

## University Education in Prison: the ethnographic story of a (participatory) research journey.<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

In recent decades, university education in prisons has experienced significant global expansion, driven by a renewed awareness of the transformative potential of education in contexts of deprivation of liberty. This development reflects a consolidated normative recognition of education as a fundamental human right, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reaffirmed by key international instruments concerning social, cultural, and educational rights (UDHR 1948; UNESCO 1960; ICESCR 1966).

Within prison contexts characterised by endemic overcrowding, institutional fragmentation, and resource scarcity, educational practices may become “special observers of invisible realities, megaphones to make ‘inner voices’ heard, privileged channels for opening dialogue with other external communities<sup>2</sup>.”

In this vein, starting from an educational experience within an university course in prison, in which research activities were re-signified and mobilised as educational practice, this article aims to understand whether and how

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the outcome of the collaboration of the authors. However, in order to ascribe responsibility, we declare that Maria Chiara Calo’ wrote *Introduction, Prison and University at stake: a Theoretical Challenge, Context: the Prison University Campus, Hepna: the beginning of our journey*. Sandra Vatrella is the author of *Hepna in progress* and *Conclusions*.

<sup>2</sup> So, the Inner voices mentioned in the last paragraph

engagement in research may produce effects that can be analytically interpreted as de-prisonizing, by exploring its potential contribution to reshaping students' relations to knowledge, to themselves, and to the institutional space they inhabit.

To this aim, it presents a still-in-progress project entitled *Higher Education in Prison: Needs Analysis* (HEPNA). It is a project launched at the Prison University Campus (P.U.C.) of Naples "Federico II" that involves a group of incarcerated students who participate as researchers in shaping the research process, its tools, data collection and analysis practices.

In what follows, we first outline the theoretical framework that informs our work and briefly describe the context in which the project unfolded. We then offer an ethnographic account of the process.

### **Prison and University at stake: a Theoretical Challenge**

The article develops a theoretical framework that brings classic studies on the Prison Community (Clemmer 1958) into dialogue with critical approaches in the sociology of education. In particular, it draws on Foucauldian studies with specific reference to the relationship between discipline (1975) and subjectivation (2001).

In this sense, we refer to the Prison Community as the social world that produces itself and re-produces through the mechanisms of prisonization: processes that operate by means of internal norms and codes affecting the ways individuals come to relate to themselves and to others.

In our case, these mechanisms operate primarily by governing the conditions of speech and audibility. Their effects are observable above all in the behavioural conformity of docile bodies – accustomed to silence and trained to avoid forbidden words – who daily experience the difficulty of expressing and acting upon a desire or a will, as well as the experience of not being heard.

However, when the Prison community comes into relation with the University community, the mechanisms of prisonization are somehow undermined.

As Borghini, Pastore and Tancorre (2016, 193) suggest, the presence of the university in prison can introduce innovative elements into processes of prisonization, mitigating some coercive features of the total institution while establishing symbolic and practical bridges between inside and outside.

From this perspective, attention shifts away from prisonization understood solely as a disciplinary effect and towards learning processes as potential sites of what we define as *de-prisonization*.

To analyse such shifts, we draw on Foucault's notion of technologies of the self (Foucault 1988), understood as socially mediated practices through which individuals act upon themselves in order to transform their thoughts, conduct, and modes of being. In the case discussed here, research-based education functions as a context-bound strategy that enables students to engage in a sustained exercise of "putting oneself to the test" and a practice of reflexivity that allows them to enact "a concern with self that involves a new experience of self" (Ivi, 28).

Putting oneself to the test refers to the critical practice through which subjects confront their own features and limits within contemporary reality, to identify possible points of transformation and to shape the concrete form that such change might take.

By reflexivity, we refer to the exercise through which subjects turn themselves into objects of critical inquiry, enacting a concern with the self that at the same time opens up cognitive and speculative possibilities.

That being said, the de-prisonizing processes we discover become visible in specific transformations that - as we will show - we conceive not as stable achievements, but as contributions to situated and reversible forms of self-government.

This framework directs attention now to the institutional context within which certain processes of learning – and *transformation* – become possible in prison. Accordingly, in what follows, a brief description of the context is provided.

