


The formative-professional trajectory of professor Timothy Denis Ireland and his advocacy for education in the prison system

ARTICLE

José Douglas de Abreu Araújoⁱ 

Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Iguatu, CE, Brasil

Wanderson Diogo Andrade da Silvaⁱⁱ 

Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Limoeiro do Norte, CE, Brasil

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Abstract

This study sought to understand and analyze the educational and professional trajectory of professor Timothy Denis Ireland within the context of prison education, highlighting his advocacy for the right to education for people deprived of liberty. Data was generated through autobiographical narratives, allowing the professor to recount his journey and contributions to this field. The narratives reveal that Ireland has become a key reference in the area, advocating for accessible education that upholds the human dignity and citizenship of incarcerated individuals. Furthermore, his experience is closely linked to the socio-cultural context of prison education, as it highlights the importance of educational training as a tool for personal and social transformation. His trajectory reaffirms the need for educational policies that ensure learning opportunities within the prison system, which contributes to the promotion of human rights and the resocialization of individuals beyond prison walls.

Keywords: Human Rights. Education in Prisons. Autobiographical Narratives.

Trajetória formativa-profissional do professor Timothy Denis Ireland e sua defesa pela educação no sistema prisional

Resumo

Este estudo buscou conhecer e analisar a trajetória formativa-profissional do professor Timothy Denis Ireland no contexto da educação prisional, destacando sua defesa pelo direito à educação para pessoas privadas de liberdade. Os dados foram gerados por meio das narrativas autobiográficas, permitindo que o referido professor narrasse sua trajetória e contribuição nesse campo. As narrativas demonstram que Ireland se tornou uma referência na área, defendendo uma educação acessível que valoriza a dignidade humana e a cidadania das pessoas em privação de liberdade. Além disso, sua experiência conecta-se ao contexto sociocultural da educação prisional, pois evidencia a importância da formação educacional como instrumento de transformação pessoal e social. A sua trajetória reafirma a necessidade de políticas educacionais que garantam oportunidades de aprendizado no sistema prisional, o que contribui para a garantia dos direitos humanos e para a ressocialização extramuros.

Palavras-chave: Direitos Humanos. Educação em Prisões. Narrativas Autobiográficas.

1 Introduction

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Education in the prison system is a fundamental human right and a social instrument for the reintegration of people deprived of their liberty. In this context, educational practices in prisons, whether school-based or not, are permeated by structural, political, and conceptual challenges that limit their effectiveness. In general, the provision of these practices in the prison context is restricted to literacy and early elementary school studies in the form of Youth and Adult Education (EJA), without significant investment in the continuity of school education and the expansion of diversified social educational practices (Araújo, 2021).

The prison environment, as an institution that imposes custodial sentences on people who break the law, must guarantee basic rights as a mechanism for minimizing social exclusion, with education being one of those rights (Jácome; Chaves, 2022). Although it is not the solution to all the social ills present in the prison population, education within prisons is a fundamental element in the process of human and social development. This process is not restricted to the limits of traditional schooling, expanding as socio-educational practices and as a potential catalyst for (trans)formation of the prison population. To this end, training and assistance practices should be coordinated with a view to broadening the life prospects of persons deprived of their liberty, going beyond the punitive logic to promote the personal and social development of these individuals.

In the context of defending education in the prison system, this study highlights the solid work of Timothy Denis Ireland, a retired professor at the Education Center (CE) of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFBP), whose professional background reflects the importance of prison education as a human right and an essential mechanism for social reintegration outside prison walls. Noteworthy contributions in the academic field have been made by researchers such as professor Timothy Denis Ireland, marked by a commitment to the education of young people and adults, especially in the prison environment.

Thus, publicizing the educational and professional background of this teacher becomes relevant, given the perspectives of his knowledge and skills for understanding the challenges and potential of education in prisons. His work reinforces the need to broaden discussions on educational practices in the prison system, which has enabled him to carry out significant teaching, research, and outreach activities both inside and outside the university, with local, regional, national, and international impacts.

Based on this context, this study sought to understand and analyze the educational and professional trajectory of teacher Timothy Denis Ireland in the context of prison education, highlighting his defense of the right to education for people deprived of their liberty. To this end, we sought to answer the following question: how has this teacher's career contributed to strengthening the defense of the right to education for persons deprived of liberty in Paraíba and Brazil?

It should be noted that this study is an excerpt from the doctoral research of the first author (Araújo, 2024), developed from the analysis of extension activities coordinated by professor Timothy Ireland at UFPB before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. Autobiographical narratives allowed "the subject to surrender to their own history, extolling their identity and gradually conveying it to the researcher" (Araújo; Sarmiento, 2021, p. 267), as will be presented in the following sections.

2 Methodology

The development of this study was guided by the principles of the qualitative approach, as it works with subjective data that cannot be measured quantitatively. In the field of education, it is this approach that reveals "the teacher as a person, as a professional, as a builder of intelligibility, as a reflective being, as someone who thinks, decides, and worries" (Ghedin; Franco, 2011, p. 61). Set up as a narrative study, the research took a person's life experience as the best way to understand their educational experience (Clandinin; Connely, 2011). In addition, it used bibliographic research to identify and analyze the scientific work of professor Timothy Ireland.

The autobiographical narratives were produced through an interview, using a semi-structured script, conducted virtually via the Google Meet platform on March 1, 2024, recorded in audio and video format. A total of 100 minutes of audiovisual material was generated, which was then transcribed and textualized, resulting in 23 pages of text. The textual material was sent to the professor to validate the transcription, because “the reason for presenting this material stems from the consideration that the interviewee should have access to the interviewer’s interpretation, since both produced knowledge in that specific situation of interaction” (Szymanski, 2011, p. 55).

Professor Timothy Ireland voluntarily agreed to participate in the research, signing the Informed Consent Form (TCLE) with authorization to disclose his true identity. In addition, the research was approved by the UFPB Research Ethics Committee, with opinion number 6,666,311 and Certificate of Presentation for Ethical Review (CAAE) number 76215123.5.0000.5188.

The data resulting from the interview and bibliographic research were cross-referenced, allowing us to present the educational and professional trajectory of the aforementioned teacher and his defense of the right to education in the prison system, as explained in the following sections.

3 Professor Timothy Denis Ireland and his focus on education in prisons

Professor Timothy Denis Ireland’s academic journey has forged him into an expert with notable contributions to the understanding and implementation of public policies that support youth and adult education and education in prisons. In addition to his contributions to the educational process of young people and adults in Paraíba, as stated by Torres (2019), the teacher also played an important role in reshaping educational policy for inmates in Brazil. He served as Director of Youth and Adult Education Policy at the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity, and Inclusion (DPEJA/SECADI), linked to the Ministry of Education (MEC), between 2004 and 2007.

Born in 1948 in Rochford, Essex, England, to a religious Anglican family and the middle child of two brothers (Pinho, 2022), his academic career began with a degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. In graduate school, he earned a master's and doctorate in Adult Education from the University of Manchester in England, charting a path of knowledge and reflection that sparked his passion for teaching and his concern for social justice.

In an interview with the Education Agenda Program of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN), professor Timothy Ireland shared the beginning of his career in youth and adult education, which began in the 1970s when he taught English to students of different ages, including seniors. He also worked as a social worker with the hearing-impaired community in England, where he became aware of the educational challenges faced by this group. In this context, he came into contact with young Asian immigrants whose families had been expelled from Uganda and faced communication barriers. To help these young people integrate, he participated in the creation of a youth club and language classes, seeking to promote literacy and the development of forms of communication (Ireland, 2016).

The teacher recounted that among these immigrants there was a young Englishman with hearing impairment and practically illiterate, approximately twenty-five years old, born in England, who caught his attention. He started working in communications, even without any previous experience, but the young man ended up being arrested and the teacher resumed his work with him in prison.

It was exactly an exception, and soon after, he was arrested. The police arrived, he was with his partners, all listeners, and he did not listen to the police. Everyone else left, and he stayed behind and was arrested, and I started... I don't remember the whole story anymore, but I know that I went to continue this work in prison with him. I don't remember how long it lasted, but I went several days to continue working with him in prison (Ireland, 2024. Interview granted on March 1, 2024).

