

PRISON EDUCATION IN POLAND: SPECIFICS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The problems presented in the text refer to the education of convicts in Poland. It has been based on current Polish legal regulations, statistical data and specialist literature. The problems which refer to the education of convicts in Poland are regulated by the Act of 6th June 1997, the Executive Penal Code, the Act on the Education System and executive acts to the above-mentioned regulations. The current situation in the labour market requires people to acquire education and to improve their qualifications. People without education, who are excluded from the access to professional development and in-service training, find themselves in an extremely difficult situation. The lack of qualification and vocational skills usually leads to exclusion from the labour market. People who serve their sentences in prisons find themselves in a particularly difficult situation, because their lack of education may push them back into crime. A very positive tendency that may be observed in Poland is a growing demand for prison education. Convicts may acquire knowledge and raise their qualifications at various levels and in various fields. They may follow the curricula at the level of a primary or secondary school; they may pass their Matura certificate and, after the consent of relevant authorities, they can continue their education at the university level. Convicts may also learn a new profession, change their professional qualifications or acquire new additional skills during specialist courses. The qualifications acquired in this way shall meet current demand in the labour market, and convicts may find employment after they leave prisons. Education allows them to improve their self-esteem and self-reliance, to catch up with any deficiencies and to work on their self-discipline. At the same time, education offers opportunities to expand knowledge, to return to the society and to the labour market.

It is important for convicts to obtain opportunities for education, since such a chance comes as a significant factor of their social re-adaptation. Considering social values, it is important to foster the pursuit for education among convicts. A lot of prisoners still do not want to learn, and this fact may result from their previous school failures, the sense of embarrassment caused by their knowledge deficiencies, the lack of interest and faith in their own potential.

The material for the text has been collected on the basis of the method of theoretical analysis, and it includes available statistical data, legal regulations and literature which refers to the discussed problems. The article aims at the presentation of prison education, how it is organised in Poland and what advantages it presents for both: convicts and the society. The text also presents programmes of prison education which are implemented by correctional staff in prisons.

Keywords: *education of convicts, penitentiary correctional measures, prison education, social re-adaptation, social rehabilitation.*

Introduction

Today finding employment without education or vocational skills is extremely difficult. Such a situation results from intensive transformation of labour market, not only in Poland. Expectations of employers towards employees undergo considerable changes. New technologies and management solutions are quickly developed. The requirements in terms of employees' knowledge, skills, competences and experience constantly grow higher. At the same time,

competition between current employees and people who are looking for employment forces all of them to improve their qualifications. Undoubtedly, there is a correlation between the level of acquired education and employment. Although a diploma of higher education does not come as a particularly significant asset, higher qualifications considerably improve chances of finding and retaining employment. The percentage of the unemployed is much lower among people with higher and secondary education. It is important to expand one's knowledge, to acquire new skills, to continue learning. It is difficult to find employment without any formal certifications of education and without actual knowledge and vocation skills.

Noticeably, at the same time, people without education and those who have been excluded from the labour market have found themselves in an extremely difficult situation. Deficiencies in qualifications and the lack of professional skills lead straight into exclusion from the labour market. The situation of people who serve their sentences in prisons becomes particularly disadvantageous because their lack of education may push them back into crime. Recently, a very positive tendency has been observed, namely: a growing demand for prison education. Convicts are offered chances to acquire education and to improve their qualifications.

One of the research scientists observes that the education programmes for convicts should be adjusted to their needs and to the specific character of their current situation. Prison authorities should show some understanding and they should allow convicts, who are interested in such an offer, to continue their education at universities. Furthermore, the above-mentioned author accurately observes that the idea of re-adaptation, social reintegration and chances for values acquired through education have been neglected. It is better to educate convicts, to offer them values, the sense of good, understanding and wisdom than to keep them in permanent separation, and let them count down the number of days to be free again. Convicts who set an example by completing their process of education come as a priceless value (Juwa, 2013, p.131).

Considering social values of such activities, it is necessary to make efforts focused on social rehabilitation of convicts and their education. Despite all the factors which make those processes difficult, it is necessary to continue theoretical considerations in this field and to search for systemic and efficient solutions. Considering the problems of preparing convicts to life in freedom, it is particularly important to provide them with conditions favourable for the completion and improvement of their education and acquisition of professional qualifications.

The material for the text has been collected on the basis of the method of theoretical analysis, and it includes available statistical data, legal regulations and literature which refers to the discussed problems. The article presents prison education, how it is organised in Poland and what advantages it presents for both: convicts and the society.

