Chapter 4

Research on Information Literacy and Social Inclusion of Female Inmates

Aurora Cuevas-Cerveró
Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

María Antonia Agúndez Soriano
Colegio Universitario de Estudios Financieros (CUNEF), Spain

ABSTRACT

Information literacy in prisons is still an incipient issue for the scientific community, as evidenced by the absence of studies on information literacy activities in prisons. There are hardly any specific training programs for the acquisition of informational competences in Spanish prisons. They are presented results of research that have been aimed at creating a theoretical-application model of training in informational and digital skills for people in prison. The project had a methodological approach based on action research. The digital divide makes it difficult to integrate people into the labor market, leading them to social exclusion. In the case of female prisoners, this gap is even more accentuated and integration difficulties increase, so the project has adopted a gender perspective. In order to meet the objectives, a training program aimed at social and labor inclusion was created with the aim of improving the living and working conditions of women prisoners and increasing their participation as active citizens in the information society.

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INTRODUCTION

The research we present is a response to the lack of informational literacy training programs for the social inclusion of women prisoners in the jails of the Community of Madrid (Spain). The economic and gender gap hinders the integration of these women in the labour market and leads them to social exclusion. If we add to this the informational and digital gap, we are facing a serious case of social exclusion. That is why the objective of this research has been to develop a formative proposal of information literacy for social inclusion, with the aim of allowing inmates to acquire the necessary information and digital skills for their social and educational development from the perspective of social and labour inclusion, thus improving their living and working conditions and increasing their participation as active citizens in contemporary society.

First of all, in order to achieve our objective, an analysis of the general and specific environment has been carried out, which has allowed us to define the context for the implementation of our training proposal. The review of the literature and the experiences found related to our object of study has allowed us to determine the need to produce a training program for the acquisition of informational and digital competences in the female prison context.

In addition, in order to elaborate our proposal, we have relied on the theoretical framework of information literacy for social inclusion and the collection of data through a user study conducted directly to the inmates in our case study. The analysis of the collected data reflected relevant facts, which showed that the inmates had a very low level of computer and informational knowledge. This study has allowed us to develop a training proposal according to the specific needs of our study group. Our proposal includes training in informational and digital competencies for the social inclusion of women inmates of the “Jaime Garralda” Mothers Unit in Madrid, a prison in which women who have just been mothers living with their children remain for up to three years.

With our work we intend to contribute to diminish the informational and gender gap suffered by these women, facilitating their integration into society and allowing them to take advantage of all available resources, so that they can relate, work, communicate, entertain, produce, and access administrative procedures. It is also intended to facilitate that woman prisoners are more autonomous, economically independent, more critical and more reflective, that is, in short, more socially and professionally integrated.

This work that we present here emanates from the doctoral thesis carried out by Agúndez-Soriano and directed by Cuevas-Cerveró in 2015 in response to the lack of information literacy training programs for the social inclusion of women prisoners. Information Literacy whose acronym is ALFIN, is a translation of Information Literacy.
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