This experience was decisive in sparking his interest in prison education. Professor Timothy Ireland began teaching communication and literacy classes to a deaf young man

in conflict with the law, sparking an interest in educational work in prisons and leading him to apply for a position as director of education at a prison while pursuing his master's degree. He said that the interview process was long and that, although he was not selected, he was positively encouraged to continue seeking opportunities to work in the field.

These events in his life – working as a social worker, coming into contact with young Asian immigrants, and helping a deaf young man in conflict with the law – were decisive in his decision to pursue a career in youth and adult education, abandoning the idea of continuing in social work, as he himself recounted:

It was my entry into the field of youth and adult education, when I decided that social work was not for me. I thought that what we needed was more educational attention than social services. So that's when I started investing. I took a specialization course for young people and adults, then went on to do a master's degree, and soon after I was finishing my master's at the University of Manchester in England, I received an invitation to come to Brazil (Ireland, 2016).

His arrival in Brazil occurred between his academic training and the experience he gained during his doctoral research, defended in 1988, in which he conducted field research with social movements, particularly with the opposition group of the Union of Workers in the Construction and Furniture Industries (SINTRICOM) of João Pessoa, as well as his entry as a professor in the Master's Degree Program in Education (CME), now the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPGE) at UFPB.

The climate of the military regime was a challenge. But, right from the start, I was eager to get involved in social movements. As someone working in the field of Youth and Adult Education, I never thought it was enough to study adult education from a purely academic and theoretical perspective. You have to get your hands dirty, you have to get involved. It's an area where practice is absolutely vital (Ireland, 2016).

The teacher recognizes the importance of actively engaging in Youth and Adult Education (EJA), understanding that this area requires a participatory approach and engagement in social movements as essential elements for effective work with this audience. His initial experience sparked an even greater interest in the field, and after completing his

doctorate and returning to Brazil, he had the opportunity to resume his work in prison education. This was made possible through his work at the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the creation and incorporation of SECADI in 2004, when he held the position of director of the Directorate of Youth and Adult Education Policies.

While still at MEC, specifically in 2005, he was surprised by a financial contribution from the Japanese government in the amount of approximately US\$200,000, earmarked specifically for literacy programs. Although it seemed like a lot of money to him, it was a limited resource to invest in public policies. It was not possible to implement a larger project, but it was necessary to start a project, even if limited, that would allow for the creation of new approaches in the field of prison education, giving rise to the Educating for Freedom project, as he recounted:

\$200,000 in public policy is very little, and I thought, “How can we use this in a project as a seed for a larger project, but it has to be a more restricted segment, where we could create new approaches?” I suddenly thought about the issue of education in prisons. So, it was from there that we decided to create this project, “Educating for Freedom.” It was a joint effort with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, and UNESCO participating in the mediation. We started with six states. We made agreements with six states and began implementing this proposal for education in prisons (Ireland, 2024. Interview granted on March 1, 2024).

As director of DPEJA/SECADI, and when analyzing the situation of the prison population, the professor and his team paid special attention to education in prisons, coordinating with different government agencies and providing strategies for the construction of an efficient policy, since education was not an acquired right, always remaining dependent on managers for its recognition: “*If it was considered important, time was devoted to it; if not, there was no time*” (Ireland, 2024. Interview given on March 1, 2024). The professor notes that this was the first time that the Brazilian state effectively assumed responsibility for providing education in this context, from the perspective of a guaranteed right for individuals deprived of their liberty.

It's not that we innovate. Education in prisons, as we all know, is nothing new, but this was the first time that the Brazilian government had really taken responsibility for providing systematic education in prisons, which, in most cases, depended heavily on the director or secretary to decide whether or not education would be offered in prisons. It was not an acquired right of the person deprived of their liberty (Ireland, 2024. Interview granted on March 1, 2024).

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An important factor in this movement was the strategy of intersectoral coordination to consolidate education involving various institutions and areas, such as health and social services, to ensure an interdisciplinary approach to promoting education in prisons. This led to the Educating for Freedom project, as the teacher explained:

We started with a project called Educating for Freedom, which was a national mobilization around education in prisons in 2005, and we managed to organize state and regional seminars, as well as a national seminar. At the national seminar, discussions began on the importance and necessity of having national guidelines for the prison system and a national policy. Finally, in 2010 and then in 2011, these guidelines were approved by the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education (Ireland, 2016).