### **Context: the Prison University Campus**

HEPNA takes place within Italian Prison University Campuses (P.U.C.), whose history dates back to 1998 at "Le Vallette" prison in Turin. Since then, the collaboration between prisons and universities has made it possible to launch important study programmes in various prisons throughout the country. However, it was only in 2018, with the establishment of the National Conference of Delegates of University Rectors for Prison University Centre

(CNUPP<sup>3</sup>), that the formal coordination of those responsible for university-level educational activities in prisons was achieved. Since 2018, more than 40 universities have joined the project, promoting teaching and training activities in 120 prisons for approximately 1,837 enrolled students (CNUPP report 2025). In that same year, the University of Naples Federico II also joined these universities by establishing its own P.U.C. in the “P. Mandato” prison in Secondigliano.

In this context, the P.U.C. of the University of Naples Federico II stands out for the specificity of the residential model it has adopted: it is, in fact, among the few examples at the national level that provide a section dedicated to incarcerated students, within which it is possible to combine the residential dimension with the pursuit of a university degree program.

In particular, the detained students are housed in two dedicated units: one high-security wing, Ionio, and one medium-security wing, Mediterraneo.

The Ionio unit, in particular, hosts a dedicated section in which around 50 students, enrolled in 13 different degree programmes, live together. Within this section, in addition to the sleeping quarters, there are also three classrooms that students use both to attend lectures and to study independently or with their fellow students. It is precisely through this organisational arrangement that the university community enters the prison, and the outside world finally crosses its boundaries.

So far, we have described the context in which the project is taking place. From this point onward, we move into the core of the work, which began as a teaching experience in the Sociology of Education course at the P.U.C. we have been responsible for since 2023. It is in this specific context that we work and HEPNA gradually took shape.

Consistently, in what follows, we present a sort of ethnographic page, field notes interwoven with some theoretical observations about the data we have collected up to now<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Set up within the Conference of Italian University Rectors (in Italian CRUI)

<sup>4</sup> The ethnographic account is based on empirical data that includes fieldnotes, classroom interactions, collectively produced research documents (e.g., the questionnaire and its revisions), and written/oral contributions prepared by student-researchers for public events. Identifying details have been modified to protect participants, in line with institutional requirements and consent procedures.

## **Hepna: the beginning of our journey**

What does education in prison mean? What meanings should the sociology of education take on in prison? What kinds of learning goals should be pursued? What learning outcomes should be expected? What methods, strategies and teaching practices can and should be enacted?

These are only some of the questions that arise for those called upon to take on the challenge of teaching in prison. It was from these, and from many other questions, that our own teaching journey began. That is, muddling through the need to listen to students and the possibility of building a shared path. On the one hand, we were confronted with the need to overcome the tendency to silence due to a sort of “shyness of poor<sup>5</sup>” (linked to a shame of crime and a chagrin of punishment) that the students come with. On the other hand, we felt the possibility of constructing with them a shared heritage of new meanings. In this way, amid doubts and questions, we began looking for an instrument drawing on the toolbox of research methodology, a toolbox we started to think of as a box containing teaching strategies. This led to the idea of referring to the biographical approach in social research (Rosental 2004; Bertaux 2016; Tamboukou 2010), and then, of developing the instrument that we called educational biography, i.e. a life story in which events and experiences, people and relationships, spaces and contexts are re-interpreted in terms of their educational functions. This implies, following Biesta (2015), that in our attempt, students should have learned to remember, re-read and recognise their life in terms of the qualifications they acquired, the socialisation processes in which they have been engaged in their life-path, and the experiences of subjectivation they had and would like to develop in view of the future.

Once the tool had been identified, we launched the laboratory, but the attempt to enable students to reflect on and re-signify their biographies produced only partially successful results.

Our aim was for students to retell and reinterpret their personal stories as expressions and integral parts of a collective history, using sociological conceptual tools.

However, the results proved interesting less for the contents themselves or for the students’ ability to experience theory as embodied within personal and

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<sup>5</sup> The expression is taken from the book *Lettere a una professoressa. Scuola di Barbiana* (Milani, L. 2017)

collective histories, and more for the statements they were eventually able to articulate and the claims they could finally voice.

In this regard, it is interesting to note how knowledge changed between the first and the last lesson.

During the first lesson, when we asked:  
What does education mean?

The students replied:

Education means not causing trouble, not shouting, not mistreating women, not taking the place of an elderly person.

