

Learning Through Art

The PEETA project and its value and possibilities for reintegration of prisoners in society

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"Give to disadvantaged people and those that made mistakes the hope for a better future and the opportunity to rehabilitation in society." (Sepe evaluation 63)

Introduction

Prison theater is a blooming form of community art, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Prisons, and the criminal justice system in general, have "a complex relationship to performance" according to James Thompson (57). With this remark he does not so much refer to theater in prison as to the prison and criminal justice system as performance: "They construct special sites, appeal to certain audiences, involve ritualized acts and entertain or appal" (Thompson 57). However, prison itself is not only a performance; it can be a place for performance as well. In the Anglo-Saxon world, major projects are being initiated with prisoners and youth-at-risk, reaching international attention with projects like *Shakespeare Behind Bars* (USA). In the Netherlands, only a few prison theater projects have been carried out so far. These projects have been a great success and will continue next year with possibilities of reaching more prisons in the future. With these projects comes the need to assess the time and costs put into these prisoners. What makes these theater projects more valuable than, for example, an ad-hoc drawing class or physical work the prisoners are allowed to do?

This essay will focus on a specific European project that works to develop a program according to the PEETA method (Personal Effectiveness and Employability Through the Arts). This program concentrates on the skills a non-artist can acquire through art education. After the activities, skills are evaluated and, if they meet certain criteria, participants are entitled to a so-called SEPE certificate (Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness), which is a diploma that can help them get employed. This project has been piloted in six different European countries. The PEETA projects have been significantly different from previous prison theater projects in Anglo-Saxon countries. *Shakespeare Behind Bars*, for example, takes an existing text (*The Tempest*) as basis for the performance. By contrast, the Dutch PEETA project *Rob in da Hood* allows a lot more creative freedom to the participants and has a different goal. The PEETA method and with it the SEPE certificate are applied to several prison education projects in Europe, according to the promoters with

great success. However, the project does not have tangible, recorded results so far, and internal reports are vague in showing an actual, positive outcome. This is the reason I will try to specify what the PEETA project and the SEPE certificate are and how the Dutch *Rob in da Hood* project benefits from this. Subsequently I will evaluate the available information about the Dutch project, revealing possibilities for further improvement of the Dutch project and European project in general.

To delineate clear improvement possibilities there needs to be a general overview of prison theater, showing the position of prison theater and the possibilities it opens up to its participants. This issue will require a brief introduction about prison theater and theories and research that this field of work has generated. Secondly, I will explore the ideas and goals behind the PEETA project. To address this, the importance and possibilities of PEETA will be discussed as well as the significance of the SEPE certificate. In this segment, I will focus on the possibilities this certificate creates for the participants upon their release. In order to support my arguments, I will provide a practical frame of reference in the form of a case study that will illustrate how the PEETA method and the SEPE certificate have worked in the Dutch *Rob in da Hood* project. The final segment will discuss areas of improvement and includes recommendations for future projects.

Prison Theater – The basics

Prisons and those within them have always been there as a display, a warning, a vision and a spectacle for the public gaze. (Thompson 57)

“Creative work which produces and exploits [spaces for resistance] is customarily an unwelcome challenge to authority, an unpredictable disruption of norms, a kind of playing with fire” (Kershaw 35). This is the negative view on art in prison from the authority's point of view. However, a lot of creative work has been done in prisons that have had a positive effect, not only on the participants as individuals but also on the general atmosphere in prison. Theater and other art activities in prison can help inmates achieve different goals and change positively. The projects can help prisoners develop ‘transferable skills’ as Baz Kershaw calls it (36). These skills allow an individual or a group to

increase their chances of “survival in negotiating the demands of a rough and tumble world” (Kershaw 36). This is a very important and often cited effect of art in prison and is therefore researched and developed, and with that advancing, every day.

