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Incubator of Enterprises for Former Prisoners, a Good Idea?!

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The project in question was called the Incubator of Enterprises for Former Prisoners whose mission was to foster innovative actions in the human development of re-educated, ex-prisoners, young people in conflict with the law and any and all citizens, creating opportunities through qualification and entrepreneurial training, awakening empowerment and the reconstruction of identities. To make the idea viable, it was proposed to create partnerships between the university, incubators and NGOs, associations for the assistance of convicts aiming at the social integration of men and women, who have passed through the prison system, through the practice of entrepreneurship.

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INCUBATORDEENTERPRISESFORFORMERPRISONERSAGOODIDEA

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Incubator of Enterprises for Former Prisoners, a Good Idea?!

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I. Introduction

More than a "Technologicalarticle"[1], the present work proposes a reflection based on a technical report of production with a professional emphasis on the experience lived in a certain academic project executed and concluded, but which has often been the subject of debate within the scope of the discipline "Public Policies of Science, Technology and Innovation and the Brazilian State" under my responsibility in the Professional Master's Degree in Intellectual Property and Transfer of Technology at UFSJ. Given the inter, trans and multidisciplinary bias of the aforementioned graduate course, each class has a distinct professional profile and such diversity impacts and feeds back into the debate. This is what we will deal with as explained in the title of this article: is it a good idea!? In other words, the specificity of the present work is its emphasis on the practical contribution to the debate because, after all, theory and practice are interdependent, two sides of the same coin.

The project in question was called the Incubator of Enterprises for Former Prisoners whose mission was to foster innovative actions in the human development of re-educated, ex-prisoners, young people in conflict with the law and any and all citizens, creating opportunities through qualification and entrepreneurial training, awakening empowerment and the reconstruction of identities. To make the idea viable, it was proposed to create partnerships between the university, incubators and NGOs, associations for the assistance of convicts aiming at the social integration of men and women, who have passed through the prison system, through the practice of entrepreneurship. The Incubator for graduates aims to improve the managerial capacity of entrepreneurs in the commerce, services and industry sectors, contributing, through the strengthening of their own businesses, to their social reintegration. In this way, create opportunities for other graduates, multiplying the number of beneficiaries and thus reversing the reality of discrimination and consequent unemployment faced by them, creating opportunities through qualification and entrepreneurial training, awakening empowerment and the reconstruction of identities.

From the partnership between ITCP/UFSJ (Technological Incubator of Popular Cooperatives), INDETEC/UFSJ (Incubator of Technological Development and Traditional Sectors of Campo das Vertentes)[2] and APAC - SJDR (Association for the Protection and Assistance of Convicts of São João Del Rei - MG),[3] the [4]pilot project for the creation of IEESP began in 2009, with financial resources from MEC under a specific call for university extension projects (PROEXT/MEC), thus seeking the full social integration of men and women who have passed through the prison system through the practice of entrepreneurship. That is, to improve the managerial capacity of entrepreneurs in the commerce, services and industry sectors, contributing, through the strengthening of their own businesses, to their social reintegration. And, in this way, create opportunities for other graduates, multiplying the number of beneficiaries and thus reversing the reality of discrimination and consequent unemployment faced by them.

According to Rodrigo de Souza Costa, professor of Criminal Law at Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV): [5]"It is necessary to bring the issue of graduates to the university as a way to achieve the greatest mission of the colleges, which is transformation. Students function as multipliers of concept and inhibitors of prejudices." Here we have the opportunity to revert to the reality of the ex-convicts from the main perspective of the penal execution process: the moment of leaving the system and social insertion, where the man suffers several mishaps, from the lack of opportunity in the labor market to the stigma of those who have served time.

The phrase attributed to Nelson Mandela (former President of South Africa, lawyer and ex-prisoner as a politicalprisoner) islapidary:

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[1] - For a better understanding of the subject, see: MOTTA (2017, 2022); BISHOP (2022); FISHER (2022); MARTENS; PEDRON; OLIVEIRA (2021), amongothers.

[2]- https://ufsj.edu.br/itcp/
[3] - https://ufsj.edu.br/indetec/
[4] - https://www.facebook.com/fanpageapacsjdr/?locale=pt_BR
[5] - In: Interview to the EM FOCO website http://www.cpjm.uerj.br/em-foco-opiniao-rodrigo-costa/ Accessed on 03/18/2024.

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"It is often said that no one truly knows a nation until they have been inside its prisons. A nation should not be judged by the way it treats its highest citizens, but rather by the way it treats its lowest, least liked citizens."

