

Supporting Prison Learners to Prepare for Life on the Outside

Project Summary

New research suggests that 81% of prison leavers state that they received no support preparing for their release from prison.

This is one of the major challenges that incarcerated individuals face as they try to rebuild their lives on the outside and become an integrated part of society. The majority of prison leavers said that they felt their life was more stable inside prison. Access to services which also address the causes of homelessness such as mental health, substance misuse, and lack of employment is imperative. Post-release employment has been found to reduce the risk of reoffending by between a third and a half. However, a significant proportion of the prison population have no experience of stable employment. Further research recommends that employment programmes should be based on strong local partnerships with vocational training activities that have links to real employment prospects.

Digital systems are crucial to enabling the delivery of high quality education to prisoners. If prisoners are, on release, to secure employment, continue to study, or otherwise contribute to society, they must be given the opportunity to use and improve their digital skills in prison. Augmented Reality will play a significant, integral part in the Offender Learning revolution. The methods developed are innovative for target groups and partner countries. Partnership and involvement with Shrewsbury Colleges Group and the AR approach to education in prison should give individuals the skills they need to unlock their potential, gain employment, and become assets to their communities.

Project Objectives

Develop high quality resources using AR to engage learners, having access to specific resource topics, translated into their own native language

- Improve education results in offender institutions
- Evaluate the effectiveness of using AR resources
- Meet security and access requirements, ensuring that the resources are 'locked' from the outside world and access is monitored within security guidelines
- Extend and enhance the learner experience using an engaging tool that enables learners to access the content 'at the point of need'
- Widening participation for offender learners in partner countries as a result of production, dissemination and embedding of the AR resources
- Share good practice and adapt processes, resources and outcomes transnationally • Evaluation of the project with outcomes report

Although some projects are being developed to implement digital e-prison services and some countries gaining confidence in moving forward towards digitalisation behind bars, none have focused on the use of AR as a means to provide and deliver personalised resources, information and digital process for access 24-7.

Nationally and Internationally, the e-prison model is yet to be adopted at scale. This is reaffirming the Coates review and this will have greater impact across a wide range of offender institutions

across Europe. This also build on the current project with European partners to introduce and develop AR to support youth offender learners.

“They need to look at how they measure the success of prison education; the current levels of prisoners’ educational attainment; and what happens when education is assessed as not good enough by regulatory bodies such as the Office for Standards in Education” (Coates, 2016).

To ensure sustainability, it needs to be extended to wider EU penal systems, including translation of resources, the differentiation for need as well as European system requirements. It will also enable the look at impacts of the AR across the pilot institutions with an in-depth evaluation, analysis and impact of Augmented Reality in improving the outcomes of Offenders.