The Educating for Freedom project was strengthened by coordination between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), demonstrating that the will of public authorities counts for a lot in the implementation of educational policy, as pointed out by Torres (2019) because it allowed for the opening of political spaces and facilitated the dissemination of ideas, as well as the possibility of debates with civil society, NGOs, people serving prison sentences and people who have already served their sentences, education professionals, criminal justice system operators, and researchers linked to universities. According to professor Timothy, *“based on ‘Educating for Freedom,’ two national seminars were held, and national guidelines were approved at the first national seminar”* (Ireland, 2024. Interview given on March 1, 2024).

The professor began his career interested in management in the area of prison education, but over time, he delved deeper into this field and had the opportunity to meet influential figures such as Roberto Silva, from the University of São Paulo (USP), and Mariângela Graciano, from the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP), as well as

other social actors involved in civil society movements, NGOs, and universities. Together, this collaborative group began planning and implementing educational initiatives in the prison system.

So, with that, I ended up following up and delving deeper into the subject, and when I went to UNESCO in 2008, we continued. At that time, Marc de Maia, who was Belgian and a consultant for UNESCO, wanted to organize an international conference on education in prisons. The idea was to gradually build a grassroots movement, and the idea of holding regional conferences and then having a central conference, which was already scheduled to take place in Belgium, so we organized a Latin American conference in Brasília on education in prisons, and there was a group of important people (Ireland, 2024. Interview granted on March 1, 2024).

In 2013, he coordinated the project of the Dean of Extension (ProEx) at UFPB, entitled Female Resocialization, Human Rights, and Citizenship, at the Júlia Maranhão Penitentiary in João Pessoa, with the aim of strengthening human rights policies and socialization of women deprived of liberty in an interdisciplinary manner with the participation of professionals from different areas, using different approaches to explain various forms of education. For him, it was a successful and inspiring experience, as he recounted:

Despite all the difficulties, I think it was a very successful experience in terms of exploring this possibility of languages, not only thinking about education from the school perspective, but also what are the things that will interest women? What are yours? In fact, at Júlia Maranhão, they had a choir, so singing was already an existing activity (Ireland, 2024. Interview granted on March 1, 2024).

At the same time, he led the study and research group Grupo de Investigação em Processos Educativos e Formativos no Contexto Inter/Nacional de Privação de Liberdade (Research Group on Educational and Training Processes in the Inter/National Context of Deprivation of Liberty), which was dedicated to exploring national and international guidelines and principles related to training and education in the context of criminal enforcement and persons deprived of liberty.

Between 2019 and 2024, he was involved in several educational initiatives, notably coordinating the Windows to the World Reading Club at the Sílvio Porto Penitentiary and the Doutor Romeu Gonçalves de Abrantes Maximum Security Penitentiary (PB1/PB2), both in João Pessoa. According to Araújo (2021), the project aimed to encourage reading and writing as tools for broadening horizons and the subjective development of participants. Inserted at the intersection between research, teaching, and extension, the initiative took place through the discipline of Directed Readings Articulated with Practices of Sentence Remission through Reading at the PPGE of UFPB and the practices of sentence remission through reading, promoting a space for dialogue between the university and the prison environment. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the project had to be suspended due to health restrictions and social isolation measures.

As an offshoot of the Windows to the World project, the interinstitutional university extension project Among Us: Letters, Words, and Conversations has emerged as an alternative for maintaining educational practices in the prison context during the COVID-19 pandemic. Conceived by professors Timothy Ireland and Aline Campos, from the Federal University of Northern Tocantins (UFNT), the project used reading and writing through booklets with different textual genres and letter exchange as a pedagogical tool, enabling the continuity of learning and dialogue among participants (Araújo, 2024). According to Campos, Rosa, and Ireland (2024), the project was designed with the aim of promoting education as a continuous process of exchange and knowledge building, adapting to the limitations imposed by the prison environment and the health restrictions of the time.

