

# THE CRITO PROJECT

## The Crito Project Annual Audit

- Project report for year ending February 2018
- Analysis of qualitative data on course efficacy
  - Future Strategy & Implementation

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# 1 Project Overview

## Background

The Crito Project has been active since September 2013, providing unaccredited higher education in the fields of Philosophy, Logic and Ethics to inmates at prisons located across the East of England. Its various modules are all held over three-month periods and involve weekly, three-hour group teaching and discussion sessions. To the best of our knowledge, this combination of course structure & topic has not been carried out before in the United Kingdom, and so we decided that an audit process should be put in place to examine the impact and efficacy of the course. This process also provides valuable information as to how the course can be both refined and developed.

Due to the unique nature of this course we settled upon a qualitative design to ascertain the impact of the course as perceived by the participants. This involves using semi-structured interviews (see Appendix for questions asked) to collect data, analysed using Interpretative phenomenological analysis, which identifies key themes as according to the perspectives of our students. The semi-structured interview focuses on both the positive and possible negative impact the course could be having on the students.

## Objectives

The Project's *pedagogic* aim is to provide our students with the conceptual tools necessary to take control of their lives upon release, and to manage the crises and challenges that make up a life lived in prison. We aim to effect this change through the conceptual clarification & coherence that comes with philosophical study at a higher level of learning. Aspiration, as expressed through study in higher education, can be a transformative experience, leading its student towards new vistas, new conceptions of their social, historical, ethical and physical world. There is no more timely or relevant place for this kind of aspiration than while serving a prison sentence.

Our *institutional* aim is to forge positive and mutually beneficial relationships with prison governors, education departments, international partners, relevant charitable bodies and the University of East Anglia. These ever-closer ties will allow us to improve and widen our provision, learn and incorporate the best methods from our peers and, eventually, to implement an accredited higher-education system right in the heart of the prison classroom.

Our *research* aim is to gather, author and present qualitative, then quantitative and, finally, longitudinal research that analyses the efficacy of the Crito Project, to both safeguard & inform its future learning outcomes, and to benefit the wider audience of academics & policy makers.

## **Objectives in context**

Current education provision in our prisons nearly always comes to an abrupt halt at Level Two; the central premise of this project is that this arbitrary ceiling is having a limiting effect upon the efficacy of our prison system in achieving its central goal: the reform of those people within its institutions. This is not a small concern: both the reduction of crime, and the wellbeing of many excluded members within our society, rest upon the efficacy of our prison system. In the UK 46% of adults are re-convicted within one year of release, and reoffending by all recent ex-prisoners costs the economy between £9.5 and £13 billion.

Meanwhile, the “Brain Cells” survey, undertaken by the Prisoner Education Trust, in 2012 found that 41% of respondents did not engage in prison education, as nothing was available at a high-enough level. Their survey also found that inmates “were particularly motivated to progress to higher levels of learning and go to university in the future. Many respondents said they wanted to turn a negative situation into a positive one through education.” The Crito Project is an attempt to meet this clear and present need.

The university system in the UK has undergone rapid and deep structural change over the past five years. Its future will depend to a large extent upon the impact that its research, teaching and practice can have upon society at large, beyond the lecture hall and the journal. As a country we possess an embarrassment of riches;

many of our universities are world leaders and we produce an overabundance of highly-educated graduate researchers every year. These resources can and should be deployed in the solution of wider social problems.

The Government's Coates Review, if implemented, represents a sea change in prison education provision. New initiatives are springing up, such as the Prisoner Education Trust's PUPiL scheme (Prison & University Partnerships in Learning), that will facilitate the coordination and sharing of best practice and findings. The signs are promising.

## **2 Qualitative Research**

### **Participants**

All participants for this audit were inmates based in either a Category C or Category D prison in East England who had completed The Crito Project course 'Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy'. All students who took part in the courses were offered the opportunity to take place in the audit, the purpose of which was explained to them before they commenced the interview. We also explained that information and findings from the audit would be published and that taking part or declining the interview would have no impact on their prison sentence. Five students participated in the interviews at the Category D prison, whilst four students participated in the Category E interviews, with one declining.

### **Methodology**

This was a retrospective study that gathered and explored data using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This was our preferred method of investigation as IPA is focused on providing an insight into how a person experiences a phenomenon, therefore allowing all areas of the courses impact to be examined from the perspective of the student, rather than simply the researchers own interpretation of the data. All interviews utilised the same semi-structured interview (see appendix), which last between 10 and 20 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed to establish prevalent themes, which were then compared to establish the most accurate and in depth result possible.