At first, education is something that students can define only by referring to a specific context of meaning (that of good manners). Moreover, they can define this context only by providing operational definitions constructed by resorting to the figure of speech called litotes (double negative, the denial of a supposed contrary), i.e. avoiding affirmative phrases.

During the last lesson on the same question, the students answered:

We realised we didn't know it... Education is what you learn by living, what you learn with others, and what you learn from others. What do we do now? It's difficult to re-establish a knowledge, a meaning, that we took for granted...

Then they continued:

Then there is re-education. Only here (in prison), the term re-education is used, but this makes time in prison a stigma. We were about 20, when mistakes were easy to make, pressure was easy... today, after more than 20 years, we really needed someone to put us to the test. It would be important to put the education and the re-education programmes we undertook to the test.

Comparing the excerpts from the first lesson with those from the last, we can see how the students moved from silence to speech, from denial to affirmation as capacity to express themselves through the need to show and demonstrate the effects of a transformation.

They seem to say that the critical attitude they developed must also be an experimental one. In other words, students seem to say with Foucault: "this work done at the limits of ourselves must [...] put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and

desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take" (Foucault in Rabinow 1998a: 316).

After about a month, the students passed the exam with flying colours. Yet, a subtle sense of dissatisfaction joined us: the feeling of a journey that had just begun, of a horizon barely glimpsed.

So far, we have described the first year of the course in sociology of education. From here on, the story gets complicated.

### **Hepna in progress**

The new academic year begins, but:

There is only one student - so we are told - the course is at risk, and perhaps it is no longer running.

Thus, we prepared for the first lesson of the new year at P.U.C. without high expectations, but when we entered the classroom, we found something unexpected: four students waiting to welcome us. A new student and, alongside him, those from the previous year.

We want to continue!

That's what the students told us during the first lecture of the year, showing themselves in the expression of a desire and a will. It is at the same time the practice and the aspiration of testing oneself, an exercise that gives rise to that practice of reflexivity that still accompanies us today.

This is how we started our discussion of what we wanted to do and what we could do, talking about possibilities and expectations, speaking about needs: The need to show up for themselves (or to be present for themselves) and to share their stories.

The need to share the 'bad' lesson they learned because it is their story to tell.

The possibility of building meaning and creating other time, not to atone for their wrongdoing, but for the need to participate, because they tell me:

Everyone talks about us, but no one asks us anything. No one thinks about giving us a microphone.

It began from here, the idea of building this possibility. The possibility of authors writing their own narrative, an informed and competent narrative to be told in the first person and to be a mouthpiece for.

Thus, the idea emerged of launching an education and research journey centred on students and their knowledge, their lives, their rights and, last but not least, their voice.

So, we spent the month of January as a brainstorming session driven by a few key questions. Among others:

- How can we make the most of our knowledge? How can we put our knowledge to work?
- What can we do in the context full of limitations for us and them in which we are all working on?
- What can we authoritatively talk about and knowingly (consciously) build on?

These are just some of the questions that arose during our meetings. But it is precisely by answering these questions that both the research group and project gradually took shape.

Regarding the research group, we formed a team composed of five researchers: the two of us and three students from the sociology degree course at the P.U.C. in Secondigliano: Antonio, Luigi e Angelo.

Regarding the research project, our reflection led us to identify higher education in prison and the educational needs of P.U.C. students as areas of inquiry, to further question the different meanings that education in prison itself assumes, as well as its multiple functions (qualification, socialisation, and subjectivation [Biesta 2010; 2016]).

Needless to say, the research aims we identified also represent educational aims. First, due to the themes that the project intercepts, i.e. topics that students can address, recognising (valorising and enhancing) the competences they bring. Second, due to the role they acquire in the field. The project represents the possibility of being part of a research path that makes students responsible for themselves and others: actors in a process of understanding that leads to a process of change. It means, in a Foucauldian perspective, a process in which caring for self means caring for others so as to render oneself and others

competent to “occupy a place in the city, in the community, or in interindividual relationships” (Foucault 1984: 118).

In order to pursue both research and educational aims, we constructed a methodological strategy addressing and incorporating both the limitations and the possibilities afforded by the context.

Regarding this, it is important to point out that – as we said before - the P.U.C. community, i.e. the space where the educational needs we investigate take shape, represents a sort of campus within a prison facility. Therefore, our subject is particularly difficult to investigate, due to the multiple constraints of the prison space and the rules and regulations that act in a differentiated way on the members of the research group.