With his experience, professor Timothy Ireland collaborated with the Interinstitutional Commission on Education in Prisons in the development of the State Plan for the Education of Persons Deprived of Liberty and Former Prisoners for the period 2021-2024, in Paraíba. His contribution was fundamental in defining these guidelines, which aim to guarantee access to education in the Paraíba prison system, promoting actions focused on literacy, schooling, and citizenship training, in addition to strengthening coordination between different institutions to implement the plan.

In addition to extension and research projects, his academic contribution extends to advising students on their final projects, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations; his vast theoretical output, which includes the publication of articles in renowned national and international journals; and participation in academic events, where he shares his knowledge and experiences with other researchers and professionals in the field. Part of this production will be presented in the next section of this study.

Professor Timothy Ireland's academic journey in the education of young people and adults deprived of their liberty is marked by his commitment to promoting viable access to education. His life, academic background, professional and scientific experience have made him a reference in youth and adult education and prison education, inspiring other professionals and researchers to work in this field.

4 The scientific knowledge produced by professor Timothy Denis Ireland in light of human rights

Prison education has become a field of tensions and possibilities, in which different social actors interact to build an educational model that respects human rights and offers dignified conditions for the training of prisoners, following the example of public universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In this context, studies such as those by professor Timothy Denis Ireland are expressions of the shift from thinking about education in simplistic terms that maintain the system to conceiving education as an inalienable human right.

Ireland (2020) emphasizes that education in prisons should be a space for autonomy and emancipation, rather than an instrument of domestication and social control, presenting and absorbing Freire's categories (Freire, 2017) to defend liberating and lifelong education, in which the person deprived of liberty is not reduced to a mere recipient of content, but rather recognized as a protagonist in the process of knowledge construction and self-transformation. With holistic and dialogical pedagogical relationships between educators and students, as proposed by Freire (2017), education can be a potential tool

for rebuilding the identity of people deprived of their liberty and collaborating in the construction of meaningful life experiences.

To this end, professor Timothy Ireland's academic work in the field of prison education has addressed topics such as sentence remission and the role of reading, popular education, and higher education in prisons, always with a critical eye on educational policies and the rights of incarcerated individuals, which helps us to deepen our reflection on lifelong education in prison as a basic right. Table 1 shows the main publications by this professor and his collaborators from 2011 to 2024, highlighting the central themes. It should be noted, however, that professor Timothy Ireland's scientific output is more extensive than the summary presented here, which only considers studies and research on education in prisons. It is therefore worth checking the curriculum at Plataforma Lattes¹ to access all of his published intellectual output.

**Table 1 – Academic output of professor Timothy Denis Ireland
on education in prisons**

Year	Category	Main theme	Reference
2024	Article	Prison education and sentence remission	SOUZA, M. A. N.; IRELAND, T. D. Remição de pena como política educacional nas prisões femininas da Paraíba. Revista Educação & Emancipação , São Luís, v. 17, p. 240-254, 2024.
	Book chapter	Education and communication in prison	CAMPOS, A.; ROSA, C. S.; IRELAND, T. D. Entre-nós: cartas, palavras e conversas dentro e fora da prisão. <i>In</i> : FREITAS, C.; ANDREATTA, E.; PERES, R. (org.). Entre redes e outros nós . Manaus: Editora UFAM, 2024. p. 173-188.
2023	Article	Popular education and women deprived of their liberty	SOUZA, M. A. N.; IRELAND, T. D. Políticas públicas de educação para mulheres privadas de liberdade: contribuições da educação popular. Temas em Educação , João Pessoa, v. 32, n. 1, p. 1-20, 2023.

¹ A Brazilian platform that gathers academic, professional and scientific information on researchers. To see Timothy Denis Ireland's curriculum lattes, visit: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5935627249778242>.