## **Modules Held in Audit time frame**

**16<sup>th</sup> February: Introducing Philosophy at Hollesley Bay (12 Week Module)**

**10<sup>th</sup> March 2017: Introducing Philosophy at Warren Hill (12 Week Module)**

**24<sup>th</sup> August 2017: Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy at Hollesley Bay (12 Week Module)**

**24<sup>th</sup> August 2017: Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy at Warren Hill (12 Week Module)**

**31<sup>st</sup> November: Introducing Philosophy at Whitemoor (12 Week Module)**

An audit was carried out for the *Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy* module taught at both Warren Hill and Hollesley Bay, however, due to researcher limitations it was not possible to carry out an audit of the *Philosophy of Mind* courses at the same site. Additionally, due to increased security measures not being met in time, we were unable to conduct interviews at Whitemoor at the conclusion of *Introducing Philosophy*.

### **Method**

#### ***Audit of Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy HM Warren Hill (Category C Prison)***

This course finished with 7 students completing the course. On the day of the audit interviews five students were present and all consented to take part in the interviews and audit research.

#### ***Audit of Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy at HM Hollesley Bay (Category D Prison)***

This course finished with 7 students completing the course. On the day of the audit interviews five students were present and four consented to take part in the interviews and audit research.

The Analysis of these courses found the same superordinate and subordinate themes. Therefore, to avoid duplication of the discussion of the themes and their interaction, the analysis of each audit have been combined, with examples from each course being included per theme.

## **Assessment & Analysis**

IPA analysis of the interviews found two superordinate themes and five subordinate themes emerging as a result of taking part in and completing the course. These themes were in agreement with the previous audit of the previous Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy courses run by the Crito Project.

### **Superordinate Themes:**

#### **Insight**

Students reported an increased awareness and ability to examine and draw more accurate conclusions from their thinking. This included being aware of the flaws or fallacies of their own thinking and also in that of others. His increase ability of their insight appears to not only have provided an awareness of incorrect thinking patterns but also an ability to develop new ones. Taken together, the various aspects of this improved cognitive ability appear to have allowed the students to think more clearly and accurately about their past, present and possible futures, whilst subsequently reducing their impulsivity and improving their understanding and subsequent relationship with others.

*P1WH At some point there is going to be a constant connection, to have the ever present in my mind, you know, to make sure, to force it into you mind that these things happen and as soon as these things happen it comes with reactionary reasoning rather than the wrong reaction, so yeah it will help me deal with people in the future. (Insight/impulsivity and Positive Relationships with Others)*

*P2WH If someone calls you whatever, that's not in your control, so you just let*

them be. What is in your control is you getting angry about it. So that was a big part of the course what I enjoyed. (Insight/impulsivity/Positive Relations with others.)

P3WH Realising that people have got their own agendas and own goals and they won't always tie in with...you know alongside yours, and you know... maybe a lot of the friction that you experience in social situations is completely unintended, it's just that you are trying to achieve different things at different times. So, it's quite hopeful to be mindful of that. (Insight and Positive Relationships with Others).

P4WH The course has really had a big impact...it's helped me pull through really. I accept more things in life now, I mean, I've always looked into Philosophy but this has given me a framework and understanding that I didn't have before. (Insight Purpose and Means of living - Autonomy)

P4WH The course is definitely helping me to have more insight of others and situations...like I am less fragile now as I am able to pause and kick a problem around in my head. (Insight)

P5WH This course creates new pathways in your mind....Like I have become aware of some of the dead ends in my mind and I've been able to new pathways. You will find that these concepts stay with you if you ever do this course. (Insight + Self Belief/Purpose in Life).