Regarding the students-researchers-detainees involved, they are called upon to manage, first, the three roles they hold in the research field and, consequently, the methodological reflexivity that these roles allow to develop; i.e., as Antonio notes, the awareness and fear that:

I won't be able to see... I live here. I'm too caught up in the things you ask me to look at. They concern me.

Regarding us - as teachers and researchers - rules and regulations that prescribe behaviours and actions are related, among others, to long and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures needed to obtain legal permission to conduct research, procedures that we had experienced but underestimated.

We assumed that our role as teachers would somehow allow us to speed up the process or make it easier. But that was not the case.

Suffice to say that the application was submitted in February, but the official permit only arrived in August and, in fact, is still awaiting finalisation (the final formal step is still pending). Despite procedural delays, the project has continued (and it is proceeding) along a path fraught with uncertainties but also with hopes and expectations. We didn't know if or when the authorisations would arrive. However, we knew that we would continue, we knew that our research would somehow take shape inside and/or beyond the educational setting we shared. It is therefore against this uncertain context that we gave shape to a research strategy that identifies the questionnaire as our starting point, since it allows us to reconstruct the context scenario in which the P.U.C. project is realised. We refer to the socio-demographic profile of inmates residing at the P.U.C., with specific regard to the qualification's dimension

(Biesta 2016). This implies being able to discover places, spaces and times of the educational paths that led detainees to university education: i.e., the way in which knowledge, skills and dispositions took shape.

So, we started to build the tool to be administered. Regarding this, it is relevant to underline the way we worked: the questionnaire was not constructed according to the framework established by the methodological literature on the topic. The conceptual categories to be operationalised seemed too distant from the competences brought by the detainee researchers partaking in the project. Above all, as Antonio says about this, sometime later:

It is our words that we need. Who could get there better than us? We are the ones who occupy this space and live it.

The excerpt thus reveals an awareness and methodological reflexivity that accompany investigative choices at every stage of the research. Therefore, we chose to turn the process upside down, starting from the questions and knowledge embedded in the students' practical actions, focusing on what they know about a familiar space. So, first, we began to reflect on the P.U.C.: on what is there and what is missing, on how to uncover all the contradictions of both an educational provision that often seems too distant from the needs of prisoners, and educational practices that develop regardless of the context, without considering what studying and learning entail for adults who live in prison.

Second, we began a slow process of concertation and cooperation on words and meanings, issues to be omitted, and themes to be addressed, often putting into question dimensions and themes we had taken for granted.

In short, we developed the questionnaire by experimenting with a sort of *educational game* that questioned the meaning and knowledge that we all bring with us to the field, modifying and re-modifying the form, style and intentions of the questions that were ultimately incorporated into a tool that we built, revised and corrected, transforming it into an almost qualitative tool that was decidedly more complex (even to administer) than a simple questionnaire.

It was precisely within this shared work of negotiating meanings that one of the most revealing moments emerged from the lively debate triggered by the term *colleague*, a word we introduced while discussing pedagogical relationships between peers and which continues to be debated both inside and outside the prison.

In this regard, Antonio's account is particularly revealing:

You should know that we attach a stigma to the word colleague, because that's how prison officers call each other in order to hide their identities. Therefore, calling one of our comrades a colleague would be equivalent to associating him with the figure of a policeman. You see!!! This is where the transition-transformation phase that is underway in this place comes into play. In fact, it is within this process that we have unblocked-disarrested the term colleague and use it among ourselves as well.

These are the words with which Antonio speaks of the effects produced by the discussion on the term "colleague", during the European Researchers' Night, i.e. the event that represents the turning point of our project.

So far, we have described a slow, thoughtful, and selfless endeavour. It is a task that we have carried out in the knowledge that the possibility of "leaving" the field of "mere" teaching remained subject to official authorisation. Only in this way could we give official status to our reflections and legitimize the research actions beyond what was configured as a simple educational laboratory.

However, while we were waiting for the permit to arrive, something unexpected happened:

"The European Researchers' Night was to be held on September 25th. Departments were invited to participate with initiatives involving P.U.C. students".

These was the tones of a late and hasty notice, but precious for the opportunity to test the tool we were working on, begin constructing the empirical base (i.e. collecting data by means of the questionnaire) and allow student-researchers to test their often-declared desire for a leading role that puts their voice to the test within the framework of an event – to be held at Secondigliano prison – in which, in addition to all the students of the P.U.C., external sociology students would also participate.

