Authentic Inquiry
Guidance document for educators

RENYO project

Re-engaging young offenders with education and learning

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. What is this document for?

This document is a guide to apply the Authentic Inquiry (AI) methodology with young people in conflict with the law who are in custodial settings.

This guide is the result of the "**RENYO** - **Re-engaging young offenders with education and learning**" project. The aim of RENYO is to enhance educators' capability to re-engage young people in conflict with the law with education and learning whilst in custodial settings in 4 European partner countries (United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Spain).

> To learn more about the project, visit its website:
> https://skills4youth.eu/the-project/

1.2. Who is it aimed at?

This document is intended for professionals (mentors/coaches) who work with young people in conflict with the law (learners) who are in custodial settings. Its purpose is to guide these professionals in the implementation of the AI methodology.

Mentor / Coach
Professional working with young people

Coach

Learner
Young people

Learner

1.3. What are its main contents?

This guide contains information on the steps to be followed to implement AI and highlights key aspects of the process.

It is important to note that this document contains hardly any information about AI, since it focuses on the application process with young people. Therefore, for any questions about AI, it is recommended to go directly to the training materials.

> Training materials can be found here:
> https://skills4youth.eu/training/

2. BEFORE IMPLEMENTING THE AUTHENTIC INQUIRY

Before implementing AI with young people, it is necessary to remember the following aspects.

2.1. Review the 8 steps of AI

Before starting, it is important to remember that AI is a pedagogical methodology that has been shown to be useful in re-engaging young people with education and learning. It provides a step-by-step process to support mentors to re-engage young people in conflict with the law whilst in custody.
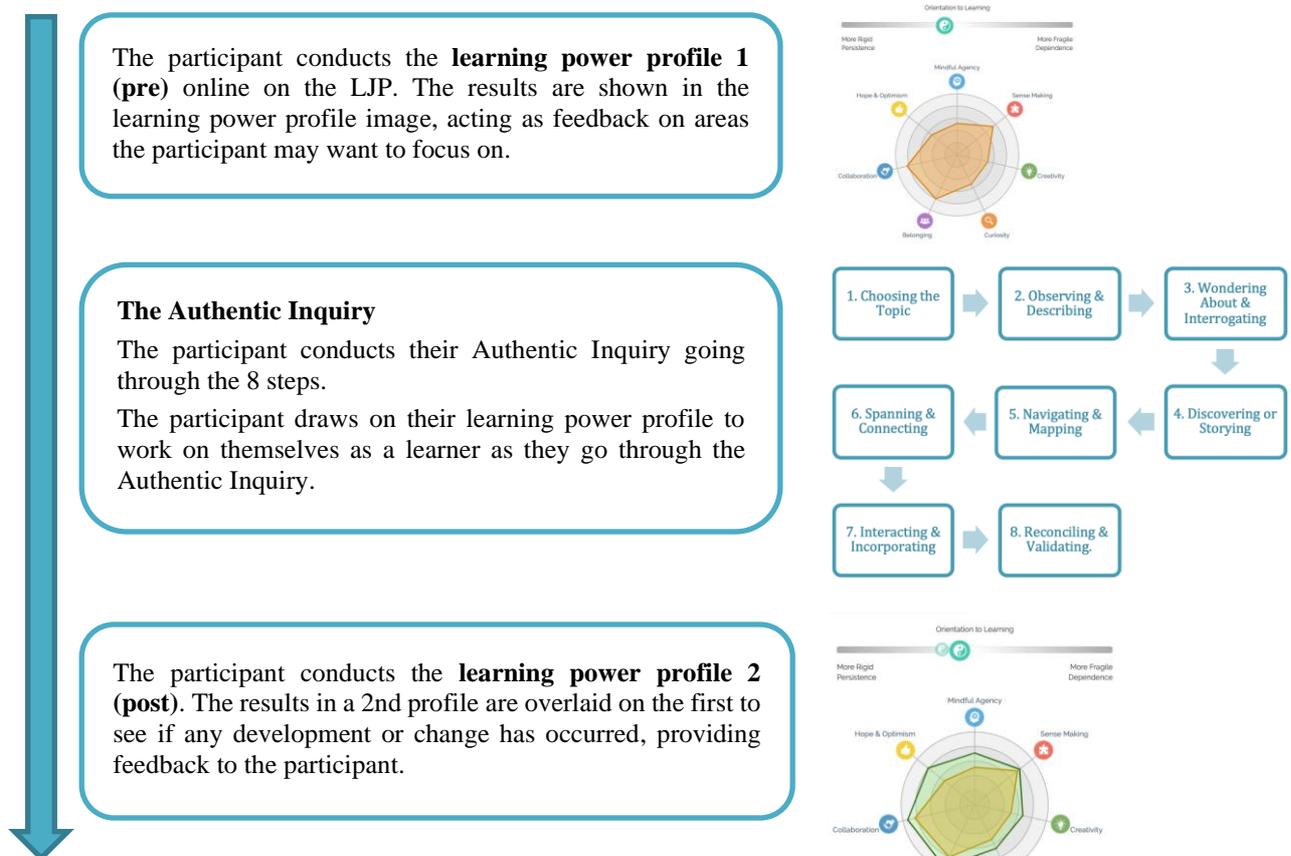
There are 8 key steps in the Authentic Inquiry:

