

Building Bridges: Pathways to building bridges between practice and research in the field of restorative justice

Gerry Johnstone (UK)
Katharina Resch (Austria)
Iain Brennan (UK)

BEYOND CRIME
8th International Conference of the European Forum for
Restorative Justice, June 11-14, 2014, Belfast
Parallel Workshop Session 11



Contents of the presentation

1. Background to Building Bridges
2. Challenges of Building Bridges
3. Meeting the challenges

Building Bridges Partners

- P1: Gevangenenzorg Netherlands (NL)
- P2: Prison Fellowship Hungary (HU)
- P3: CONFIAR (PT)
- P4: Seehaus e.v. (DE)
- P5: University of Hull (UK)
- P6: Makam Research (AT)
- P7: Prison Fellowship Italia Onlus (IT)
- P8: Mezinarodni Vezenske Spolencenstvi (CZ)
- P9: Confraternidad Carcelaria de España (ES)



1 Background of Building Bridges

- How Building Bridges got started
 - *idealistic reason*: contribution to victim support work in Europe
 - *methodological reason*: Sycamore Tree Project (STP) was developed and done in America, but rarely in Europe (victims are hard to reach in this programme)
 - Prison Fellowship has rarely received EU money for their activities (*practical reason*)
- Prison Fellowship International (PFI) Movement
 - *Bringing together those who have committed crimes with those victimized by them.*
 - *Promoting healing dialogues*
 - *United Nations Partner for Restorative Justice*

Sycamore Tree Programme (STP)

- brings together unrelated victims and offenders
- with a curriculum guide a facilitator leads the participants to consider responsibility, confession, repentance, forgiveness etc. in the context of crime and justice
- 5-8 week in-prison programme



1 Background of Building Bridges

- Building Bridges wants to:
 - **Make a case for restorative justice in prisons**
 - **Transfer an effective methodology (STP)** and further develop it to Building Bridges into different EU countries
 - Enable victim-offender mediators, counsellors, prison psychologists, social workers, and others to **support victims in the restoration process**
 - **Training** victim-offender mediators, counsellors, prison psychologists, social workers, and others in the Building Bridges methodology

1 Background of Building Bridges

- Implementing Building Bridges in European prisons and testing it in 14 programmes
- Profound scientific evaluation of Building Bridges - to test its effectiveness and feasibility in different settings inside and outside of prisons in Europe
- Sharing and spreading knowledge about the Building Bridges methodology in a guidebook for facilitators in 8 languages and in a European Conference (Rome 2015)
- Writing a book about victim-offender mediation with Building Bridges

1 Background of Building Bridges

- **Exploring existing STPs in Europe and the original STP methodology**
 - Collect literature about STP in North and South America
 - Interviews with mediators from STP in Europe
- **Review of victim-offender mediation projects and programmes and the role of the victim**
 - Literature review

2 Challenges of Building Bridges

- **Target audience challenge**: how to adapt an intervention which was initially designed to help offenders to develop victim-awareness, self-reflection and other habits associated with desistance – and which involves victims in order to achieve *these* goals – into an intervention which is equally focussed on promoting healing and recovery of crime victims
- **Transfer challenge**: how to implement and evaluate an intervention in very different institutional and cultural contexts (from South/North America to different regions in Europe)
- **Methodological challenge**: evaluation challenges, managing outcome expectations (process vs. outcomes evaluation)

3 Meeting these challenges

- **Target audience challenge:**
 - Thinking of new ways of engaging victims in STP
 - Re-framing the aims of the programme
 - Thinking of concrete benefits for victims to take part
 - Thinking of “typical” or appropriate victims
- **Transfer challenge:**
 - Finding ways of adapting the existing programme to new structures and groups
 - Building capacities in staff members in countries which have no experience with the programme
 - Provide clear and structured documents of the programme in European languages as a minimum requirement to transferability and sustainability

3 Meeting these challenges

- **Methodological challenge:**
 - Ethnographical research part with observing current STPs (participatory observation)
 - Sociological research with interviewing victims and offenders (life-stage interviews)
 - Measuring “restored values” in both groups
 - Measuring effects of “re-integration” in both groups
 - Collecting or filtering out enabling and hindering factors for victim support in this programme

Conclusions

- Comments
- Suggestions
- Questions

University of Hull
Law School
Prof. Gerry Johnstone

**Cottingham Rd, Hull, Yorkshire HU6 7RX,
United Kingdom**

Email: J.G.Johnstone@hull.ac.uk

MAKAM Research
Dr. Katharina Resch
Hietzinger Hauptstrasse 34
A-1130 Vienna, Austria

Phone
+43 1 877 22 52

Email: k.resch@makam.at