It is also worth mentioning that the Law on Penal Executions (LEP), in its Article 10, states that "Assistance to prisoners and internees is the duty of the State, aiming to prevent crime and guide the return to coexistence in society". Thus, if we think of an ideal model and according to what the law proposes, this return should be one in which, upon leaving, every egress would be accepted by the family, with regular health, school education completed within the penal system and guaranteed social assistance. However, when faced with the reality, we find men and women who are totally vulnerable, mentally and physically ill, and who turn to Social Work in search of some help, the first of which is insertion into the labor market.

In the Incubator, the Social Service can and intends to accompany the entrepreneurs who will be trained to set up their own businesses, maintain themselves from the income generated by it and create job opportunities for other graduates. Our goal is to give them minimum social conditions for the best possible performance in their business during and after the pre- and/or incubation period, and also tocreate popular cooperatives.

This proposal takes place, however, without the intention of "relieving" the State of its duties to this portion of the population; On the contrary, since we seek partnership with government agencies and also with the judicial system for access to a considerable contingent of the prison population in prison units. What is expected, in general terms, as a result of our actions, is an entrepreneur with a profile more focused on the development of skills to improve their own business, as well as make their economic and social situation stable. We understand that promoting the entrepreneurial protagonism of graduates is the main way not only for their social reintegration, but also for the economic development of an entire territory located around them.

II. A Necessary Theoretical/Conceptual Foundation

Although the expression "social reintegration" is not present in the Penal Execution Law (LEP), it contains the orientation that precedes the definition given by DEPEN (National Penitentiary Department): it is the duty of the State "to assist the prisoner and the internee [...] aiming to prevent crime and guide the return to coexistence in society", also considering that "assistance extends to the ex-offender" (Law 7.210/84; TITLE II, Art. 10).

And, in conceptual terms, social reintegration is understood as the process by which "society (re) includes those it has excluded, through strategies in which these 'excluded' have an active participation, that is, not as mere objects of assistance, but as subjects" (SÁ, 2005). And thus prevent society from keeping active the figure of the "centaur state", a liberal head over an authoritarian body, which applies the doctrine of "laissez faire, laissez passer" when dealing with the causes of social inequalities, but which proves to be brutally paternalistic and punitive when it comes to assuming the consequences. (WACQUANT, 2007)

The Penal Execution Law provides that detainees are kept in individual cells of at least six square meters. Rather than holding one inmate per cell, individual cells are typically used for two or more inmates. In addition to individual cells, most prisons have large cells or dormitories that have been specifically designed for group living. "Institutions, in their function of social control, carry out specific forms of recovery, which must be processed hierarchically" [...] (FALEIROS, 1993, pp: 75-79).

And in order that punishment may not be a form of violence by one or many against a private citizen, it must be essentially public, rapid, necessary, as little as possible in the given circumstances, proportionate to the crimes, and dictated by the laws. (BECARIA. 1999).

Many penal establishments, as well as many cells and dormitories, have two to five times more occupancy than the capacity envisaged by the projects. In some facilities, overcrowding has reached inhumane levels, with inmates crammed into groups. It is common in most Brazilian prisons to see scenes of inmates tied to windows to relieve the demand for floor space.

The work aimed at the family reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners is important because it also seeks to reintegrate the convicted into social life without the stigma of imprisonment and with attitudes and behaviors unrelated to crime, also contributing to the reduction of recidivism rates.

Mainly through work and study, greater possibilities of family and social reintegration are opened. Many prisoners, when they leave prison, are faced with various problems related to housing, obtaining a fixed income, and the resumption of relationships with their children and other dependent members of the family, particularly with regard to their livelihood, leading many of them to recidivism for futile reasons, lack of encouragement from their relatives and from society as a whole. Many of them recommit crimes due to lack of opportunities, because the fact that they carry the stigma of imprisonment causes the doors of decent work to close, making the "easiest" method the only way out of their problems.

Thus, "social reintegration", as a social function of the prison system, branches into two vertices of actions, one focused on the period of serving a sentence, especially the custodial sentence, and the other focused on the post-release period, in which

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prisoners are treated as ex-prisoners. "No matter how high the qualities of a people, if they do not have moral strength, energy and perseverance, the law can never prosper" (LHERING, 1872, pp: 45-46).