Prison theater has been around for a long time, according to Michael Balfour. He says “[i]t is probable that soon after the first prison was built, the first unrecorded moment of prison theatre/art occurred” (Balfour 1). It is likely that from ancient times, prisoners have taken up creative work to break the monotony and to express themselves. There is “considerable evidence of prison theatre and art work during the Second World War” (Qtd. in Balfour 1). Prisoners in concentration camps used creativity not for their survival, because art was no protection against gas chambers or transportation. It did, however, transform ‘fear into freedom’ as Balfour quotes Dutlinger (2). This transformation can be essential when trying to survive, it may well be the straw of hope they need in tragic, violent, oppressive conditions.

One of the earliest documented theater projects in prison was in 1961 in California, where inmates performed in a play by Beckett (Cluchey). “Although many of my fellow convicts had similar interest, as early as 1958, we were all non the less, required to be patient and wait until the Warden of that day decided to allow us the special sanction of an experimental workshop, where such plays might be performed” (Cluchey). Besides the development in prison theater there was a general interest in prison education. This interest was brought together in Europe in 1991, forming the EPEA, the European Prison Education Association (Epea.org). In 2007 there were members in 41 countries in Europe, and elsewhere (Ibid.). One important outcome of the EPEA is an article in the Statute of the Council of Europe, wherein the rights of education in prisons are defined. In this statute, important values for prison education, and with it prison theater, are set. An example of such a value is: “Considering that education in prison helps to humanize prisons and to improve the conditions of detention” (Ibid.). The values lead to recommendations on implementing policies, the most important for prison theater being: “Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role because these activities have particular potential to enable prisoners to develop and express themselves” (Ibid.).

Nowadays, theater in prisons is mostly initiated from the outside. It is “normally undertaken in response to an invitation from the prison governor rather than the prisoners” (Prentki 181). It is used as

“a tool designed to re-educate, re-socialise, and ‘rehabilitate’ people” (Balfour 2). Probably the most interesting contradiction remains between the confinement within a prison and the freedom that art allows. Prison theater is “[a] living, breathing, noisy, chaotic, confusing and compelling paradox” (Balfour 3). It allows people to develop skills that cannot be attained within the prison rules itself.

The skills the participants develop during the process of the art project can be very useful for life after detention. These skills, or competencies as they are referred to in the PEETA project, are important for future employment possibilities and allow the participants to develop themselves as a possible employee as well as a person that can communicate better and understand the consequences of his actions. The goal of this form of applied theater is to “help (...) people build the capacities and resources – the ability to respond flexibly and fluidly – needed to survive and prosper in an uncertain world” (Hughes, Ruding 222). Awareness of the relationship of the participant with others is also an important goal, according to Hughes and Ruding (222), which at the same time is a crucial skill for employment. It allows the individual to understand different hierarchies and address people in different positions in the proper way, something that is aimed for within the PEETA project as well.

Personal Effectiveness and Employability through the Arts – PEETA

The PEETA project is a Leonardo Transfer of Innovation project, which is “working across 6 European countries to test the use of an Edexcel qualification developed by Exeter University and Superact” (Peeta.eu). Superact is a non-profit organization based in the United Kingdom and was founded in 2006. They work, among other things, in prisons and juvenile security units, providing arts education and using this to break down barriers, help participants build self-esteem and promoting social inclusion and employability (Superact.uk). The Edexcel qualification used by PEETA aims to use art to “develop employability and personal effectiveness skills” (ibid.). In five different prisons across Europe the qualification has been piloted through the transfer innovation method, which means that one country starts the project and hands it over to the next country. That country will try to learn from the mistakes made in the previous country and thus, through trial and error, a project-concept emerges that is continually fine-tuned in different settings (Santman).

The project focuses on the downward spiral prisoners and other delinquents tend to find themselves in: lack of skills needed for employment will lead to a life in the lower echelons of society. One wrong move and one can find oneself serving time. This imprisonment will be visible on the prisoners' record upon release, which leads to even worse job prospects, which can then lead to recidivism (Peeta.eu). This cycle is a hard one to break out of and the background of most (former) convicts makes it hard for them to survive within the traditional educational system, with which they have often had bad experiences. Creativity-based work, however, allows this specific group to expand and reinforce their basic skills and competencies.

