

Being in “The Courtroom”: Young male prisoners’ experiences of a creative arts programme in Pollsmoor

Thesis by Sarah Waterfield

Dept of Social Anthropology – UCT, 2015

Feedback and suggestions to YIPSA

1. Volunteers

- Less is much more
- During the time I was part of the programme, I observed many sets of volunteers
- The volunteers that came in ones or two were far more beneficial and less distracting.
- Single volunteers felt more inclined to get more involved and play more of an integral role whereas volunteers in groups tended to lose focus on stick to one another

2. Volunteer Training

- Volunteer training is extremely beneficial-especially those volunteers who are not from South Africa
- Although the training provided by YIPSA gives a fairly good idea of how the programme should run, it does not prepare the volunteers enough for actually going into prison
- Volunteers need to be reassured that they will be safe
- It needs to be further emphasised that no inappropriate or tight clothing should be worn, and that there might be a lot of hype around their arrival in the sections
- I would recommend a tour of the prison before actually going in to take a programme- this will provide better preparation and focus for volunteers
- The above is mainly where group volunteering is concerned

3. Facilitators

- Nkosinathi and Tynan
- Worked extremely well together and were well prepared
- They fed off each other and having two facilitators definitely increased programme focus
- I mention Tynan’s work in my thesis- which I found to be highly beneficial to the programme.

4. Observation worksheets

- I found the observation worksheets that are supposed to be carried out by volunteers to add no value whatsoever.
- They take volunteers away from the group, disrupt the programme and at the end of the day are not a true reflection of what is going on and an unnecessary stress for facilitators.
- I understand that these are for funder purposes but think they need to be re-developed (which I think they already are in the process of being)
- Perhaps a ticking type sheet, where observers can tick a relevant option out of five or six. I can explain further if required

5. Life Skills Focus

- One of the aims of the programmes is to equip offenders with the necessary life skills-for use once released
- I found that this is happening to an extent but often the full life skill was not carried out fully
- What prisoners found extremely beneficial-and I make this all very clear in my thesis- was that the programme removed them from their cells and minds for the two hours the programme ran.
- This helped them to deal with stress and cope with everyday life in prison

6. Time efficiency

- Sessions often started late-we were often waiting for members to go and get the group
- Facilitators often kept waiting for up to an hour
- This meant that the programme time was mostly shorter than it should have been and therefore scheduled programme activities could not be completed
- Perhaps phoning the ICO on leaving the office or home to say that she/he can go and get the group then- this may help to alleviate some of the time management issues

7. General organisation

- The programme is extremely beneficial to prisoners-and they are so appreciative for it
- Nkosinathi is very well respected by all in Pollsmoor-members and offenders- he has helped a fair few of them
- Nkosinathi is an amazing way of uplifting the spirit of any room with his enthusiasm and positivity
- In general, organisation could be improved

- ‘Lesson plans’ or something similar should be put together, known, and circulated among the group of volunteers and facilitators
- Generally more structure is needed during programme time

8. Programme space

- Please see thesis Chapter 3 for a more detailed account of this theme
- It is extremely important that the space in which the programme is carried out is away from their ‘normal’ environment
- Outside of their cells, blocks and sections
- When sessions are carried out inside sections, the focus is completely lost and many benefits of the programme lost with it
- The removal of prisoners from their ‘normal’ environment that the programme provides is hugely beneficial to offenders (They say it over and over again)
- What is also important is that the programme space stays constant- prisoners in the programme associate this space with being safe, comfortable, less stressful
- Therefore open up further, are more engaged, and they gain more from the programme

I would like to say a huge thank you to Nkosinathi and YIPSA for this wonderful collaborative experience. Nkosinathi provided me with everything I needed and we worked well together. Without him and YIPSA this project would not have been possible. If you would like any further feedback on anything from my thesis or feedback, please contact me. I wish YIPSA the best for the future.

Sarah Waterfield

060 6776 235

sewaterfield13@gmail.com



The UCT Knowledge Co-op facilitated this collaborative project with Young in Prison (SA).

The report is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.5/za/deed.en>