1. Choosing the Topic	• This often represents the most difficult part of the Authentic Inquiry.
2. Observing & Describing	• Observing and describing the subject of choice with regards to the choice itself and relevance to self within that.
3. Wondering About & Interrogating	• Wondering about and interrogating the chosen topic. Thinking in more depth and breadth about your chosen topic.
4. Discovering or Storying	• This would be related to the personal element of the learner. In other words, how does the object fit into their life as it has been and where it could go?
5. Navigating & Mapping	• Navigating and mapping the self and the topic within the wider context. In other words, what could be the relevance of this to the learner's life and new learning opportunities?
6. Spanning & Connecting	• Spanning and connecting to established sources of knowledge. This is when the learner locates their story within the wider picture for relevance beyond the self.
7. Interacting & Incorporating	• This helps the learner to place their learning and connect the personal with the public.
8. Reconciling & Validating	• This is done by connecting the subject of interest to the curriculum, assessment or other outwardly recognised goal or achievement.

If any of the steps is not clear or you do not remember how to approach it, it is advisable to review the training materials.

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2.2. Use the Learning Journey Platform

The Learning Journey Platform (LJP) is designed to support the coach/mentor and the participant/learner with a set of questions that they can use to talk about learning, and help the participant to identify their strengths and areas they wish to work on in their Authentic Inquiry. The participant does this through taking part in an online survey which presents the information visually for them to understand their own learning. During the AI process they can work on their strengths and areas for development. The LJP acts as a digital infrastructure to support and scaffold learning. The diagram below shows how the LJP and AI work together.

The participant conducts the **learning power profile 1 (pre)** online on the LJP. The results are shown in the learning power profile image, acting as feedback on areas the participant may want to focus on.

The Authentic Inquiry

The participant conducts their Authentic Inquiry going through the 8 steps.

The participant draws on their learning power profile to work on themselves as a learner as they go through the Authentic Inquiry.

The participant conducts the **learning power profile 2 (post)**. The results in a 2nd profile are overlaid on the first to see if any development or change has occurred, providing feedback to the participant.

Regarding the RENYO project, the LJP also plays an important role in collecting data from the survey to understand whether and how the AI methodology contributes to the learning experience of young people in conflict with the law.

Link to access the Learning Journey Platform:
http://learningpower.learningemergence.como/loging

2.3. Conduct your own AI

Before implementing the AI methodology with young people, it is recommended that as mentors/coaches you practice the methodology by applying it to yourself, as part of their professional development. AI is an innovative methodological approach for professional development. Conducting your own authentic inquiry is a practical way to better understand AI, the platform (LJP) and other materials, at the same time it is a transformative learning experience that will stimulate and generate your enthusiasm in your environment.