2021	Article	Educational policy in prisons	TORRES, E.; IRELAND, T. D; ALMEIDA, S. I. Diagnóstico da política de educação em prisões no Brasil (2020): o desafio da universalização. Revista Eletrônica de Educação , São Carlos, v. 15, p. 1-18, 2021.
2021	Article	Encouraging reading	IRELAND, T. D. Convite à leitura. Revista Eletrônica de Educação , São Carlos, v. 15, p. 1-3, 2021.
2021	Article	Reading in prison	CAMPOS, A.; IRELAND, T. D. Ler na prisão: entre portas, mundos e janelas. Educação Unisinos , São Leopoldo, v. 25, p. 1-18, 2021.
2020	Article	Higher education in prisons	CAMPOS, A.; IRELAND, T. D. Ensino Superior em prisões da América Latina: um diálogo com uma experiência piloto no Tocantins/Brasil. Educação e Cultura Contemporânea , Rio de Janeiro, v. 17, n. 48, p. 124-145, 2020.
2019	Book chapter	Prison education and human rights	SARMENTO, V. A.; IRELAND, T. D. Educação que liberta: notas para construção de um Projeto Político Pedagógico em prisões à luz de Educação em Direitos Humanos. <i>In</i> : CALAÇA, S. M. <i>et al.</i> (org.). Direitos humanos, políticas públicas e educação em e para os direitos humanos . João Pessoa: CCTA, 2019. p. 519-534.
2018	Article	Adult education in prison	IRELAND, T. D. O caminho de Belém a Suwon: uma perspectiva latino-americana. Desicio: Educacion de Adultos en Reclusion , [s. l.], v. 50, p. 21-27, 2018.
2016	Book chapter	Training prison officers	IRELAND, T. D.; SARMENTO, V. A. Formação para agentes penitenciários(as): uma proposta metodológica à luz da educação em/para direitos humanos. <i>In</i> : ANDRADE, F. C. B.; RECHEMBACH, F. (org.). Contribuições à educação em direitos humanos na contemporaneidade . Curitiba: Editora CRV, 2016. p. 147-168.
2011	Article	Prison education and educational rights	IRELAND, T. D. Educação em prisões no Brasil: direito, contradições e desafios. Em Aberto , Brasília, v. 24, p. 23-43, 2011.
2011	Article	Reflection on educational policies	IRELAND, T. D. Apresentação. Em Aberto , Brasília, v. 24, p. 11-16, 2011.

Source: Own elaboration based on survey data (2025).

Professor Timothy Ireland's work highlights that education in prisons faces a double challenge: on the one hand, it is recognized as a human right in line with Human Rights Education and Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of Liberation; on the other hand, its implementation suffers from structural and political limitations. Sarmento and Ireland (2019) reflect on the need for a political-pedagogical project within the prison system that considers both school and non-school educational practices, promoting training that engages with the reality of prisoners and contributes to their worldview.

Reinforcing this need, the diagnosis of educational policy in prisons, analyzed by Torres, Ireland, and Almeida (2021), demonstrates the precariousness of access to education in the prison system, as educational provision in prisons is often reduced to a policy of containment, focused more on managing the prison population than on effectively promoting the right to education. Educational activities become instruments of control and discipline, reinforcing the prison system itself and reducing its potential for education for freedom.

However, projects such as sentence remission through educational social practices, guaranteed by Resolution No. 391/2021, represent a significant initiative by enabling people deprived of their liberty to participate in differentiated educational activities (Brasil, 2021). Thus, Souza and Ireland (2024) reflect that this policy presents contradictions, especially with regard to the instrumentalization of education in the prison context. There is effectiveness in the educational practice of remission by enabling the reduction of sentences and stimulating the interest of incarcerated individuals in learning. However, the risks of reducing education to a bargaining tool, thereby undermining its formative and critical potential, must be considered. The authors point out that this logic becomes even more pronounced in women's prisons, where access to education is often treated as a privilege granted, rather than a fundamental right, reinforcing inequalities and limiting the possibilities of social transformation through education.

The critical approach to prison education is also reflected in the study by Souza and Ireland (2023) on women deprived of their liberty. The authors defend popular education as an instrument of emancipation, revisiting Freire's principles of dialogue,

awareness, and social transformation, contrasting with the traditional view of prison education, which is often limited to the transmission of formal content, without considering the experiences and sociocultural contexts of people deprived of their liberty.