P1HB So it's given me these and told and really shown that if you don't make these choices then you won't have a fulfilling life. If you do then the right things will happen. (Insight)

P1HB So, I realised ...had insight into my own behaviours, for example, when I was serving a man a small bit of chicken who I did not like. I realised what I was doing. So, I learned to accept things as they are and see the possibilities of change in myself...as you start to really see the world. (Insight)

P2HB Yeah, it certainly has...it's so important to keep perspectives challenged. I fail sometimes then react to it so that I can keep living in the moment, which make same feel better. This also allows me to challenge the certainty of how I see others and myself, which allows the possibility of change and a greater understanding of both. (Insight/Personal Growth)

P4HB Learning from Stoicism, that's what has changed for me. It's had or given a profound insight...so it's just not learning some knowledge in the world, I can use it practically....something I can use...so it's beneficial. It has changed my outlook on how I see the world and myself. (Insight/Personal Growth)

## **Reflection**

An increase in one's ability to reflect on one's behaviours, opinions and beliefs along with those of others was prevalent in all participants. This change to their cognitive thinking style was identified as an important factor that allowed participants to not only take time to consider themselves and others but also to look back on their past and reassess certain events and relationships. This increase in reflection also contributed to the sub-ordinate themes of how they reacted and interacted with others, their view of themselves and their approach to their future.

*P2WH It's given me a bit of motivation to change and it's let me look at a few things and I've thought 'well I'm going wrong in that area' so reading self-help diaries Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus. But yeah, just looking at their teachings and then looking at my life and reflecting on it, I've noticed where I've gone wrong and where I want to be in the future. So it's been a massive help. (Reflection/Insight)*

*P3WH It's made me think about myself quite a lot actually. In that ...what are my good points? What are my bad points? How can I improve myself? Um, how can I get more out of life? How can I feel that I've lived longer and done more? (Reflection/Insight)*

*P4WH The sage does not react....but you can talk with another and think about what is being said, which is a better process. (Reflection)*

*P5WH It's made me reassess certain things, question things...how I was dealing with certain things. I think the course has helped me reflect on my own reality....my self and ideal self...to really think about the reality I created and the reality I want to create. (Reflection - Facilitated)*

*P5WH It makes me more sharp with analysis....so not making assumptions about others and instead thinking more deeply and with less emotion. (Reflection)*

*P1HB Well, we now see each other more around the prison...in like we're all part of something and I know when I see them, that they are trying to live right as well. It's easier to do your meditations in prison...we all have the same kind of problems and you see how people deal with things in different ways. (Reflection)*

*P2HB If I hadn't been doing what I had being doing in prison on the course...I don't know where I'd be. I have been serious about the course, it certainly has*

*have made me see the past clearly and also where I want to go. (Reflection/Purpose in Life)*

*P3HB Yeah, it's a bit of both really...certainly Stoicism is working on yourself but also realising that you can't change things in other or in some situations. It's made me look back at my past that got me here and how I can do the future differently. (Reflection/Insight/Personal Growth/Purpose in Life)*

*P4HB So, it makes me more reasonable in my life and in my decision making and also in my perception....in my ability to change my perception of things. I see myself and other with more empathy...I look at others with more compassion, for example if someone would do something that I could react to, like them being a bully, I can now, with my reasoning, react compassionately to them. (Reflect/Relationships with Others and Insight).*

## **Subordinate themes:**

### **Impulsivity**

The impact in the impulsivity of the participants behaviour and thinking was evident throughout all interviews. This appeared to result from the change in both the ability to reflect more and have more insight whilst doing so. The effect of these changes on the impulsive behaviours, such as learning the value of not reacting to ones own thoughts or the behaviours of others was found to have a reciprocal positive interaction with both the superordinate themes. The benefit of this change in thinking and behaviour can also be seen in the subsequent positive changes that this causes in their relationships with others, personal growth and purpose in life.

*P1WH Perhaps, because it will help you develop interpersonal, intercommunication skills, that you know, don't make judgements on other people and what they teach you....and perhaps it does you know? (Positive Relations with Others/Impulsivity)*

*P2WH Less impulsive, less susceptible to peer pressure and em, it's lengthened my fuse, as I had a short fuse but it's actually lengthened my fuse, so for them three reasons, through knowing that concept of it's out of your control, so yeah, it's changed me. (Insight/Impulsivity/Personal Growth)*

*P4WH On the course you come up against different people and ideas, who*

*have all had different lives and we may all be these people. This course gives you an understanding of people and makes you less reactive. (Impulsivity and Relationships with Others)*

*P5WH The course teaches you this...to assess different aspects of an argument and to accept others may have a different point of view....so you develop this all together and then this all accumulates and clarifies who you are....your identity, and then how you act. (Impulsivity and Self-Belief)*