The PEETA project promotes itself as an attempt to redefine the role of art in society. What the PEETA project does is it brings art to people that mostly have never seen the true possibilities of art so they can experience it and see for themselves what value it could have for society. The project also monitors the Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness (SEPE) Award, the tangible outcome of its theater activities, by recording and analyzing its effectiveness in new contexts (ibid.). With this certificate, a more 'structural transformation' is accomplished, something Prentki regards as an unlikely outcome of applied theater. He says that the practices "may serve the participants well in terms of confidence building and social skills" but that they are unlikely to make any real change in the participant (Prentki 182). With the SEPE certificate PEETA believes it can overcome Prentki's objections.

The PEETA project aims to enhance employment opportunities for its participants. The acquisition of skills is of major importance for the reintegration of people in society. It can mean the difference in preventing people-at-risk from making major mistakes in life. It has the potential to inspire students who cannot keep up with conventional learning and, in general, can help all kinds of people to reach their full potential. McGregor detects different kinds of learning that can result from involvement in drama, including "greater understanding of people and their situations" (25). This understanding could help people-at-risk as well as those already in prison to understand other people better and may help them to reflect on themselves and the situation they were in when they did what they did. McGregor focuses his research on the effect of drama on children, but every person in a learning process will, in my opinion, experience similar benefits. Participants in the Dutch PEETA

project are older and have – in varying degrees - known a life of crime and imprisonment. These factors do play a role in their understanding and ability to learn, but because of the non-academic delivery of knowledge, learning through art is beneficial to them. It can affect their perception of reality and social relations because it is not based on knowledge or dependent on conventional ways of learning.

One last important value of the PEETA project is that it can be inspirational. It can help envision a future perspective for people who may have never seen a future in the literal sense of the word. It may inspire them to find a job or it can motivate them to keep developing their creative skills even after they have served their time (Oud, Oostdam 59). It is also important that the participants understand that what they learn is not only applicable to the immediate process of artistic creation. They have to be aware that what they learn can also be used in various non-artistic situations in real life and that they can continue to educate themselves in their personal life as well (Boersma, ten Dam, and Volma 83).

The certificate

Arts funding opportunities have become more tightly tied to targets relating to social inclusion and arts organizations are routinely asked to demonstrate the impact of their work in relation to such agendas. (Hughes, Ruding 217)

The diploma connected to the PEETA program is called the SEPE certificate. This document is proof on paper of the development and skills of the participant. To qualify for it, the participants are asked to link “[c]reative skills and capacities (...) to personal and social skills that make it more likely that a (...) person will successfully engage in mainstream educational and vocational opportunities and as a result avoid negative life trajectories” (Hughes, Ruding 221). These conditions are particularly formulated for people (like at-risk youth) who have not yet made mistakes in life that have led to imprisonment but might be on the verge of doing so, although PEETA has the broader ambition to offer this type of education to anyone whom it might benefit. Through the PEETA project and with it

the SEPE certificate, it will give them possibilities to make more positive choices in life. To date, however, the PEETA project pilots have so far only been implemented with people whose behavior has already led them to imprisonment.

Research shows that “causes of young people’s offending are complex and experiences of social and economic disadvantage – rather than creative skills and capacities – remain strongly correlated with offending by young people” (Hughes, Ruding 221). With this remark, Hughes and Ruding seem to warn for an overly optimistic view on initiatives like PEETA. Long-term effects would still be more determined by the background and the social context of the participant than on any arts activity. So far, only little research has been done on the certificate the participants of the PEETA project receive after they have fulfilled all the required skills satisfactorily. It is, therefore, uncertain if the project will have the desired success at the moment.

The certificate is the tangible result of a creative process. At one point it was decided that, for PEETA to be taken seriously by society, there had to be an official recognition of some kind. The required document should not be about the offender's quality as an artist, but about the competencies and skills he or she has acquired and about how someone functions. “This means it is not important if someone is a great actor, (...) it is about how someone functions in (...) a setting where they have to work together” (Santman). What gives this certificate added significance is the fact that, for most participants, it is the first diploma they have ever received.

