opportunity to study the module. His comments effectively articulated the way we had seen the value of highlighting potential rather than emphasizing the deficit of people in prison:

“I want to say thank you to my fellow desisters, not ex-offenders, for proving that we’re an asset to society and not a liability to society.” (HMP Wandsworth)

Part of the aim of the module was that it can develop and build skills that are transferable and that enhance future employability. Themes emerged from the students that the style of learning as conducted among a diverse group of people with very different background experiences, helped to develop different skills to those ordinarily focused on in campus-based class

discussions. One Middlesex student considered that she is now more open-minded following her involvement in the Learning Together module as illustrated in the following comment. None of the Middlesex students had previously been in a prison and a number could be viewed as having limited insights into the complex reasons that surround incarceration. This exposure is deemed as highly important for criminology students of potential criminal justice sector employees.

“I can communicate with people from different backgrounds by being more open-minded” (Middlesex University)

With regards to the aim that the module can transform and shape future aspirations, many of the students talked about how Learning Together made them want to further their studies, or that it had given ideas for future employment that would not otherwise have occurred to them. In particular, one Wandsworth student noted the module had given him ideas to combine his accountancy skills with the criminology experience he now has, to use in the future in data analysis and Social Science research. He expressed thoughts of studying at Middlesex University in the future. Another student noted how getting into education at this higher level had given him the confidence to undertake further studies. There is an opportunity for Middlesex University to take a lead in establishing and supporting prison to university pathways that is evidently needed. Moreover, it is precisely what Coates (2016) requested Higher Education Institutes and Universities engage with. HMP Wandsworth is a London-based prison and pipelines to Middlesex University can be opened through the Middlesex Wandsworth Learning Together module.

In terms of employability, Middlesex University students expressed the module had created a heightened interest and aspiration to work in the criminal justice sector:

“I want to work with them. We all make mistakes and we shouldn’t let our mistakes define us” (Middlesex University)

One student is inspired to set up a similar project in China when he returns on completion of his PhD study. He mentioned how he had been paying careful attention to the way the module was implemented in terms of the way it was organized and structured, the manner of communication, and group management skills:

“I want to have something similar, or even the same module, back in China if I got the chance...It was very helpful and a very valuable experience for me.” (Middlesex University)

Part of the transformative effect of Learning Together as an immediate impact was the achievement of changing perceptions among students. As noted, many of the Wandsworth students expressed apprehension they would be judged by the community-based students on why they were in prison - “I was quite nervous because of the perception that they would have of us”. As discussed, the students established an equal relationship from the start, cultivated by the environment the Learning Together ethos creates. The students overcame any negative perceptions themselves from being in small mixed groups where dialogue opened up the sharing of ideas and experiences and helped appreciate that crime and offending is nuanced and complex with many variants and causal factors. This helped to “close the gap” and alter perceptions.

“People have a different perceptions of prisoners, but once they get to know us, [we’re] more than that, like friendly people...we’re just normal people at

the end of the day” and changing perceptions will “give others a chance, down the line, in employing ex-offenders.” (HMP Wandsworth)

“[It has] opened up a different view...a whole new experience where we have actually learnt so much from them (Wandsworth students), more than they’ve learnt from us...the view that all criminals are dangerous can change” (Middlesex University)

Learning Together as a facilitator of individual, social, and institutional transformation

From evaluating how the module delivery and content was received, and the students’ overall experiences, transformation within individuals emerged as a theme. This is a key principle embedded within the Learning Together model, and within wider desistance theory which places emphasis on the importance of positive identity change (McNeill and Schinkel, 2016).

Individual transformation

A number of students, particularly from Wandsworth expressed thoughts on their personal growth and involvement in the module as part of a ‘journey’ in shaping new identities. This was from an emotional viewpoint, and in a practical sense of gaining new skills, that can be put towards future employment and further study.

In response to the question on the overall feeling students had been left with, a Wandsworth student who reported a fragmented early education expressed real pride in himself for succeeding in the module – “I’m proud of myself for doing it”. He also mentioned the pride his father had in him for his achievements. The power of education was apparent within many of the comments connected to feelings of raised self-esteem and self-confidence. These are important attributes for all student learners, but for some of the prison students who had not previously experienced education in any satisfying way, it is likely the Learning Together approach that embeds empowerment and self-belief is likely to have an enduring impact. It is hoped our longer-term follow up research will capture this with resulting positive outcomes.