So, starting from mid-May, the research process took on a different rhythm. The meetings began to intensify, as well as the work aimed at closing the questionnaire we were working on, to ensure that Antonio, Luigi and Angelo could then administer it to their 47 colleagues.

During this time, the air at the P.U.C. was thick with tension and anticipation; it was as if time stood still and yet paradoxically every small change could be felt and seen.

At the same time, we also launched a complex organisational process for the Researchers' Night at the P.U.C. chaired by the student researchers. Meanwhile, as the organisation proceeds, the questionnaire administration begins, but as Angelo states in his contribution for the European researchers' Night:

Conducting research in prison is not easy. At all. There are numerous limitations, including space, time, and technology. In terms of space, the biggest challenge was finding it. There are only four classrooms, and they are almost always occupied. In terms of time, we needed to balance our time with the free time of our colleagues. Imagine it! It takes more than an hour to answer questions. An hour feels infinite in the sweltering heat of prison in August. Furthermore, the European researchers' night was getting closer, and only in the last few days of July did we receive word that the professors couldn't reach us in August. We had many questions and many doubts, but we had no way to communicate with them because even with learning remotely, we then would have been interrupted for the August holidays.

By clearly outlining the limits of the context, the excerpt shows how the long-awaited exercise of putting oneself to the test has changed significantly. It is no longer just a desire but a practice, an exercise carried out in solitude, having acquired autonomy and awareness. So, despite difficulties and limitations Antonio, Luigi and Angelo managed to complete the questionnaire administration.

However, once again, something unexpected happened.

On September 12, a notice arrived from the Department of Penitentiary Administration (DAP) that required the initiative to be reworded: students from outside the P.U.C. were not allowed to enter the prison. That is the main reason why Antonio, Luigi e Angelo faced the difficulties and the challenges that the research represented: to be protagonists of a process to be told. To be able to bring their testimony to their colleagues.

We won't dwell on the complications that the DAP's decision has entailed. We'll simply highlight the group's reaction.

When we asked them if they intended to continue even without their colleagues from outside, even in the climate of uncertainty in which we were working (if the DAP hadn't accepted our reformulation, we would have wasted all our work), Antonio, Luigi, and Angelo replied without hesitation:

We want to continue! We can't give up now!

This is what they told us at that dramatic meeting where, despite ourselves, we became accomplices (or so we felt) to a system that consistently stifles actions and reactions, thoughts and words.

The DAP's approval would only arrive on September 22nd, only three days before the event. An event that, as Luigi said at the end of his speech with a trembling voice and a steady gaze:

You listened to us, and for a moment we weren't just prisoners, but people sharing a dream, an idea, a journey. This journey has changed me profoundly: it has given me tools to think, to feel part of something, to give voice to the real needs of those who, like me, approach study in a context full of limitations, but also of potential. This is my educational transformation. Not just the passage from one level to another, but from a condition of marginalisation to one of participation. The transition from who I was to who I am becoming. Sometimes it seems like we have nothing to give, but today we discovered that together we can create.

Luigi's words crystallise the meaning of HEPNA and clarify the kind of transformation at stake. What emerges is not simply an educational progression, but a change in the conditions of subjectivity. Being listened to and "having a voice" enables students to speak in the first person, making their experiences and needs publicly intelligible and showing the transformation to which we refer. It is the de-prisonization processes that emerge here: a process enacted through speech, reflexivity, and participation.

## **Conclusions**

As mentioned, the project is still ongoing. However, it is worth taking stock of what has emerged so far.

The way in which prison rules and regulations are enacted, between the possibilities they grant and the prohibitions (but also the unexpected and uncertainty) they impose, intertwines with the discretionary power that the university exercises, sometimes colluding with the mechanisms of

prisonization on which the prison community is founded, and which education should counteract. i.e. The social processes by which incarcerated people learn and embody the norms, values, and cultures of the prison community.

In this sense, prisonized subjectivities emerge from a strategic interplay between technologies of government and technologies of the self. However, this strategic interplay can also produce something else.

The ethnographic account we offered shows how learning mechanisms can be more complex and controversial than those captured by the concept of prison community.

Moreover, it demonstrates how sharing a research process can become a key pedagogical tool for coming into critical consciousness. It enacts a more or less strategic use of technologies of the self that finally leads to what we can call de-prisonization.