You deal a lot with people who are school drop outs, and then they receive a diploma. With that they get to understand a different notion of schooling, because they have the idea that education is a teacher in front of the class, with students making notes (...). This [the PEETA project, ed.] is more than that. Yes, we are making a play, but we are also creating an environment where they can learn.

(Santman)

In the theater project, the participants will encounter different situations that they will have to handle properly and will not automatically know how to cope with. If they can deal with these unfamiliar

situations and responses they will undergo a development that they would not have encountered otherwise. These developments are what the SEPE certificate will eventually show and it is expected that the participants are eventually able to apply these skills outside of prison.

The certificate focuses on four basic learning outcomes as seen in Image 1 (Hamill, Cursley, and Lang 27), which an examiner will assess on the basis of a portfolio compiled by the project supervisor. If this demonstrates that the participant has successfully completed the assessment criteria, he or she will receive the certificate. The only way participants can show their progress is by participating in the process. After the project, participants in the Netherlands had a personal evaluation, which information was also linked to the certificate in the end.

Learning outcomes		Assessment criteria	
1	Be able to use effective communication skills	1.1	Demonstrate the ability to listen to others
		1.2	Communicate appropriately with others
2	Be able to make a positive contribution within a team	2.1	Contribute ideas and suggestions to the group project
		2.2	Show discussion skills within the group
		2.3	Be reliable during the realisation of group work
		2.4	Demonstrate collaborative team working skills
3	Be able to demonstrate employability skills in a group project	3.1	Demonstrate task management skills
		3.2	Show flexibility when dealing with problems or changes in circumstances
		3.3	Complete assigned tasks within given timescales
		3.4	Show time management skills
4	Know how to reflect on personal effectiveness skills and qualities for employability developed in the context of a group project	4.1	Describe own personal effectiveness skills and qualities demonstrated in the context of the group project
		4.2	Identify personal effectiveness skills and qualities needed for own development for employability
		4.3	Plan ways to develop own personal effectiveness skills and qualities for employability

Image 1

(Hamill, Cursley, and Lang 27)

The first learning outcome is the use of effective communication skills, which can be demonstrated by listening to others and communicate appropriately with others. The participants of *Rob in da Hood* were able to show their effective communication skills in the group discussions at the start of the process, where they had to listen to each other and respond in a respectful way. The communicative result was very similar to what had happened in the previous pilot in the Netherlands, where one

participant said: “I had never been able to work with others before but this has taught me to listen and work together, not just to follow my own ideas” (*Sepe Evaluation* 19). The ability to listen to one another also strengthens the group dynamics and teaches the participants respectful communication. The second learning outcome, making a positive contribution within a team, was also brought forward in the group discussions, where initiative had to be taken so that a play could be created. During the process, participants were asked to bring in ideas during rehearsals, showing initiative in taking the lead, asking others to participate and bring in music. Being able to ‘demonstrate employability skills in a group project’ is demonstrated through as simple a thing as showing up on time and knowing the lines before rehearsal. The last learning outcome, however, poses a problem. Knowing ‘how to reflect on personal effectiveness skills and qualities’ is more difficult to demonstrate, because it runs into the paradox of the learning environment. On the one hand, Ed Santman talks about an inexplicit learning environment to allow everyone a place to learn in their own way. On the other hand, the participants are asked to identify their employability skills and come up with ways to develop them, making them hyper-aware of the learning process.

It stands to reason that the people receiving this certificate also acquire a more positive self-image. They have heard over and over that they are no good and now, for once, they have excelled (Santman). The certificate will show an employer what kind of marketable skills the participant has, which again will reinforce a positive view about themselves. These different, positive effects of the SEPE certificate are a further reason to open up these projects to more participants. However, as mentioned before, these effects are not yet sufficiently proven to apply to all participants, which is why projects tend to recruit participants that will most likely benefit from them. This can influence the results from the projects, since the participants are not necessarily representative of the prison population. The results may therefore turn out to show the benefits for part of the possible participants, more than they represent the possibilities the project aims to create for everybody.