Social transformation

In addition to the evident individual transformations that were emerging, social transformation is also a potential outcome of the Learning Together approach. The results that can engage from prisons extending beyond their walls into the community, and the outside community penetrating and positively contributing to what goes on in prisons, is socially transformative. Armstrong and Ludlow (2016), founders of the Learning Together project suggest by bringing prisons to the outside community and the outside community into prisons; effectively delivering ‘education across walls’, contributes to social responsibility and enhances wider societal awareness. On asking the Middlesex students the nature of the discussions they were having with friends and family about the in-prison learning they were engaged in, insightful responses were revealed:

“..it opens up this great conversation about how useful and kind of wonderful a programme like this in terms of ... breaking down barriers and creating commonality .. for me it’s been the great basis for larger conversations about criminal justice and the way we perceive people who are incarcerated”. (Middlesex University)

“I think probably for most people they didn’t know this is going on in prison,, for example I told him [flatmate] “those gentlemen are very clever, they are so clever. They understand the articles and the readings very fast”. I would

say “they surprised me a lot because they talked about those theories, you know knowledge through their own experience and they even extend those knowledge to something that I am not so familiar”. So I told him, “do not underestimate anyone because of where they are going and what they experience, no, because they are good and they have such big potential to achieve more than normal person, even as I do”. Yeah. So and I told them about the last ceremony and the graduation, I told them “it was so touching”. (Middlesex University)

Institutional transformation

It is argued that programmes such as the Learning Together initiative encourage a more pluralistic culture in universities that can be transformative for the institution, as well as for the individuals participating. Middlesex University is committed to being a socially inclusive university, welcoming students from diverse learning backgrounds. Involvement with this initiative is important evidence for Middlesex University to demonstrate its commitment to the ‘widening participation’ agenda. This is currently promoted in higher education and is defined by removing barriers and facilitating entry for people from non-traditional educational and social backgrounds. Moreover, it will mark Middlesex University as an institution that strongly embeds principles of social justice and equality of opportunity and diversity.

With regards to the Middlesex lecturers who taught on the module, all expressed a huge appreciation at being given the opportunity to extend their teaching practice into a prison-based classroom. A number of the lecturers had not previously been inside a prison, and it was evident the value derived from this experience was transforming in terms of being introduced to the talent among in-prison learners, and a keenness to continue working on the module. The following comment given by a Middlesex lecturer draws attention to the unique teaching experience it provided, with the feeling of collaboration emphasized - “It was an extraordinary teaching experience...one of the most collaborative teaching experiences...”

University students of criminal justice need a broad and impassioned understanding of offender groups, their abilities, aspirations and hopes. Traditional university class teaching can only partially illuminate these. Providing an opportunity for university students to learn alongside the offender groups they are likely to seek employment with, can help nurture the right attitudes of acceptance, belief, and respect among future criminal justice employees.

...for more than ten years I studied in an academic area. I didn’t have experience talking to those, or working in this study area, ... So everything I learned probably about crime and criminal justice was from books or articles. But this kind of experience is not replaceable. As I say I can only learn from participating in the field study, from talking to those students. That is something I could never get from a book. So mutual understanding is one thing. And can I say something, I don’t know how to describe this kind of feeling, but something really touched my heart, can I say a touching experience. (Middlesex University)

Our evaluation of the Wandsworth module has generated a wealth of important data of which only some has been included here. Analysis of the data is ongoing and further engagement with it will take place as we seek to establish the outcomes of involvement in the module over the longer-term.

Revisions for future module delivery

From the module feedback the students provided, as well as through observing class session in action, there are some aspects that can be tweaked or changed to facilitate improved delivery and learning.

From our experience of getting the module off the ground, it was clear that a programme of this nature needed complete buy-in from the top-down in both institutions – the university and the prison. In terms of the prison, a pre-existing relationship with the then governor of HMP Wandsworth - Mr. Ian Bickers - was the link from which the implementation of the module became possible. It was, however, the partnership with the current prison education provider NOVUS that enabled its successful operation and delivery. Just in terms of operational management, it would not have been possible to execute the weekly module sessions without members of the education staff, who facilitated the men arriving in the classroom by physically going on to the landings, opening cell doors, bringing men from their work places and so on. It was apparent, just in this small way, that policy decisions in terms of staffing levels has a profound effect on the operation of purposeful activity, a central element of prison.