It is necessary to transform the system so that the reform of the convicted is facilitated by instruments such as education and work, in order to enable him to lead a dignified life when he leaves the prison, and to prevent the prison from being more painful than it should be. This is so that the prison sentence is in line with the principles of penitentiary law, which are: the protection of the prisoner's human rights, the prisoner as a member of society, the active participation of the sentenced person in the issue of re-education and his social reintegration, the effective collaboration of the community in prison treatment and the training of prisoners so that they relearn the exercise of citizenship and respect for the legal order. According to Foucault (1997), criminal detention should have as its essential function the transformation of the individual's behavior.

On the other hand, the entire trajectory of the proposal goes along the lines of another anchored economy or from other forms of organization. And this form of economic organization, which arises spontaneously or induced by civil institutions, does not correspond to the forms of behavior *of homo economicus* advocated by neoclassical theories of economics, since they require the overcoming of relations based on competitiveness and individualism. For competition, in order to fight for the satisfaction of wants, brings people together in masses and not in communities.

Reversing this situation implies seeking the necessary means in the community and in the immediate social environment, enriching relationships in diversity and strengthening initiatives with the union of complementary skills. Relations of cooperation and solidarity are fundamental to reduce dependence and stimulate the autonomy of marginalized and precarious sectors of the population in the face of the current system of production and consumption. An economy with these foundations, that is, a solidarity economy, is therefore one that seeks to incorporate solidarity into the economy, introducing it into the various phases of the economic process (production, distribution, consumption and accumulation).

Thus, the concept of solidarity, which usually appears after the completion of the economic cycle to mitigate its social problems, should be inserted in a previous discussion, which goes through the fundamentals of the economy itself.

The main issue is to make the economic activity itself and its products solidary, and not just to apply solidarity after the end of the economic cycle with welfare measures. In addition, the solidarity economy fosters a broader movement, directed to the whole of society, with the participation of people and institutions willing to collaborate and contribute with resources, ideas and work (SINGER, 2002).

III. About the Method used in this Incubation Process

From a selection process, with the launch of a specific notice established by the proponent incubators (INDETEC and ITCP) among the graduates housed in APAC - SJDR, their demands were raised, in order to identify capacity, as well as personal objectives for later forwarding in the incubation of ideas and/or formation of cooperatives.

Once the intended enterprise was identified as individual/business (for example, of the individual micro-entrepreneur type), INDETEC took care of the development of the enterprise using its own methodology defined by two phases: Pre-incubation and subsequent Incubationoftheenterprises.

The pilot project of IEESP put into practice actions such as analysis of technical, economic, commercial feasibility of ideas, through the elaboration of a Business Plan, promoting the training of selected entrepreneurs in the management of both individual and collective enterprises - emphasizing, in the light of the precepts of the Solidarity Economy - the development of basic business and collective skills.

The pre-incubation phase comprises consultancies in the areas of business planning, marketing, accounting, economics, administration, organizational development, management of solidarity enterprises, credit recovery, services in the areas of Psychology and Social Work, as well as the promotion of participation in events, fairs, coursesandcongresses.

In the Incubation phase, the project is systematically monitored by the INDETEC team in order to develop the capacities of those projects.

Once the intended enterprise was identified as collective/business (such as, for example, a cooperative of waiters, gardeners, among others), the ITCP took care of the development of the enterprise using its own methodology structured in four categories or phases: characterization, organization, mobilization and manage -ment.

The Characterization identifies the origin of the demand and begins with the elaboration of an Action Plan, feasibility study (ecological, economic, financial, managerial, social and technical) among other socio-economic mechanisms and questionnaires to have a characterization of the potential collective.

In the category or phase of the Organization, the production and work process is defined. It is an attempt to propose the referential work process for actual or potential workers so that subsequent actions can be made viable. It is the phase of the organization of the collective structure (association, cooperative): the debate on the constitution, the formalization, the

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beginning of the process of institutionalization of the collective.

The case of Mobilization is the category of action and analysis that identifies, incites and fosters participation from meetings with specific lectures (which 'feed' the previous phase) for the graduates.

The action of the Management begins with the implementation of the collective, now formalized. Some complementary instruments should be constituted, in addition to those previously elaborated in the Characterization and in the Organization, which now constitute the instrument of self-management. For example, internal regulations, or regiments, as well as complementary instruments, such as manuals and other management mechanisms. Self-management is the essence, the decision must be shared, and the ITCP team contributed with advice for the actions and decisions of the graduates who are part of the collective.