*P1HB Yeah...it changes how you look at the world...if you want to, and that is the thing. We've made a choice to come every week and that is our choice. I've learned that I can't control much but what I can choose, how I think and act, are the most important things. (Impulsivity and Insight)*

*P1HB Yeah....seeing the beauty in things, not worrying about other people, like not getting too involved when my misses gets upset, so I am now more helpful to her. It helps you step back more from intense situations. (Positive Relations with Others/Impulsivity)*

*P2HB It's also changed who I see and interact with others. I am more able to look at myself and then see and understand others....others in how they are being and how they could be has opened my eyes up to people's behaviours. This has changed my reaction time, as it was a nanosecond and now....it has been tested many times....I now have that second to think and then not react.*

*P3 HB I suppose it meant I haven't got as frustrated by things as I did when I first got to prison. I'm more tolerant of other people...letting people go when they are confrontational...you know walking away. I'm maybe coming out of my shell more. (Impulsivity/Positive Relations with Others)*

*P4HB I'm a bit more enlightened now...I'm interested in how and why something happened rather than jumping or reacting to it. (Reflective/Insight and Impulsivity)*

## **Positive relationships with Others**

The ability to reflect more, gain insight into the thoughts and actions of oneself and others also contributed to the participants experiencing an increased resilience to the negative behaviours and rationalisations of others. This change to their understanding of and reactions to others, along with a decrease in their impulsivity, led to an improvement in their relationships with others. The theme of positive relationships with others appears to have two clear areas, one of having closer and more positive relationships with some people and two, being able to tolerate others

more and so having less negative interactions and relationships. As a result of these changes also positively interacted with both the superordinate and other subordinate themes.

*P1WH Yeah, when dealing with other people. One of the principles is 'Expect it of people' so when it does happen you are not surprised, so you take people as they are. I expect that of you. So if you don't do it then you don't do it, but if you do do it then I am neither surprised either because I expect it of you because of the human condition. So yeah, in some degree's it does help in the day to day life and dealing with other people. (Positive Relationships with others. Impulsivity. Insight)*

*P2WH Yeah, I see others as...a big part of the course is what we were just speaking about then. Em. Prison is a very judgemental area, but when you actually delve into some theories what we have learned, about people seeking the good. So, if you go out and rob an old lady, you're not necessarily what I'm doing is not right. He recognises what he's thinking he's doing is putting food and the family table, so he's seeking the good, which he perceives as good, but it's not quite good, but he's trying to do the good. So you can almost be a bit accepting of some people because they're just a bit misled on what the good is. So it gives you a new look on them. (Interpersonal/Insight)*

*P2WH Looking around and speaking to the group and that, it's definitely inspired some, if not most. There is a community between us now. In the gym now, we are no longer just person x, y or z, we are like, 'What do you think to the dichotomy?' 'What do you think about...what's your essay plan?', So it's brought it together outside of hours of education. (interpersonal/social and community/Personal Growth)/Positive Relationships with Others.)*

*P3 WH You meet someone who's in a bad mood and they're not necessarily in a bad mood with you, you know anything could have happened (Positive Relationships with Others)*

*P4WH I can now accept other people's beliefs....understand others beliefs and see that what they are saying is nether right or wrong but projections of their thinking and understanding. This course has allowed me to see and accept this in other and challenge them in myself...which will continue in the future. (Impulsivity and Positive Relations with Others)*

*P4WH I have spoken with people from the class outside, when I may not have done so in the past and we often talk about a topic in the course or what we are working on. Everyone seems to get a lot from it. (Social – Positive Relationships with Others)*

*P5WH I think this has changed my character to make me more tolerant of others and to have better relationships too. (Positive Relationships with Others).*

*P5WH We see more of each other in the week now. We talk about the course but also the topics that we are learning about or are trying to write an essay on. (Social) You see the skills we have learned and how we all apply them to new situations. The course has created new relationships within the group but well are also influencing the larger population...In the office the other week I benefitted from the Philosophy course because I was less urgent and stressed with a larger group and it helped keep things calm. (Impulsivity and Positive Relationships with Others).*

*P1HB I've learned to not get upset or try and change arrogant people or people who are stuck...as it's not my role to change people or get upset by them. I'm choosing to live a better way...to be a better person. So the meditations showed me to not hold a grudge. (Relationships/Social/Insight/Impulsivity).*