Steps on conducting your own AI:
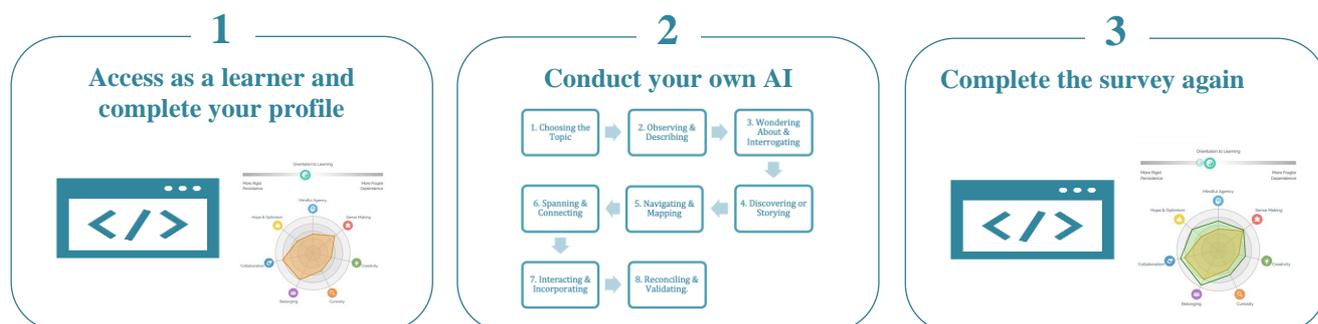
2.4. Fill out the "case study template"

After using the AI methodology for your own learning, you will complete the "case study template"[1]. This document serves to reflect the experience of applying AI methodology to oneself, while reflecting on the best way to conduct AI with young people. It will also help other professionals learn how to apply AI.

As already explained, AI is a new methodology. The information collected will be useful for professionals to learn from their peers' experience in applying the AI – what worked well in which context and the barriers that stop it from being effective. Through sharing these experience, we will be creating a transnational community of Authentic Inquiry facilitators.

Once you have understood the AI methodology and have applied it to yourselves, you can begin to apply it to young people.

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[1] The "case study template" is included in Data Collection Toolkit.

3. IMPLEMENTING AI WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

3.1. Identify the participants

In principle, the AI methodology can be applied to all young people who are in a detention centre complying with a custodial measure. However, before deciding whether to apply AI with a young person, there are three key aspects to consider:

1. The time that the young person will remain in the centre.

    The young person's stay in the centre is temporary and applying AI is a process that can last 8 weeks. Therefore, it would be more suitable selecting young people who still have to be at the centre for at least 12 weeks.

2. Willingness.
    It is essential that young people participate voluntarily. Therefore, once they have been pre-selected, they will have to be asked if they want to participate in the application of the AI methodology and must give their consent. To do this, they will first be explained what the AI is (point 3.2) and then they will be provided with a consent form to sign it (point 3.3).

3. Permission.
    In some cases, the consent of the young people is not enough. In some cases, depending on the country and/or type of setting, and/or the age of the participant, the permission of their parents or legal guardians will also be necessary (point 3.3).

3.2. Explain AI to the participants

In order for young people to participate, it is necessary to explain to them beforehand what AI is, in clear, simple language adapted to their ability to understand. It is important that the mentor makes sure that the young person understands it before signing the consent form, explaining it to them as many times as necessary.

3.3. Ask for the necessary authorisations

There are several authorisations that must be in place for the mentor to apply AI with a young person:

1. Authorisation of the Public Authority
    In many countries, when young people commit a crime and are sentenced to serve a custodial measure in a centre, their guardianship and custody during the time they spend in the centre corresponds to the Public Authority responsible for the centre. Therefore, this authority must authorise young people to participate in the AI application process. The coach/mentor should not worry about the procedure to obtain this authorisation, since it is a task that corresponds to the person responsible for the project in each region.

2. Authorisation of the centre
The heads of the centre must be informed of who will participate in the process and agree.