Case study: *Rob in da Hood*

I obtained first-hand information about the *Rob in da Hood* project during several personal visits to Krimpen aan de IJssel and an interview with Ed Santman, one of the supervisors and spokesman of the

Dutch PEETA organization. I attended one rehearsal and the performance before the fellow inmates, which was seen as a dress-rehearsal at the time, but can be seen as a full performance. The rehearsal I attended was on the 11th of February, the performance on the 10th of March. The Dutch pilot of the PEETA project was implemented in correctional facility PI de IJssel. The project was facilitated by Jos Zandvliet of *Stichting ACCU*, who was assisted by two interns. They worked under the supervision of Ed Santman. The project resulted in the performance of *Rob in da Hood*, a play written by one of the inmates of the correctional facility. According to Ed Santman, marketable skills among the offenders emerged organically during this group project. He says that, when working with groups, a creative process with a good result requires communication skills, the generation of creative ideas and strict compliance with earlier made agreements and time management (Santman). Obviously these are abilities and skills the participants learn as a consequence of being involved in the process.

The full title of the resulting play is *Rob in da Hood: The battle against injustice*. This title is an indication of the deep-seated concern in the group of inmates working on this project, namely the injustice in society. The script was developed after group sessions with the inmates, where different topics were discussed and improvised. There were a total of 15 three-hour group sessions, including the rehearsals. The ideas for the play came forward through open questions, with emphasis on the fact that there were no wrong answers. This led to more openness in the group, especially because these men have negative experiences with giving answers in other settings that caused them trouble. For example, an answer can have severe consequences in a conversation with a psychologist or during a trial. Within the creative process, however, this is different. There are no right or wrong answers, just choices and within these choices, an answer is allowed to be logical or not and you can change your mind again a second time around (Santman). This openness of honest communication was the first important lesson for the inmates. The sessions somehow led to the topic 2012, which was linked to the end of the world (Santman). Here, the idea developed towards a play where someone from the past ends up in 2012, which eventually led to the script of *Rob in da Hood*, which was then written down by Ibrahim, one of the inmates.

The Performance

Rehearsals and set building lasted about thirteen weeks, starting on December 8th and leading up to two performances on May 10th 2012. The audience members in the morning were fellow inmates of the players and designers, so there was some pressure not to make a fool of themselves, “for my reputation’s sake” (Anonymous participant). In the afternoon there was other pressure when family members got the opportunity to attend the play, as well as government officials. This performance had to show to the people outside of prison what theater can do for a prison population.

The play starts with a mysterious man greeting the audience: “This is the story of a man with a mission and his battle against injustice” (Ibrahim 3, *own translation*). When the curtains open, Rob and his friends are celebrating Rob’s 18th birthday. Then the mysterious man enters again and gives Rob a bow and an arrow and warns him for the future: “The king will try to break up the people with ridiculous taxes (...) so prepare for battle. I will come and find you in a few years' time” (Ibrahim 4-6, *own translation*). In the third scene, Rob is thinking about the cruel things the king puts his people through. An angel tells Rob to be careful, while a devil is telling Rob he knows just what to do with this king: “Sometimes violence is the only solution” (Ibrahim 7, *own translation*). Rob is about to agree with the devil, but then the mysterious man returns. He tells Rob he is a great man now, but he still needs to learn. He gives Rob a plant to eat which allows them both to travel to the future.

This leap in time brings Rob to an office-like setting where he gets sent on a goose chase from one window to another, illustrating the bureaucratic aspect of present-day society. Rob is required to register himself, get a passport and then pay taxes. This is where the problems start; Rob has no money. He does, however, have pieces of gold. Rob is asked to give the gold and he gets a small amount of cash in return for it. Rob obviously does not realize he is being scammed and he goes to the next window. Here he is asked to invest and he explains that he has just traded his gold for money. The teller explains to Rob he has been scammed and Rob returns to the window where he traded the gold, but he gets sent away because he does not have a valid ID. All this makes him realize that the future is not that much better than the present. This is when he awakes. Back in his own time and place he realizes how bad the king is to his people and that not everything can be solved by violence. He wants to organize the people to get rid of the king so they and their children can live in a free world.