*P1HB I am also more acceptant of difficult challenges and I focus more on myself rather than others. I can't believe that they do not teach this in schools....its helps everyone and would reduce arguments as you accept everyone has their own view and the important thing is to own your own. (Insight/Purpose in Life)*

*P2 HB There's a couple of guys I knew before they came to the course. It's been good to get an insight into these when they start opening up. It just makes you see everybody in a different light...their true self. A lot of people have had different upbringings and experiences in life...different worlds...but now we understand each other better. (Insight/Positive Relations with Others)*

*P4HB Practicing Stoicism is my day to day life now and it has meant I've had less emotions in my life...that I react less intensely and generally I am more reasonable. (Positive Relationships with Others)*

*P4HB It's changed how I react to the world...to the things around me... emotionally and how I function and behave. It's given me more peace of mind...more stability in my emotional responses. (Impulsivity/Positive Relationships with Others)*

## **Personal Growth**

With the awareness of their development of the skills of insight, reflection, having

decreased impulsivity and better relationships of others, the students appear to have experienced personal growth. Another element to this subordinate theme is a growth in confidence both in their new capabilities but also in their ability to make positive changes in themselves and their immediate world.

*P2WH Yeah, the course has just made me have a massive outlook on life, because obviously I'm in prison for a violent crime and it was all about protecting image. So now, it's like, I've got a new identity being a Philosophical student but also I've got a new strategy of combating negativity, so instead of letting people get me angry with the stuff they say, I have clear knowledge, it's indifference, so it's irrelevant to me. So really it's changed me for the better. (Insight/Impulsivity/Personal Growth)*

*P3WH Yeah, yeah...and at the same time, the reading what you get with the course is pretty brilliant, hearing people from a whole points of time from the last 2000 years with the same sort of ideas but in different contexts, helps you put it into yours. (Personal Growth)*

*P3WH Yeah, I'm taking a bit more interest in what I do on a day to day basis. Spending a few minutes at night looking back at what I've been doing....sometimes trying to forget, other times making times for improvement. (Reflection – facilitated by course)*

*P4WH I think the impact has only been in the short-term at the moment but the longer you study the book...Marcus Aurelius...the more you grasp how to apply these things to your life. (Personal Growth– plus operationalisation of Philosophy).*

*P5WH Well I've made new friendships on the Philosophy course. Each week is a focal point for me and everyone on the course that...that gives you stability and balance that sorts out your whole week. (Social and Purpose in Life) It's made me function better....think more clearly. (Personal Growth/ Insight + Self-belief/Self Esteem)*

*P5WH Yes definitely. The course is really the pursuit of thinking and through that you are developing skills, analysis skills and learning to differentiate between different ideas, perspectives and aspects of reality. (Personal Growth)*

*P1 HB Oh, it's changed my life! I want to lead a good life, but I didn't know how to. This is a very prison thing to say, but it's given me the tools to do this. (Personal Growth)*

*P1HB No. Absolutely not. It challenges you, which can be uncomfortable for a*

*bit but that is a good thing and eventually you are in such a better place.  
(Personal Growth)*

*P2 HB Really good. I'm practicing Buddhism....Arete and Dharma are the same thing for me...it opens your brain and gets you thinking. I'm surprised so few people come to something so valuable. It helps you find yourself. Years ago I started practicing Mindfulness and then Buddhism, which led me to Dharma and having a life led by this. I wish I'd found it years ago...this course has consolidated that and helped focus how to do good and also how to let go of bad I my mind. (Personal Growth/Insight/Reflection)*

*P2HB Day to day I try to pursue Stoicism everyday. I see myself taking my opportunities to read and practice. It's changed who I am, as I have more patience, more understanding and I'm more friendly now. I've always had these traits but it's exacerbated them. (Personal Growth)*

*P3HB I do find myself looking back ...again whether that is because of the course or just because of being here I can't tell right now. I think the course has helped me improve myself and have more confidence in myself and the future. (Personal Growth)*

*P4HB Yeah, it has. The way I reason in my thinking and the way I react to people, relationships, situations...it's changed me in the sense that I use my reason now more than emotion. (Personal Growth).*

## **Purpose in Life**

The topics that the course brought into focus and the insight, personal growth and subsequent confidence that was attained by the students was identified as assisting them in developing a clearer understanding of their purpose in life.

