

PRO-SOCIAL EDUCATION OF PERSONS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

Luminița BÂRLEANU (DOBRE)

PhD Student, Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities,
University of Craiova (Romania), Email: lumi_dobre@yahoo.com

Abstract: *Punishment is appreciated as the way to reduce the commission of criminal acts, being appreciated as representing the instrument of coercion used by the legal system of all times and by all societies until now. Over time, the punishment took various forms and manifested itself in different ways, standing out as a coercive measure, used by the legal system against those who committed acts criminalized by the criminal law. The current criminal policy is in a continuous development, the role of penitentiaries also knowing another dimension, namely that of educating the prisoner, but especially of reducing his criminal potential, through the educational action, to determine him to fulfill and exercise social roles and statuses in accordance with the values and social norms generally accepted by society and protected by legal norms. In the current conditions and in accordance with the legislative recommendations, the penitentiary acquires educational values of great importance, its mission being primarily to reduce the risk of recidivism through the educational actions and programs carried out inside it.*

Keywords: punishment, prisoner, pro-social education, educational programs, remodeling

1. Introduction

In that article, I started from the hypothesis that in the penitentiary environment an essential aspect regarding the educational act is imposed, namely that the curriculum must be consistent with the educational deficiencies of the prisoner, with his educational needs and not a general one. Many of those serving a sentence have a low or very low level of schooling, a low level of culture or come from social environments where committing crimes is a way of life, a normality, in some cases also presenting various alcohol addictions or drugs.

Education in penitentiaries is a topic that is increasingly debated, because this action aims to redefine the identity of the criminal, to reshape his moral and personality traits, to return him to society at the time of his sentence, as an individual capable of living in harmony and in accordance with the requirements of society and in the spirit of respect for the law.

For people who have committed crimes, there are punishments provided in the criminal codes, and the magistrates have the mission of applying the punishment provided by the legal norm, after a deep analysis of the act and based on evidence that inevitably leads to the fact that the person in question is the perpetrator. The application of the punishment is not a simple aspect, it must be thoroughly analyzed, so that it is useful, corrects the one who broke the law, but also represents a protection offered to the members of the community. By the application of the punishment, the correction of the convicted person is considered in particular by educating a conscientious attitude in order to fit better into the realities of social life, to produce at an intrinsic level a positive legal and moral change in his personality. The prison, as a place of execution of the sentence, must represent a second chance for the individual, offering him the opportunity to obtain some social achievements, some behaviours and moral values necessary and useful to him at the time of his return to the community.

At the same time, deprivation of liberty produces significant changes and has traumatic effects on the personality of the person who is serving a sentence. The penitentiary environment determines a series of behaviours totally different from those he had in freedom, the carceral universe, its specific activities, the group of individuals that make up this world are factors that determine readaptation behaviours, institutional coexistence, the feelings and frustrations that appear in this context causing the prisoner to be hostile and reluctant with those around him. „the measures imposed in the penitentiary, the opinions developed, the

treatment from which the inmates benefit from both colleagues and staff become obstacles for the way they conceive their future life" (Florian, 2016 : 62).

Although a series of educational programs exist and are applied in penitentiaries, there are situations, not pleasant, in which they do not fully fulfill their intended purpose. We affirm this aspect because it has often been observed that the phenomenon of recidivism has not remained at a low level, with cases of reconviction and return to the prison environment. The phenomenon is given by the fact that the person did not have the ability to reshape his will, to implement and respect the notions transmitted through the educational process, to effectively manage his feelings and social actions. Gheorghe Florian emphasized that "the expected goal of the execution of custodial sentences is the re-education of the recidivist." (Florian, 2016: 3). In the same way, Aura Preda appreciates that, "the re-education of the prisoner represents the proof of the effectiveness of the treatment applied in the penitentiary." (Preda, 2018: 32).