In this reflection on sentence remission and its relationship with education, professor Timothy Ireland defends reading and writing as fundamental educational practices in prisons. In Campos and Ireland (2021) and Ireland (2021), the importance of access to books and letter writing as forms of resistance and humanization in the prison environment is highlighted. The research by Campos, Rosa, and Ireland (2024) deepens this discussion by demonstrating that the use of different resources in educational practice, such as letters written by people inside and outside prison, contributes to the interaction of people deprived of liberty and the maintenance of emotional bonds and the development of reflective and critical skills.

Campos and Ireland (2020) and Ireland and Sarmento (2016) address the role of higher education in prisons and the training of professionals working in this context, advocating for greater access to higher education as a strategy for social reintegration outside prison walls and for reconfiguring power relations within the prison system. The authors argue that the training of prison officers should include principles of human rights education, ensuring a humanizing approach rather than one that is solely coercive and disciplinary with a view to punishment.

The work of professor Timothy Ireland and his collaborators shows that, although prison education is a legally recognized right, its implementation faces structural, social, economic, and political challenges. The instrumentalization of education for sentence remission, the precariousness of educational provision, and resistance to critical methodologies are some of the obstacles identified by the research.

To overcome these limitations, the aforementioned scientific production points to paths for meaningful and critical prison education, based on popular education, reading and writing as a liberating practice, and critical training for both inmates and prison system professionals. Thus, the struggle and resistance materialize in the need to restructure educational policies in prisons, in line with human rights principles.

5 Conclusions

Timothy Denis Ireland's academic career in prison education highlights his contribution to defending the right to education for people deprived of their liberty, not only in the state of Paraíba, but also on the Brazilian national stage. His narratives express an approach that has become a benchmark in the field, promoting human rights-based education in prisons that values human dignity and citizenship.

The professor contributed to thinking about education in prisons in Brazil, standing out for the development of innovative pedagogical practices that expanded access to education for people deprived of their liberty. His participation in projects such as Educating for Freedom, Windows to the World, and Among Us: Letters, Words, and Conversations, among others, demonstrates how education enables learning and strengthens social interaction within the prison context. By using various educational tools, such as booklets and letters, the teacher highlighted various possibilities for educational practices in prisons, even in difficult times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. His work reinforces the importance of humanizing educational practices in the social reintegration of incarcerated individuals outside prison walls.

The results show that Timothy Ireland's experience is directly linked to the sociocultural context of education in prisons, highlighting educational training as a necessary tool for personal and social transformation. His journey reinforces the urgency of educational policies that guarantee real and diverse learning opportunities in the prison system, with possibilities for meaningful learning and social reintegration outside prison walls.

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ⁱ **José Douglas de Abreu Araújo**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6564-4793>

Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Faculdade de Educação, Ciências e Letras de Iguatu,
Curso de Pedagogia

Doutor e mestre em Educação pela Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB). Pedagogo (UNINTER), filósofo (FAFIC) e assistente social (IFCE-Iguatu). Professor substituto da Universidade Estadual do Ceará (Uece).

Contribution of authorship: writing of the text, generation and analysis of data.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/2025761218487894>

E-mail: josedouglasabreu@gmail.com

ⁱⁱ **Wanderson Diogo Andrade da Silva**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9583-0845>

Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Faculdade de Filosofia Dom Aureliano Matos,
Curso de Licenciatura em Química

Doutor em Educação (UFMG), mestre em Educação (UFC), licenciado em Química (IFCE-Iguatu) e Pedagogia (UNINTER). Professor adjunto de Educação Química da Universidade Estadual do Ceará (Uece). Professor colaborador do MPEC-UFOP e do MPECM-UFV.

Contribution of authorship: writing of the text, guidance, and final revision of the text.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9517476282566295>

E-mail: wanderson.andrade@uece.br

Responsible publisher: Genifer Andrade.

Ad hoc experts: Manuel dos Santos Bandeira Neto and Bruno Miranda Freitas.

How to cite this article (ABNT):

ARAÚJO, José Douglas de Abreu; SILVA, Wanderson Diogo Andrade da. Trajetória formativa-profissional do professor Timothy Denis Ireland e sua defesa pela educação no sistema prisional. **Rev. Pemo**, Fortaleza, v. 7, e15505, 2025. Available at: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo/article/view/15505>