*P2WH So, day to day living, I've em been very inspired by Ben as a teacher em away from Philosophy...him as a teacher. He comes in here on a voluntary basis and he's trying so hard to make it where you get credits and stuff like that. So him as a person has actually inspired me, because I do want to change people's lives for the better when released. So actually, having a role model like Ben in front of me has actually just spurred that on. (Purpose in Life/Personal Growth)*

*P2WH Massively. A big part of what I want to do when I get released...I grew*

*up in the prison system ...I come away when I was 15 with a 15 year sentence, so growing up in that era in prisons, I want to go back into prisons and put forward recommendations on how young offenders should be treated and maybe design a course around how they should be treated and the Philosophy and some of the teaching coincide with what I believe in. (Purpose in Life/Goals for the Future.)*

*P3WH It's given me a bit more information to put that into practice, more than anything else. (Operationalising philosophy – Insight and Purpose in Life)*

*P4 WH So, this course and the study of this book, gives you the tools for the future. In learning to apply things and also in seeing that others on the course have used them, is testimony to their usefulness. Really, this course and what I've learned from it has given me a reason to carry on. (Personal Growth/Purpose in Life)*

*P5WH So yeah, it's changed how I approach the future for the positive. (Purpose in Life).*

*P5WH I'd just like to add...Flow Theory....I'm an optimistic person....flow theory was perfect for me...there is a theory showing that what you hold your attention on gives you power. This --has given me and enforced my optimism and pursuit of what I can achieve realistically. It has shown me how creative you can be with what there is in front of you. (Purpose in Life and Self-Belief)  
PG*

*P1HB Self (Pause) I see myself as a little person...it's changed me definitely. I feel like...It's hard to explain, I feel like a can achieve anything if I live right and do the right things. It will impact on other people. I've not lived well. I'm in prison, But I want to show others that I can be better...that I want to achieve more. (Purpose in Life)*

*P2HB I've answered that really....but I would add that it's both how I see my past and how I approach my future. (Reflection/Purpose in Life)*

*P4HB I don't talk a great deal to the other guys, except my friend, who's not here today. I think its inspired him in the same way in it's been an eye opener. (purpose in life and insight)*

*P4HB Yeah, it has actually. It's made my personal goals a lot clearer. Once goal is Arete, who is what I've learned from this. It was always good but this coursed centred that and provided it a framework that made it all made sense in a wider view. I also now see how to achieve and understand it...my goal of living the Stoic way. (Purpose in Life)*

*P4HB I wouldn't say that it's so much changed my mind on who I can be but it has encouraged it a lot more. This goes back to my personal goals...this has*

*been reaffirming of my personal goals and given me methods of achieving who I want to be...who I could be.*

### **The negative impact of the course**

A vital component of each audit carried out is to ascertain if there is any negative impact of the course, which is achieved by an open question in the semi-structured interview (see appendix). All participants stated that they had not experienced any negative impact of the course, however one participant stated that he thought some people many find the challenge to their thinking too much of a challenge. In exploring this idea further with Dr Walker, he stated that they felt the voluntary nature of the course allowed any person who felt that the challenge to their thinking was too great could stop attending.

The following excerpts are answers to whether the course had a negative impact on the participants:

*P5WH No. (pause) Not at all. I think it could have on some others...due to the debate and arguments that might lead people to feel inadequate or lower their self-esteem. (Pause) But Ben brings in a balancing factor to that and makes it a learning experience rather than a judgemental one.*

*P1HB No. Not at all. It challenges you, which can be uncomfortable for a bit but that is a good thing and eventually you are in such a better place. (Important for negatives- Insightful)*

Dr Walker also stated that the nature of the course is to challenge thinking styles and beliefs that utilised and contained fallacies, which although a difficult challenge to some students was also the source of the benefits of the course. The comments of previous students also support this view (see The Crito Project yearly audit 2016 – 2017).

### **Discussion**

The fundamental approaches of the Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy module are to gain insight into your own thought and behaviour patterns by understanding the course teachings, whilst also using the tool of reflection of oneself and others to aid these insights. Along with these teachings, a unique feature of this course is the

operationalisation of the theory by integrating Stoic exercises and practice into one's daily living. It is therefore not surprising to find that both insight and reflection were found to be the superordinate themes in both courses yet again, and that they strongly influenced both one another and all of the subordinate themes. The consistency in the participants' answers in identifying the positive changes in their impulsivity, positive relationships with others, personal growth and purpose in life are also understandable and to a certain extent expected as the focus of the course is to gain greater clarity and a sense of agency in these areas. In a previous audit of this course (see The Crito Project Audit 2016-2017, Stoicism & Ancient Philosophy) an improvement in one's quality of life was identified as a theme.