It is what happened when detainees moved: from being silent to being affirmative, from forbidden words to “dis-arrested” words, from the impossibility of talking about themselves to the necessity of doing so, from the desire to take the floor to the ability to do so in front of an audience.

Briefly, from the *I want to continue* to the test of reality that the students first demand (at the beginning of the research journey), then practice (during the journey) and finally embed as an achievement; as a way of showing the *transformation* they have enacted.

This is the process of de-prisonization to which we refer, a process that works by “dis-arresting” words and possibilities, and by making the prison community tellable for themselves and for others.

This is why the contribution ends with the words of Antonio, Angelo, and Luigi, the inner voices of a research journey developed through and about the prison community, which they daily experience and which they will now *tell you* about.

### **Inner voices**

Prison communities exist. They are alive and full of humanity.

But they are communities characterised by strong external and internal closures. In the first sense, relationships with other civil communities are virtually non-existent, which turns them into islands. Islands of punishment.

In the second sense, there is a lack of internal connection, so that the various sections of a single prison seem to have their own dynamics, sometimes at odds with one another.

In our triple role as inmates, students, and researchers, we have grasped the difference between our section and the one next door.

To be clear, the simple corridor dividing the two spaces, where one is for studying and the other is not, is a sign of two opposing realities, two alternative ways of understanding prison communities. It is almost banal to point out that in the first space there is a possibility of transformation, of returning a new person to the community, while in the second this possibility is denied.

We like to imagine what the university experiences can become: special observers of invisible realities, expert eyes and minds – with the will to observe and understand, megaphones to make the "inner voices" heard, hands that can contribute to erase the stigma attached to us by a cynical society, ripping away a label stuck on us that will remain even after we have repaid our debt to the state.

The opportunity to attend university represents a privileged channel for opening dialogue with external communities, starting with the scientific community that you so admirably represent and to which we are sincerely grateful.

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### **University Education in Prison: the ethnographic story of a (participatory) research journey.**

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#### **Abstract**

University education in prison has expanded significantly in recent decades, supported by the recognition of education as a fundamental human right and by its transformative potential in contexts of deprivation of liberty. Drawing on a university teaching experience in prison, this article presents *Higher Education in Prison: Needs Analysis* (HEPNA), a participatory research project that involves incarcerated students as co-researchers in defining aims, tools, and practices. The article argues that participation in research can transform students' relationships to themselves and to the knowledge they produce and mobilize.

#### **Keywords**

university in prison, technologies of the self, de-prisonization

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### **L'enseignement universitaire en prison : récit ethnographique d'un parcours de recherche (participative).**

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#### **Résumé**

L'enseignement universitaire en milieu carcéral s'est considérablement développé au cours des dernières décennies, soutenu par la reconnaissance de l'éducation comme un droit humain fondamental et par son potentiel transformateur dans les contextes de privation de liberté. S'appuyant sur une expérience d'enseignement universitaire en prison, cet article présente le projet « Higher Education in Prison: Needs Analysis » (HEPNA), un projet de recherche participatif qui implique des étudiants incarcérés en tant que co-chercheurs dans la définition des objectifs, des outils et des pratiques. L'article soutient que la participation à la recherche peut transformer les relations des étudiants avec eux-mêmes et avec les connaissances qu'ils produisent et mobilisent.

#### **Mots-clés**

université en prison, technologies du soi, dé-emprisonnement

## **La enseñanza universitaria en prisión: relato etnográfico de una trayectoria de investigación (participativa).**

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### **Resumen**

La enseñanza universitaria en el entorno penitenciario se ha desarrollado considerablemente en las últimas décadas, respaldada por el reconocimiento de la educación como un derecho humano fundamental y por su potencial transformador en contextos de privación de libertad. Basándose en la experiencia de la enseñanza universitaria en prisiones, este artículo presenta el proyecto «Higher Education in Prison: Needs Analysis» (HEPNA), un proyecto de investigación participativa que involucra a estudiantes encarcelados como coinvestigadores en la definición de objetivos, herramientas y prácticas. El artículo sostiene que la participación en la investigación puede transformar las relaciones de los estudiantes consigo mismos y con los conocimientos que producen y movilizan.

### **Palabras clave**

universidad en prisión, tecnologías del yo, de-prisonización