During the king's speech, Rob stands up and convinces the people to form a united front against the king. They demonstrate their resolve with big signs and make sure the king cannot return to his throne. The play ends with Rob's words: "Injustice will not succeed, the battle against injustice will continue" (Ibrahim 25, *own translation*).

The Process

The process, in general, was very open. This approach, allowing creativity to emerge within the group, seems to be of great importance for the development of social skills. The group learns to listen to each other and provide space for creativity. Because of the theatrical setting, inmates are able to put the world they see before them on stage without allowing it to come too close for comfort. The focus on the employment skills during the process of *Rob in da Hood* is precise, but it is also about having fun, according to Santman. The problems the participants encounter are a major learning process for the inmates. Can they handle the problems and in what way can they learn more? There will be problems between inmates that will require flexibility and communicative skills to solve as well as time management challenges. For example when working together on the creation of the play, the participants had to throw in ideas for the story, but they had to listen to each other at the same time to prevent repetition and 'stealing' someone's ideas. It requires an important communicative skill to be able to participate in a group discussion, a skill that a lot of participants did not yet master at the beginning of the process. Sometimes a prisoner gets relocated and another inmate will have to learn his lines. This will ask independent work and adjustment to time schedules of the participant involved. These skills are recorded, on video or in a log, and will serve as proof of the acquired skill in the portfolio later on. This way of learning is beneficial for people who do not fit into regular education. The creativity and fun are the most visible aspects of the process. The learning process is less evident and therefore less likely to be opposed (or resisted) by the participants as they might in explicit, conventional learning contexts.

The format of *Rob in da Hood* works well with the SEPE certificate because it requires a degree of independence from the participants. By solving problems they encounter they learn skills they might not have been aware of in the first place. This makes the learning process more accessible

for the participants. Working in a group is an important skill as well, since it can help people get over their fears, but also creates a learning environment for communication and collaboration. The problem with this project and its evaluation is that every person requires different educational techniques and has a different level of learning. It is important to refine the results of the project due to these different participants. Some may actually acquire communicative skills, while others already had them and some may even feign it, because they know there is a certificate and they are just in it for this reward. This is also mentioned in the Internal Evaluation of the SEPE projects in Italy and the Netherlands, executed by the University of Exeter in 2011. This evaluation deals with the previous PEETA project in Krimpen aan den IJssel, *Johnny Future*, which took place in 2011. This evaluation shows that most participants were motivated by the promise of certificate (Qtd in *Sepe Evaluation* 50). In Italy, “the participants began to realize they were being assessed in their attitudes, and as a result showed realization that their grades will improve if they improve their behaviour” (*Sepe Evaluation* 18). This shows that the PEETA method is not entirely developed yet. In the next chapter a few other areas for improvement will be used to provide a framework for future projects.

Room for improvement

There are a lot of areas of the PEETA method and the SEPE certificate that could be criticized, even though a lot of positive outcomes are present as well. Since the PEETA project is still developing, it is valuable to shed light on weaknesses in the process and the project’s objective, so that upcoming projects can learn from earlier mistakes. The opportunities for improvement can be divided into three parts:

- The goal of the project and the motivation of the participants
- What participants can benefit from the project and why?
- The need for focus on personal development and social background

Goal and motivation

Firstly, there is some uncertainty as to what exactly is the most important goal and motivation of the participants and the project leaders in the project. The evaluation of previous PEETA projects are

contradictory; sometimes it is said that the focus should be, and is, on the development of employability skills, while the next part of the evaluation focuses on all the positive side effects this program can have on its participants. Although both of these outcomes are important, the focus of the project should lie on the employability skills they are trying to prove that are derived from an arts project. By constantly compromising between two possible outcomes, the effectiveness of the project and the certificate is not being made clear enough, and no unbiased evidence about the project can be deducted from the data. The project leaders do recognize this problem, saying:

There is a challenge in ensuring that the emphasis is on improving employability skills, rather than on the art involved. At the same time there is the challenge that the arts course chosen as the delivery mode for the qualification motivates the participants so that they become involved and are able therefore to develop co-operative, team working skills. (*Sepe Evaluation 67*)

In the Netherlands, the fourth learning outcome of the SEPE certificate is characteristic for this issue. This learning outcome focuses on the reflection on personal effectiveness skills and qualities, where the learning environment becomes visible for the participant. Ed Santman, however, says this project is very beneficial for a lot of inmates, because it creates a learning environment that is not explicit. By asking the participant to reflect on the skills and come up with ways to develop them further, the participant is made hyper-aware of this process, thus contradicting the idea of a non-explicit learning environment.