Although the result of all the changes caused by the identified themes in the current audit arguably result in an improvement to one's quality of life, this was not directly identified as a theme resulting from the course and perhaps is more evident over a longer period of time. An important finding of both audits was that none of the participants found any negative impact of the course. The potential negative impact of having one's thinking – fallacies and all – challenged and exposed is possibly negated by the voluntary nature of the course, which allows students that are finding it either too difficult or too challenging the option of not continuing. As the positive impact and type of impact was seen consistently across participants, it will be interesting to explore the possible long-term positive impact that completing this course might have on reoffending behaviour.

## **Further Research**

As the qualitative audits this year are in agreement with the one another and the previous audit on this topic in terms of the positive impact and lack of negative impact of the course, future audits should begin to involve quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis will involve a booklet of questionnaires based on the superordinate and subordinate themes and will be completed at the start and end of each course so allowing a measure of the courses impact on these measures. The booklet will also include an section where the students can state their opinion on the course and if they have experienced any negative impact of the course.

This will allow a more detailed understanding of the impact of the course to be

attained, whilst also providing feedback on how the course can be improved or modified. Any new courses provided by The Crito Project will be audited using the IPA methodology initially, so that the main themes and impact of the course can be discovered from the students point of view.

### 3 Strategy & Planning

Over the next three years, the Crito Project has ambitious plans to change the nature of our education provision. National Offender Management Services was, until recently, the umbrella body responsible for managing prison education and its various syllabi, but recently there has been a new hope for change in the sector, as funding draw-down has been expanded to include projects that fall outside the previous remit of Level Two and below education. In part this can be attributed to the impact of the Coates Review (*Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison*, Dame Sally Coates, May 2016), which must figure as the most wide-ranging and in-depth report to be written on UK Prison Education in over 30 years.

One of the key areas addressed in the Coates Review was higher learning in prison. As part of a wider-ranging recommendation, Coates advocated that governors should have the power to decide to teach at a higher level, and be “able to use their education budgets to fund learning at Level 3 and above.”

Some of its key findings were as follows. 1) Governors should be given responsibility for education budgets and contracts so that they have the power to inform education provision at their prisons - along with the responsibility for their success or failure. 2) Access to computers, information technology training and modern interfaces must be introduced, in order to stop people leaving prison with zero practice in modern communication technology. 3) Incentivise and expand access to higher education in prison, by giving governors the ability to spend their budget to commission level 3 and beyond courses in their prisons, and removing the funding block on prisoners studying at a higher level at all, until in the last 6 years of their sentence. Historically, higher education delivery is atrophying in the prison estate.

Overall, then, in 2016 the Coates Review advocated for a sea change in Prison Education, and an attitudinal shift in regard to what we expect such education to encompass and deliver. While implementation has been spotty, and predicated upon the will of the current serving Secretary of State, the Coates Review has had a mixed impact. Being the first review of its kind in many years, it will serve as a strategy document, or at least a metric by which to judge continuing shortcomings,

for the foreseeable future. For these reasons, the Coates Review is an important baseline from which to work our strategy. From it, and other trends in the fields of Prison and Higher Education, we have set the following three objectives:

Firstly, contracting and provision are shifting in the field of Prison Education. Governors are expected to receive new budget autonomy, allowing them a degree of choice over what courses they'd like delivered at their prisons. This dynamic system allows small charities and providers such as the Crito Project the opportunity to establish at a local level what would have proved impossible within a nationally-set curriculum. We will therefore be able to pursue a strategy based on local partnerships, in the same region as the Crito Project & the UEA, and negotiate, with People Plus, for provision and some degree of financial support to help cover the costs of teaching, travel and books.

Secondly, the Crito Project's Partnership with the UEA has been in effect for a few years, and we are proving ourselves to be a significant contributor to the university's outreach efforts. By 2020 we aim to have in place a system for accreditation of Crito Project modules, either as an independent charitable education provider, validated by the UEA's Partnership Office, or by closely aligning the Project with the School of Politics, Philosophy & Languages' existing teaching, in order to align and simplify the many tasks involved in handling assessment, accreditation and applications to credit-bearing higher education. This goal is fundamental to the aims of the Crito Project, and we will work tirelessly to implement full higher education in local prisons, and to forge ever closer and more rewarding institutional relations between the prison and university sectors. To that end, we aim to make friendships with other universities providing prison education, at a more advanced stage of development than ourselves. The natural choice for this would be the Bard College Prison Initiative, and their associate colleges, grouped under the Consortium for Liberal Arts in Prison. Being able to draw down on already-established methodology would help our own implementation enormously.

Thirdly, to put in place a Board of Trustees that represents our needs as a small but expanding charity. To this end, the Crito Project will need to step up its administrative game, putting in place a number of policies, procedures and offices,

all of which are necessary for education provision on the scale we are aiming to provide. We have secured our first choice of Chair of the Board, Prof. Liam Dolan of Magdalen College, Oxford, and hope to have two more trustees in place in the near future.

## **Review of Achievements**

This year our provision has expanded to a third site, whose security rating and catchment both provide unique new challenges. This represents a really exciting opportunity to review our methods and best practices, incorporate higher security measures into our own work, and test the efficacy of our teaching methods in a very different environment. The first term proved to be a great success, with the course being oversubscribed both for its inaugural term, and booked for the next module, due to start the end of February 2018.

The feedback we have received from students continues to be overwhelmingly positive, but more importantly, we argue that it is clear from our evaluation of the data that our provision is having a strong positive impact upon the wellbeing, psychological resilience, and self-image of our students.

The agreement and signing of our official partnership with the UEA is very significant for the Crito Project. It signifies a strong foundation for the future, allows us to use the UEA brand when representing our courses, gives us access to resources within the School, and puts in place checks and oversight for our provision, to ensure that we continue to meet the high quality of teaching, and student satisfaction, that the university is rightly proud of.

Equally, in the past two years, our relationship with People Plus has gone from strength to strength. We have a great working relationship with their senior management team, their local education teams, and an increasing synergy in our provision.

Finally, we have made significant moves towards registering as an Incorporated

Charitable Organisation. This process will eventually result in our establishing vital administrative, financial and steering dimensions to the Crito Project, as we transition towards being governed and directed by our Board of Trustees.

## **Review of Setbacks**

Perhaps the largest setback of the year was, surprisingly, our first contact with a fellow university outreach course at Whitemoor. Unfortunately, and against our expectations, their response to our commencement proved to be unproductive and distinctly territorial, rather than collegiate. It's a harsh lesson, but the experience has left us mindful of the political side of provision and the research that accompanies it, and keen to explore what can be done to improve inter-university cooperation in provision. The setting up of PUPiL (Prison-University Partnerships in Learning) by the Prisoner Education Trust may well prove to be a vital component in this process of improvement, given its remit is to act as an umbrella organisation to facilitate and strengthen this type of programme.

In terms of actual provision, there have been a number of fresh challenges to be met in provision at HMPS Whitemoor. Specifically, we have made alterations in module content, due to the intractable and acute reaction that many students in the prison had to discussions of the existence of god. Whitemoor houses a very high percentage of religious inmates, and the subject proved to be so divisive that one of the weeks in Introducing Philosophy has now been rewritten to minimise the debate. Where previously we considered Descartes' somewhat unsuccessful arguments for God's necessary existence, we now focus on the philosophy of mind that his Dualism rests upon. This change was made, on balance, due to the early stage that the discussions take place at in our provision, and so we now feel that to engage constructively in such a debate might require a longer period of study before such a 'hot-button' topic is broached in-depth amongst a class with a high number of people of devout faith.

## **Appendix: Interview Questions**

The semi-structured interview includes the following eight questions:

What has been your experience of the course? Follow up: Could you tell me more about that?

Has the course impacted on you? Follow up: If yes, then how? If no then move onto the next question.

Has the course impacted on your day to day living? Follow up: If yes, then how? If no then move onto the next question.

Has the course impacted on how you see yourself? Follow up: If yes, then how? If no then move onto the next question.

Has the course impacted on how you see others? Follow up: If yes, then how? If no then move onto the next question.

Has the course had any negative impact on you? Follow up: If yes, then how?

If no then move onto the next question. Has the course impacted on your goals for the future? If yes, then how? If no then move onto the next question.

How do you think the course has impacted on other students in your class? Follow up: If yes, then how? If no then move onto the next question.