3. Consent of the young person
Young people must sign an informed consent before participating. The Ethics Committee of the University of Gloucestershire (the entity leading the project) has created an informed consent form, which must be provided to young people to sign[2]. Before signing it, the mentor/coach must ensure that the young person understands and agrees. Once the consent has been signed, it must be kept in the centre, in the minor's file.

It is important to remember that if the young person changes their mind and does not want to end the process, they can do so at any time. In addition, the young person can request for their data to be withdrawn after having completed the Authentic Inquiry, during the following four weeks.

3.4. Start the participant´s journey

Once the consent has been signed, you can start the AI learning process. Remember that there are 3 phases:

1 **Access to the learning journey platform, choose the purpose and complete a survey.**

First, the young person must be registered on the platform, so that they can access and respond to the survey to complete their profile. The results will help mentors/coaches guide the young person in their learning process and strengthen those dimensions in which the young person has obtained lower scores.

Pre-tasks

1. Before starting the session, the young person must already have access to the platform. The mentor/coach must request an account from the administrator.

2. A place with Internet access must be reserved so that the young person can start.

Steps

1. Invite the young person to complete their profile
   a. Help them read the questions if they don't understand them.
   b. Invite them to take their time to answer them, but they don't need to think about them too much, let them follow their instinct. Their answers must be based on how they are at the moment.
   c. The profile could be completed in several sessions.

2. After the young person has finished the session, remember to print a copy. It is not crucial to analyse their results at this stage, or even at the start of the next session.

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[2] Informed consent form is included in Data Collection Toolkit.

2 **Guide the participant into the 8 steps of AI**

Second, the mentor will guide the young person through the 8 steps of AI.

Tips:
- Before starting, refresh your own knowledge of the 8 steps of AI. If in doubt, it is advisable to consult the training materials. Link: https://skills4youth.eu/training/
- If the young person loses motivation, it may be due to one of the issues addressed in point 5.

3 **Go back to the learning journey platform in order to see how things have changed**

Once they have completed their AI, the young person must access the platform again and carry out the survey once more. The results will allow the young person and the mentor/coach to see how the young person's profile has changed. Take time to discuss with the young person how their profile has changed since or not since AI started and what they could continue working on later.

4. COLLECTING THE MATERIALS/ASSESSING THE PROCESS

Once the young person finishes the AI, it is time to assess how the process has gone and reflect on whether things went right or wrong, whether a positive change has been achieved, or, conversely, it has not been achieved.

The experiences carried out with all the participating youngsters can be very useful to collect ideas, resources and strategies on the application of AI with young people. This will be a collaborative work that will offer mutual help and learning between mentors/coaches. It will serve both for those who are starting out in this methodology, and for those who have been using it for some time.

It is also interesting to identify those aspects that have not worked. Determining what didn't work and how it could have been avoided or corrected will also be helpful for mentor/coach learning.

In order to evaluate the process, an **interview guide** has been developed. The young person will be interviewed when they have completed the AI process, following the template which can be found in Data Collection Toolkit. You will find instructions on how to conduct this kind of interview, and collect information, in the introduction of this document.

5. QUESTIONS

5.1. What do we do if the participant does not want to continue?

The young person may not want to complete the process. It is their right not to continue if they don't want to. However, it would be interesting to investigate what is the reason that led the young person to leave. Perhaps it is because they have lost interest in the chosen topic, so it would be advisable to go back through the steps to find out more.

It may also be because the young person has not connected with the mentor, in which case it is recommended to read point 5.2.

Perhaps there is another reason. In order to find out, you can use the interview questions which have been designed to evaluate the AI process applied to the young people[3].

5.2. What do we do if there is not a good connection between mentor/coach and learner?

It is possible that a good connection will not be established between the mentor/coach and the young person. In that case, the mentor/coach should give the young person the opportunity to decide to have a new mentor/coach.

5.3. Can they change topic?

Yes, they can.

5.4. What if the young person is too demanding for time and resources?

This is actually a good thing, because it shows engagement, but could lead to frustration for the Young person. Gaining the support of the leadership of the setting will be essential to solve this.

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[3] Guide to conduct an interview with young people is included in Data Collection Survey.