IV. Monitoring/Follow-Up of the Theme

Monitoring and evaluation, the feedback of what is planned becomes a constant practice within the IESSP. Thus, the projects were monitored and evaluated according to the internal rules and practices of the incubators (INDETEC and ITCP), with regard to monitoring and advising, from the selection process to the 'graduation' of the enterprise. Within the rules and internal regulations of each of the incubators, the graduates and their ventures complied, for example, with specific deadlines for carrying out tasks, specific training and consulting schedules, attendance at the proposed meetings, and evaluated through performance measures adopted by each proposing incubator.

INDETEC has adopted a specific monitoring form called APN (Business Plan Monitoring) for each project and which consists, in general terms, of a questionnaire on compliance with the proposed schedule in the preparation phase of the Business Plan (monitoring of the main planned actions and goals), cash flow, market situation and the possible need for measures to recover the development of the proposed business actions - solutions pointed out, results and planning of the next phases.

The ITCP adopted a form with the same objectives and format as the previous one, called AEC (Monitoring of Collective Enterprises) with specific indicators for the case of collective enterprises. For ITCP, in the case of the formation of a cooperative or association, by developing the first incubation methodology aimed at collective enterprises formed by graduates considered socially vulnerable and disadvantaged within the dominant social structure, ITCP had the challenge of planning and implementing actions that promoted, at the same time, the growth of a cooperative/association as an economic enterprise and the political and social emancipation of its members.

Thus, the methodology developed by ITCP was designed through two types of rationality that needed to be articulated in the activities carried out with popular cooperatives and that defined the two main aspects of the incubation work: one that deals with the economic viability of the enterprise and the other focused on its viability as a cooperative.

The knowledge and participation of the incubated group are essential for the whole process. The activities developed sought not only to respect, but also to stimulate and incorporate the knowledge of the groups through a clear language and didactic and planning practices oriented towards this end. And this is true for both collective and individual enterprise. This was the great challenge of the 'pilot project'.

V. About Results

The partnerships between INDETEC-UFSJ (Incubator for Technological Development and Traditional Sectors of Campo das Vertentes) with ITCP-UFSJ (Technological Incubator for Popular Coopera-tives) and the Federal University of São João Del Rei were effective and added value, and the work managed to promote total social integration of men and women who passed through the prison system of the State of Minas Gerais.

It created another form and another *locuso f*incubation, the Incubator of Enterprises for Former Penal System Graduates (IEESP) with the purpose of improving the managerial capacity of entrepreneurs in the sectors of commerce, services and industry, contributing, through the strengthening of their own businesses, to their social reintegration.

IEESP also generated opportunities for other graduates, multiplying the number of beneficiaries and thus reversing the reality of discrimination and consequent unemployment faced by them. All of this envisions the possibility of social action, anchored in an economic organization of an eminently solidary nature, becoming an indication for the elaboration of public policies of employment and income for the graduates.

In the partnership with APAC-SJDR within the scope of the pilot project, of 57 graduates housed there at that time, advisory services were provided and a total of 60 vacancies were distributed for individual and/or collective enterprises.

In this way, it sensitized society to the large number of men/women imprisoned in our state who seek a better life and dignified conditions to support their families without having to return to the world of crime. For this, society has to be able to receive these graduates, giving them job opportunities and thus providing a lower rate of recidivism, also favoring a safer life for society in general.

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VI. Some Conclusions

a) By the Target Audience

In general, the evaluation processes presented a pluralistic approach, which involved qualitative and quantitative aspects, and focused on the relations between the system of action (incubators) and the logic of the actors (graduates). The processes were enriched by the involvement of different actors and the concern to create a diversified system of indicators, combining concepts, means of collection and different responsible persons. Therefore, in order to evaluate the proposal with the target audience, a model of stages of execution and analysis/dissemination of the results of the evaluation was created, namely:

- Results Analysis - The analysis phase involved the handling and interpretation of quantitative data (frequencies, means, standard deviations, qualitative data (grouping of responses into categories, field analyses).
- Dissemination and use of Results – Reports were prepared for each stakeholder involved in the process. The main constituents of the evaluation reports were: executive summary; introduction; description of the evaluation focus; methodology; findings; conclusions and recommendations; Attachments. - Evaluation questionnaires for graduates: critical analysis of the evaluation process, analyzing strengths, difficulties and points to improve in the process as a whole.

b) By the Team

The evaluation with the execution team initially intended to answer some questions: - To what extent did the program contribute to the improvement of the graduate's family life? - To what extent has the program contributed to the improvement of the graduate's own life? - In what areas have there been concrete improvements? Income, health, education, psychological? With regard to indicators, the program intended to be self-evaluated in the following items: - Management Dimension; - Process Dimension and - Social Impact Dimension, namely:

- Management Dimension, in order to have a better monitoring of activities. The indicators were: - Cost of the Program in R$/Total Number of Beneficiaries; - Total Number of Employees/Total Number of Beneficiaries and - Evasion Rate.
- Process Dimension: - Main need met; - Subjects of greatest interest to the courses; - Degree of understanding of the content, - Perception of the instructor; - Perception of the facilities and - Suggestions.
- The dimension of the social impact consisted of qualitative and slightly more costly indicators, however, they were essential for the verification of real results in the lives of the graduates:- General aspects of hygiene; - Health conditions; - Results regarding the creation of own businesses or cooperatives - Family relationships in general.

Thus, through the definition of this evaluation procedure, it was possible for those responsible for the project to start a continuous evaluation and learning process, allowing a clearer definition of the objectives of the project, a better control and monitoring of the activities, and a more adequate and accurate verification of the concrete effects on the lives of the graduates served. With the analysis of the results and the main methodologies to be improved, the project can become a new learning space, an efficient system, with satisfactory results for the academic community in general with the production of scientific articles, seminars and specific colloquia and also in the perspective of subsidizing more humane and solidary public policies for the prison sector.

The Incubator of Enterprises for Egressed Offenders of the Penal System – IEESP, is still in the idea phase to the extent that since the conclusion of this "pilot" it has not been continued due to a series of factors that involved the various actors of this enterprise. However, the extension actions developed have concretely generated new lines of research; continuity proposals and other related extension actions.

The main objectives of the actions were the generation of new extension projects; knowledge production; indicators/inputs for public policy analysis; direct service/direct assistance according to the needs pointed out by the community served; complementary academic activity.

VII. Recommendations

To discuss the problem of the ex-prisoner is to perceive him immersed in a narcissistic and meritocratic societal logic, through which the same social structure that produced him and excluded/included him within the prison walls now needs to (re)absorb him; And this, together with an ever-increasing contingent of ex-offenders, has seen an increase in the punishment of social categories considered dangerous – "the socially excluded" – along the lines of the penalization of poverty (a layer subjected and condemned to become invisible). The Incubator, in this suffocating scenario, can represent a real alternative, built to operationalize new paradigms of professional practices, inside and outside prisonspaces.

The category "egress from the penal system", within the current logic, simply does not exist in itself; These are the "ex-convicts" or the "ex-criminals", the "future criminals" or the "future rehabilitated". The present of their lives is massacred and ignored, behaviors are stipulated based on their past, projecting the worst possibilities for the future.

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In this complex and paradoxical context, recipes find no place or usefulness. It is, therefore, not a search for formulas, but rather opportunities for the encounter of knowledge, experiences and practices, in the perspective that the complementarity of all social subjects – even if eventually identifiable as professionals or users – can build (or destroy) the elements that make human-dignified emancipation unfeasible.

Through the Incubator, reintegration is offered, but it is effective in the form of reintegrating the excluded in their social position as a debased labor force, appeased by the myth of social mobility; ex-prisoner, now a worker; deleted, now included; but never a full citizen. And this is what needs to be faced, modified.

In fact, it is emphasized again that it is not a question of "I-Incubator, in the world here", offering viable recipes for the construction of spaces that aim to break the economic and societal model, it is about showing that only when we reach the "we" will we be able to design paths and paths for this process. The Incubator of Enterprises of the Penal System - IEESP is already a reality, it will be up to its partners and the people involved to ensure, or not, its sustainability; to make its history or simply to reproduce it, postponing, once again, the utopia of social transformation.

Finally, it is worth noting that a scientific article[6] based on the Final Report presented to the Ministry of Education, which financed a large part of the planned actions, was presented at the *VII Worshop de la Red EmprendeSUR* in October 2012 in the city of Medellín, Colombia and was very well received, which provided numerous interviews and contacts with the Colombian media, which at that time was debating actions to receive FARC fighters in a process It also enabled numerous meetings to deepen this theme with several Colombian universities interested in this model of social reintegration. And then the same happened in Argentina and Chile Here in Brazil, the same happened with several universities and academic colleagues looking for information about this type of incubator and today this is no longer just an idea, it is a reality working in several regions of the country, proving the concrete fact that it is a goodidea.

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