It also became clear that the assessment, in terms of the written essay, might need to be reviewed. This is mainly because of the limited resources at the prison in terms of reading materials (although many text books were kindly donated to the prison by colleagues of Middlesex University's Criminology Department), as well as a lack of computer/internet access to the men.

Other Learning Together partnerships have used the module sessions for students to work collaboratively to produce and present a piece of work, which, alongside the reflective learning logs, formed the module assessment. Going forward, it is planned the essay will become part of the module sessions rather than expecting its completion outside of the classroom. From discussion with Wandsworth permanent education staff, this approach is favoured due to an acceptance of the practical everyday difficulties the Wandsworth men live with in terms the limited time out of their cells, and adequate quiet study space, which is invariably a disadvantage to them.

A common remark made within the feedback from students was that the module should be longer than the current 10-week sessions. From their experiences and similar feedback, the University of Cambridge is proposing a module a longer module. We can explore offering the module as 30 credits instead of 20, which would also enable transferring the credit points to Open University credits to assist those who study our module in addition to an OU degree.

Some of the feedback from students called for the use of PowerPoint slides as part of the learning materials, as well as requesting more, and better access to learning resources in general. We will work with the education team at Wandsworth to identify core criminology and criminal justice texts that can be made available through the prison library and each lecture session will be delivered with PowerPoint slides.

Learning Together mentoring programme

As part of the underpinning Learning Together philosophy, emphasis is placed on the importance of staying in touch with students as a community of life-long learners to continue to learn with and from each other. Not only is this important for ongoing research into the transformative effect of higher education and prison university partnerships, but it can involve students within the delivery of future modules. The University of Cambridge established a mentoring programme when their students asked 'what next?' This involved mentoring training

for ex-Learning Together students at the end of each course in partnership with community-led mentoring programme run by ex-offenders who work in prison. A number of the Wandsworth students are currently peer mentors in prison, or training to be. This could be built upon to include mentoring within the Learning Together initiative. It would mean previous students offering learning support as part of the small groups within the module sessions as well as supporting students outside of the classroom via reading and essay support groups or one-on-one sessions. This would help to establish a pipeline for progression beyond module completion.

Conclusion

The systematic evaluation of the Middlesex Wandsworth Learning Together module revealed a wealth of information on the successful delivery of this initiative. The positive responses from all involved provide evidence that this is a beneficial exercise in terms of fostering talent, expanding and diversifying learning experiences, and building collaborative learning partnerships.

Involvement in the programme provided students with a unique experience that incorporated reflection on the learning journey and the meaning of learning with, and from others. As such, the students who studied on the module actively participated in the co-creation of a model of learning that developed capacity for critical engagement (evaluation and synthesis) through dialogue and the in-class exchange of perspectives and ideas. The module style generates a dynamic learning space in which ideas and assumptions are explored and challenged alongside people from different social backgrounds and life experiences. It is an educational experience that is individually transformative in the way it develops self-confidence and purpose, and reinforces values of acceptance and inclusion. It inspires students to continue their reflective learning journeys so to positively shape futures for themselves that are productive, fulfilling, and which utilise personal talents and skills.

Involvement in partnerships forged within the community in the way this collaboration is formed, means that Middlesex University is taking a lead role within Greater London in shaping and responding to the agenda of University partnership building. By forming strong partnerships outside of the university, Middlesex University's position is strengthened within education, industry, and the public sector, and is thus institutionally transformative in this way. Furthermore, it means the university is taking a lead role in advocating a more flexible skills model that drives social mobility. Expanding areas for research and knowledge transfer enables Middlesex University to showcase the value and type of higher education it offers, and to empower and transform students and reduce barriers to entry. It also helps to create and strengthen a community of life-long learners.

The foreseeable transformative effect from a teaching and learning method of the Learning Together programme requires a period of continued self-reflection. In terms of future research based on the foundations of this study, this can extend to the post-release outcomes for prison learners. This is in order to understand how, when and why transformative learning experiences translate into positive outcomes, as well as documenting the future destinations of university learners. The research team has asked participants to complete consent forms to stay in touch with all of the students to facilitate future research.

A core feature of criminology teaching at Middlesex is to appreciate the complex and nuanced nature of crime and offending, and prisons and prison issues are a compulsory part of our course curriculum. A number of students develop interests in working with offender and prison populations. It is therefore imperative that Middlesex University is open to encouraging avenues

into this important area of employment, and that the risk and ethical dimensions faced within this work are embraced without institutional fear and overly sensitive interpretations.

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