2. The need for pro social education in the prison

The permanent concern for improving the quality of life of incarcerated persons has led to major changes regarding the mission of penitentiaries, their aim being to reduce the risk of recidivism through the actions and educational programs carried out inside them by means of teaching staff and other specialists. If in the past, this institution had more the role of a place of execution of punishment and the application of coercive measures in case of non-compliance with the rules and regulations, nowadays its mission can be seen from another perspective, namely that of re-educating, reshape and transform people in conflict with the law into people capable of accepting and respecting fundamental values. The appearance of the new criminal codes, the framing of the acts and the method of individualizing the punishments resulted in the considerable reduction of the incarcerated population, but also a much more efficient management of the way of educating and reshaping people who have committed criminal acts. Hiring specialists in human resources management made it possible to manifest, determine and motivate high performing behaviours, as well as obtain beneficial results regarding human conduct. The effective use of resources, their involvement in human growth and definition was the object of the development of stimulating educational programs for obtaining increased motivation and changing criminal behaviour into a prosocial one. Education in the penitentiary is based on the assessment of the individual regarding his abilities, emphasizing his resources in order to achieve pro-social goals as well as facing and overcoming certain difficulties.

Through education, both the acquisition of specific knowledge and the formation of prosocial behaviours, characterized by actions with positive consequences found in interactions with community members, are aimed at. So, prosocial behaviour can be understood as "that intentional behaviour, carried out outside of professional obligations and oriented towards supporting, preserving and promoting social values". (Chelcea, 1996: 439). Acquiring and applying positive behavioural actions have beneficial consequences and contribute to the mental and physical well-being of other people. Prosocial education in the penitentiary environment represents an intervention and a direction of the individual, by providing support and support in order to acquire and respect social and moral values. It is essential that the programs and activities are compatible with each other in order to give efficiency to the interventions in the key areas and to facilitate the inmate's participation as much as possible in specialized educational actions tailored to his needs. The prisoner's main educational needs are related to learning needs, different addictions, antisocial behaviours and attitudes. The correct and timely identification of these deficiencies makes the educational act have a quick and reparative intervention, and the educational programs are related to the needs of the prisoner, especially those that, if properly met, lead to prosocial behaviour. Educational actions take into account the evolution of behaviours and attitudes and represent a framework conducive to changing the beliefs and attitudes that were the basis

for committing crimes. The quality of prosocial education ensures a favorable environment for changes and is measured by the decrease in the crime rate. At the same time, it allows for discipline at the settlement level, with the inmates showing more respect, understanding and tolerance in their relations with each other and with the penitentiary employees. Not infrequently, multiple negative manifestations take place in the penitentiary space, determined by a multitude of disruptive factors. That is precisely why the need for prosocial education is especially important when the sentence begins, because the individuals are not socialized with this environment, they come from different cultures. The beginning of the execution of the sentence in a custodial regime can cause a deviant behaviour, especially since the prisoner is required to comply with some regulations and social norms determined by the prison setting. The social standards in the penitentiary are different from those he was familiar with in the external environment, now and here, the person serving the sentence will have to accept, learn and apply the rules of coexistence, respect the values and norms of the society he belongs to part. "At the same time, individuals are not socialized in a culture common to a single or the entire society, but in a series of different cultures and even subcultures." (Otovescu, 2010: 377). That is precisely why, on the date of incarceration, there is a period of accommodation, called quarantine, during which the individual deprived of liberty is evaluated from an educational, socio-economic, psychological perspective, but also prepared for life in detention, in order to comply with the rules provided by the Rules of Order interior of the penitentiary. This moral training aims to reduce "any act, conduct or manifestation that violates the written or unwritten norms of society or of a particular social group." (Zamfir, Vlăsceanu, 1992:167). Depending on the quality of the educational activities, we can talk about the reduction of failure on a personal level at the time of release, about the success of social and professional reintegration and implicitly about the reduction of post-execution recidivism. Prosocial education will have to strengthen previous educational acquisitions, allow the accumulation and completion of higher levels of education, so that the educational subject persists after the completion of the educational act, in the application, compliance and manifestation of the tendencies of adherence to social norms and values. Returning to the community at the end of the execution of the sentence, implies an effort to readjust to the outside world, and the existential niches in which the individual will live will be perceived with changes and numerous challenges that he will have to face. From the date of release, he will have to "accumulate the capacities and skills necessary to adapt to the organizational environment available to exist". (Popovici, 2003: 167). The idea is also found in the following statement, "... we can increase the frequency of social behaviours by increasing people's skills, teaching them how to give help, helping them to know the terrain." (Constantinescu, 2004:23).

Prosocial education in penitentiaries does not exclusively belong to the activity and competence of the educator, in this educational process a series of specialists with specific duties are involved such as: social workers, psychologists, therapists, but also personnel assigned to guard and protect. „ The programs offered by the prison administration are classified into educational, vocational training and therapy programs. Their goal is common, to get the prisoners to behave, act and think in a socially accepted way so as to avoid the phenomenon of recidivism". (Florian, 2016: 21)

Prosocial education is based on providing the information that inmates may need for their reintegration into society, and the information provided will vary depending on the individuals involved and with specific attributions. Social skills are constantly changing, that is why their performance largely depends on the ability of those who have the mission to translate them into educational activities, but also on the positive response of those who participate in the educational act. The more the person involved in the activity is confronted with various social situations, the greater the acquisition and performance, and the subsequent application of what has been learned will have a positive impact in effective relations with the community to which he will return after serving his sentence, having the

ability to develop harmonious relationships and to initiate behaviours accepted by society. The efficiency of programs based on prosocial education will take into account that the prisoner continues to develop his social skills after the execution of the sentence, and the behavioural rules learned within the programs allow him to have positive interactions with the environment he returns to, at the same time offering him the premise of respecting the norms and social values, but also the lack of interaction with the factors favoring the commission of antisocial acts.

Isolation from the social environment through the execution of the sentence in the penitentiary represents the favorable environment for acquiring poor performances, for learning delinquent behaviours, aspects that can lead to a series of problems after the execution of the sentence. Starting from this aspect, education and its related activities will consider the operationalization of society's values, the success of the educational subjects being found in the way they will manage their life and activity after the execution of the sentence. „In any form of education, individuals will have the right to a high-level education that delivers what it promises, will help them achieve their goals, will advance them up the ladder of performance as they are capable or as high as they want to go. arrive". (Popovici, 2003: 256). In the prosocial education course, the inmates are the ones who have to assume the choice of the fields they want to study, and the participation has to be completely voluntary. During the activity, they will be able to express their point of view without becoming aggressive, they will learn how to apply for a job, social assistance or deal with a problem, live independently, without the risk of involves committing another criminal act. The educational activities in the penitentiary environment do not have a neutral character, based only on the transmission of some information, but aim at a process of remodeling, transformation and inoculation of practices and actions from which they will evolve in subsequent experiences. Through this activity, the specialists in the penitentiary environment have in mind the formation of a behaviour embodied in models and practices accepted and shared by society. The provision of educational programs is aimed at strengthening prestige and self-esteem, identifying alternatives regarding the professional career after release, future prospects as well as creating moral convictions that can lead them to avoid criminal activity. "Counseling programs also aim at controlling aggression, impulsivity, addictions, adjusting irresponsible behaviour, training parental and social responsibilities, and decision-making skills in risky situations." (Ilie, 2019: 184).

3. The remodeling of the human personality in the penitentiary

In the penitentiary, the individual forms a new perspective on himself, comes to adopt and share the point of view of the other inmates regarding the environment in which he lives and the society that composes him. In this way, the prisoner develops different attitudes towards the staff, those at liberty and will try to integrate into the informal group. Knowledge, opinions, rules learned under the pressure of the group to which he joined become obstacles in the implementation of educational interventions. Added to these pressures are those exerted by regulations and their compliance. In detention, the educational process is much more difficult compared to that in the external environment, because here it is about the need to destroy learned behaviours and replace them with new ones, for which motivation and involvement of the learner is necessary. The programs carried out in the penitentiary must follow the evolution of the behaviours of the incarcerated individual and imprint a correctional orientation. The most important responsibility that the penitentiary must assume is the preparation of the prisoner for a new life, and the continuation of this effort will have to be organized after the execution of the sentence. The quality of the educational act leaves its mark on the destiny of each person and implicitly of each society. The opportunities to develop skills must be as close as possible to the opportunities for release, and the change offered in this environment is defined by giving a second chance, respectively to reduce the return to criminal behaviour. The educational activities as a whole have the purpose of

rebuilding the moral and social values of the person deprived of their freedom, they aim at improving existing skills or acquiring new ones as well as assimilating some value systems that will help them acquire social performances by putting into practice what they have learned.

4. Conclusions

The penitentiary unit, as an institution with an educational role, must respond to social challenges, by expanding the scope of activity, by developing and providing programs that ensure progress both during detention and after the execution of the sentence. Education in this environment must stimulate their positive potential and make them aware of new possibilities, with the mission of helping them decide for themselves that giving up delinquency is a major step towards social and professional reintegration. The extent to which prison education reflects the qualities of the best education will increase the likelihood that at least some inmates will continue their education after release. In this sense, it is appreciated that "the whole community should be involved in ensuring a qualitative educational process". (Constantinescu, 2018: 108).

Educational activities have a special role and importance because they help the incarcerated to express themselves and develop their mental and physical skills, it will reflect on their positive qualities and potential, it will make them feel more human and connected by the society outside the penitentiary. Thus,, ...that both nature and nurture are essential to development, and the interaction between these factors is the crucial influence for each individual." (Constantinescu, 2008: 25).

In penitentiaries, the educational intervention must focus on the plurivectorial instrumentation of the person deprived of liberty so that after the execution of the sentence or on the date of conditional release, he has the necessary resources to overcome the harmful consequences of social labeling and relational failure. The conception and design of the educational approach intended for this category of people constitute complex actions oriented towards the investigation of the personality and the appreciation of each individual's own resources. From this perspective, persons sentenced to custodial sentences belong to a special population category with specific psycho-socio-educational needs. Many of the people serving a custodial sentence did not graduate from high school, the motivation to learn and engage in cognitively educational activities is an unknown territory. In *Penitentiary Phenomenology*, Gheorghe Florian emphasized that, to this is added the lack of desire to change and, often, self-satisfaction, the conviction that they have nothing to complain about. The still unresolved legal problems of the prisoners, which concern them so much that they are not able to think about anything else, should not be neglected either" (Florian, 2006: 81).

References:

1. Chelcea, S., (1996). *Social Psychology, Contemporary Aspects*, Iași: Polirom.
2. Constantinescu, M., (2018). *Integrated and proactive programs for vulnerable groups*. Bucharest: ProUniversitaria
3. Constantinescu, M., (2004). *Social competence and professional competence*. Bucharest: Economica
4. Constantinescu, M., (2008). *Human development and social assistance*. Pitesti: University Publishing House
5. Gheorghe, F., (2001). *Prison psychology*. Bucharest: Oscar Print.
6. Gheorghe, F., (2016). *Human development in prison*. Bucharest: Oscar Print.
7. Gheorghe, F., (2006). *Penitentiary phenomenology*. Bucharest: Oscar Print.
8. Ilie, S, coord, Tomescu, C, Rotariu, L, (2019). *Life in detention: system and quality*. Bucharest: Pro Universitaria.
9. Otovescu, D. (Coord), (2010). *Treatise on General Sociology*. Craiova: Beladi.
10. Popovici, D., (2003). *Sociology of education*. Iasi: Institutul European

11. Preda, A, (2018). *Historical landmarks regarding the penitentiary system in Romania*. Bucharest: Premium Legal Universe
12. Zamfir, C and Vlăsceanu, L (coord), (1992), *Dictionary of Sociology*. Bucharest: Babel