A second difficulty with the project is the motivation of the participants taking part. Here I would like to draw from a very successful and long-running project in the United States: *Shakespeare Behind Bars*. This project was initiated and executed by Curt Tofteland. Tofteland sees the use of a certificate in a prison-theater project as a ‘double-edged sword.’ He does not believe in the carrot and the stick approach to changing human behavior (Tofteland). The inmates participating in the PEETA project are offered a carrot, the certificate. The motivation for the participants will then join the project because of the award, where Tofteland believes that all learning must be self-initiated rather

than mandatory. Therefore, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* is totally voluntary according to Tofteland. However, two things have to be taken into account on this note: Firstly, *Shakespeare Behind Bars* takes place in a very different prison than Krimpen aan den IJssel; the Dutch project-participants have more prospects on release and are serving time in a less harsh prison climate. Secondly it is important to note that the participants of *Shakespeare Behind Bars* are offered a letter of recommendation upon release, stating that the inmate completed the 12 values of the project. The difference between the participants, the chances of inmates in the Netherlands getting out are much bigger than the participants of the *Shakespeare Behind Bars* project, has effect on the value of a certificate. The Dutch participants can benefit a lot from a certificate upon release, whereas the American inmates in *Shakespeare Behind Bars* sometimes do not even have a prospect of parole. I do, however, agree with Tofteland on his comment that is doubtful the offering of a reward at the end of the road will allow for changing human behavior. This statement has to do with a few comments in the internal evaluation of the previous PEETA project, making it questionable how and why the participants received a certificate. Especially dubious is the way in which the participants realize they are being assessed in their attitudes, the realization that their grades will improve if they improve their behavior (*Sepe Evaluation*18). This shows the participants might be in the project for the certificate, their change is therefore not necessarily emerged from the artistic process, but from the knowledge what it takes to attain the diploma. This can provide difficulties for the assessment of the participants, because there is no follow-up evaluation, thus it is unclear whether the change in behavior was temporarily for the project, or if it is actual change. Regardless of their motives, however, the participant does show the possibility to change his behavior. When feigning results, the participants will have to suffer the consequences in the field if it turns out he does not meet the job requirements. The certificate may serve as a step in the right direction, but the participant will still have to prove himself worthy.

Who benefits?

Another issue within the PEETA project is the selection of participants and the way learning outcomes can have a mutual difference. Some participants in the Dutch project joined voluntarily, while others

were 'chosen' to do the project. This can be of influence on the motivation of the participants; some want to join, others have to. This will undoubtedly have an effect on the behavioral change and the possibility of attaining the certificate. However, according to the internal evaluation, the project can have benefits even without the certificate, meaning that even though the participant does not choose to participate, and might not want to go up for the certificate, the process might still have a positive effect on his behavior. This positive effect is not described in the evaluation, although it is mentioned more than once. We can then assume the positive effects referred to are general effects attributed to theater in prison, which comply with the learning outcomes of the SEPE certificate. This makes it difficult and confusing to talk about, the process and the outcome not necessarily being linked, but still generating the same result.

The main problem seems to be the certificate that is attached to the process, like it was in the previous subchapter about goals and motivation. Not only does the certificate seem to be a trigger for participation, and possibly generate equitable results, it can be seen as unnecessary because it records outcomes that are inherent to the artistic process. Adding the certificate may lead to spurious results. It can therefore be questioned whether it is beneficial to reward the participants with the certificate, or if it is counter-effective. Here, it seems that the method Tofteland persists will have a more unbiased outcome, due to voluntary participation and the possibility that, when a participant shows he measures up to the values of the project, he gets a letter of recommendation. This way a longer process is evaluated and the participant has more time to develop himself, while the evaluator is allowed to see as well as describe a wider field of competences.