Publicly available statistical data on prison education in Poland are collected by the Prison Guard. There are also legal regulations provided in order to manage all the issues related to prison education. Although there is a number of publications on the significance of education in the process of re-adaptation of convicts, the extensive research studies are still scarce in that field. The problem of the value and significance of education is also discussed in numerous articles referring to the labour market, also in the context of translating one's education into finding and retaining their employment. Education and improvement of qualifications take an important place in the process of social re-adaptation of convicts; these elements affect convicts' lives after they leave prison, their self-esteem, perception of the world around and the way to find their own place there.

The Functioning and Assumptions of Prison Education in Poland

Polish law provides convicts with a possibility to continue their education, however, learning is not compulsory. Considering individual values it provides to convicts and social advantages resulting from the process of prison education, it is important to encourage convicts

to improve their qualifications. A lot of convicts do not want to learn for various reasons, such as embarrassment resulting from their deficiencies in education, the lack of interests in general or the lack of faith in their own capabilities. It is important for convicts to have opportunities for education, as it may turn out to be a significant factor of their social re-adaptation. In the world where flexibility and continual learning are so important, prison education may actually contribute to the prevention of crime recidivism.

Considering prison education in Poland, it is first advisable to refer to relevant legal regulations. A significant solution is provided with the Act of 6th June 1997, the Executive Penal Code (2016). This normative act provides all the necessary regulations to execute judicial decisions in criminal cases and offences, including tax crimes and offences, penalties for the breach of order, coercive means, including imprisonment.

The article no. 67 of the above-mentioned regulation states that while applying corrective measures to convicts, with all due respect for their rights and execution of their duties, the most important aspect is work, especially work which fosters acquisition of relevant professional skills, education, cultural, educational and sports activities, relations with convicts' families and external world, and therapeutic means. Another article of the above-mentioned Act directly refers to prison education - in accordance with the regulation: penal and corrective institutions are obliged to provide education at the level of primary and junior secondary school; they are also obliged to provide convicts with a possibility to continue their education at the secondary school level and to attend vocational training courses. Education is first provided to convicts who do not have any profession, or to those who will not be able to work in their acquired profession after leaving prison, because they will be still under-aged (not 21 yet). Convicts who do not have sufficient financial means are provided with free handbooks and training aids. Provided that the prison authorities give their consent, there is also a possibility to educate convicts outside their penitentiary institution. In some particular cases, the penitentiary institution may even cover the expenses related to education of a convict (The Executive Penal Code 1997, 2016).

Another important legal regulation is the Act on the Education System, because prison and custody suite schools operate in accordance with the regulations stated in the Act. The Act regulates legal issues related to the education system in Poland. It defines the types of schools in Poland, the principles of granting marks and pupils' promotion and graduation, the list and scope of competences of schools and education institutions, boards of teachers, the principles of education financing and a number of other issues. In accordance with the Act, education is the good of the whole society and schools provide each pupil with optimal conditions for development, they educate pupils how to perform their future family, professional and civic duties (Act of 7th September 1991 on Education System, 2016).

Education institutions organised at prisons and custody suites are public schools which implement the same core curricula and syllabi as other schools which operate in freedom. Teachers employed there must meet the same requirements, and they must follow the same regulations as teachers who work in other schools outside penitentiary institutions.

Prison and custody suite schools are provided with the equipment properly adjusted to the requirements stated for education processes. The results achieved by graduates are verified by external examinations which define all the efforts of teachers and convicts who have worked hard to meet examination requirements. Education takes place in specific conditions where convicts are deprived of their freedom and liberties.

All people who serve their sentences in prisons and custodies have a right for education, and they are allowed to learn. It is guaranteed and stated by the above-mentioned legal regulations, first of all by the Executive Penal Code.

Prison and custody suite schools and education institutions are organised at all the education levels, except for higher education institutions. According to the current legal regulations, convicts are allowed to execute their right for education outside prison (Prison Guard 2017).

A decision to undertake education is made by a convict. In Poland vocational schools have been the most popular ones. Their popularity results from the fact that they offer a real chance to acquire a profession and to find employment after leaving prison. A significant problem comes with the practical teaching of a profession and the searching for employment. Another difficulty is the fact that prison libraries do not have some current and relevant educational materials (Jaworska, 2012, p.323).

Among the most important objectives of prison education are the following:

- to cover deficiencies in education;
- to provide convicts with professional skills so that they would be able to find employment in their life in freedom;
- to improve convicts' self-esteem (especially of those who, despite the fact that they have graduated from a primary school, can neither read nor write);
- to eliminate chances for convicts to be involved into crime again;
- to minimise social exclusion of convicts after they leave prison (Jaworska, 2012, p.324);

Valuable sources of information are statistical data. The data for 2015 indicate that on 31st Dec. 2015 there were 70 836 convicts in Polish prisons. Regarding the problems discussed in the article, the data on prison education are the most interesting for our considerations.

A table below presents information on prison schools and school units.

Table 1. