

## Exploring the history of prisoner education

- Course is free through the Open University (online and offline)
- Level 0/1 course (introduction to learning at Higher Education level)
- 8 sessions, 24 hours
- Range of materials: teaching text, exercises, primary sources, bespoke audio-visual assets, assessments via quizzes, formative and summative.
  - Digital badge awarded on successful completion of the course
  - Online, there are 7 bespoke films – a standalone miniseries on history of the prison, which can also be delivered through prison television.
- Prison education began in ‘prison hulks,’ which began in the 1800s as a solution to overcrowding at local prisons. It was here that prisoners began to read in these prisons.
- Millbank Penitentiary: From 1816, prisoners taught in the corridors in groups of 16.
- Newgate Gaol: A school for boys from 1815; a school for women and their children from 1817.
- ‘Reformation’ was used as term for what we now refer to ‘rehabilitation’.
- Originally, education was provided so that learners would not riot.
- 1823 Gaols Act, Section 10 (10) resulted in the growth of prison libraries, prison schools, and the appearance of data on prison literacy.
- Prison school curriculum growth from instruction in reading and writing, to include arithmetic, geography, history, and science.
- Pentonville in the 1840s: a curriculum that matched or surpassed the state supported elementary schools.
- From c.1865: a narrowing to instruction in the basic elements (matching trends in elementary education outside the prison).
- Prison environment became harsher, to deter and punish. Need to manage bodies (timetabling etc). Need for prisoners to work. Short prison sentences.
- Partitioned classrooms (1840s) - new penal philosophy - separation as a solution to hardened offenders ‘corrupting’ early offenders; messages on repentance; religious ideologies; cells now designed to be a place to live.
- Partitioned classrooms terminated and rise of cells as norm until 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- **What is the value of this course and studying the past more generally?**
  - Develops the imagination, is an intellectual pursuit, helps us to understand the world today, and how our systems are structured.
  - History provides a vast reservoir of human experience.

- Helps us to better understand meaningful reform.
- HMP Leeds provided highly positive feedback on the pilot.