Focus on personal development and social background

A final possibility for improvement can be achieved through focus on personal development and social background. In the PEETA project, and the SEPE certificate with it, there is only attention to development in skills, while I believe it should not be ignored that these employee skills are not solely the solution to obtaining and holding on to a job in the outside world, and therefore reducing the chance of recidivism. The past lives of the inmates will have left their traces, whether they are radically traumatized or not. Another important factor in the life and deeds of the inmates are social

contacts and family relationships. Sammie, a participant from the *Shakespeare Behind Bars* project *The Tempest*, says in the documentary that he may be vocationally and academically ready for a job outside of prison, but mentally he is not (*Shakespeare Behind Bars* 59.01). The internal evaluation of the PEETA project of 2011 mentions this twice, saying the musicians of the Italian project realized that they had to take the participants backgrounds into account when evaluating (*Sepe Evaluation* 58). Hughes and Ruding, as cited earlier, also warn for an overly optimistic view on initiatives like PEETA. Long-term effects would still be more determined by the background and the social context of the participant than on any arts activity (Hughes, Ruding 221).

The problem with the SEPE certificate is that it measures the skills the inmate has, while it ignores emotional difficulties possibly still present in the inmate. An Italian educational psychiatrist, working on the Italian PEETA project, said that she “did not notice any change in confidence [of the participants, red.], as their moods varied depending on what else was going on in the lives in and outside of prison” (*Sepe Evaluation* 64). It is therefore uncertain whether the developed skills, if they are persistent in the first place, will over-ride “the effects of their home life and their socialization once they left prison” (*Sepe Evaluation* 72).

Conclusion

Theater in prison can have beautiful outcomes, some visible, others invisible, but there is always a change. This change can benefit inmates when reintegrating into society and that is precisely the purpose of the PEETA method and its SEPE certificate. PEETA projects produce tangible outcomes that can be used in the world outside of prison. It tries to break the cycle of bad job perspectives leading to crime, leading to worse job perspectives, and frequently a relapse into crime. However, it should be taken into account that social and economic disadvantages play a major role in crime, which means that PEETA projects will not solely have positive outcomes if the larger context does not change as well. It should, therefore, always be critically evaluated what prospective participants could benefit most from the projects, considering background and emotional stability. It could have a lot of positive outcomes, like a better self image, more confidence and the possibility to empathize with others, things that can lead to a successful reintegration into society.

All of the feedback in the final chapter is not meant to state that the PEETA project and the SEPE certificate are not valuable; these are mere topics for consideration when further developing this project. The project is very valuable and has large potential for helping inmates reintegrate into society. The possibility for inmates to receive a certificate can be good for both work prospective as well as personal development, since it allows seeing the best of themselves and gaining confidence. However, there is a catch to this positive development. It is unclear whether the development is sincere due to the promise of a reward at the end of the project. There is the possibility that participants feign change in behavior to receive the certificate, without the change actually being permanent. Also there is the paradox of focusing on the learning outcomes or the artistic project as a process in itself. When the focus lies too strong on the learning outcomes the participant may be set back by the learning, while when the artistic project is the main focus, the results are possibly ignored. All together, the PEETA project and the SEPE certificate have some positive potential, but it is necessary that the evaluations will become better tools for development and it is important to learn from previous, successful projects to allow the development of this project to be successful.

With regards to the emotional difficulties that might stagnate the development of a participant, it seems important there is more guidance if available and necessary. It seems like a reasonable award for successful participants to not only gain a certificate, but to be allowed extra guidance upon release. This extra guidance could focus on emotional and social problems that might occur when returning to the society where the crime was committed in the first place. By offering the participant guidance in the process of processing previous events and reintegrating, the job perspective will increase even more.

Recommendations

As a final recommendation for the project, it seems valuable to develop an evaluation system for the project that involves a set of key performance indicators (KPI's) that will make the results and the impact of the project visible to society (Kpilibrary.com). With a measurable effect, there is a greater probability of positive response and follow up to the project. These KPI's allow for a clear outcome and will show the development towards the aimed goal.

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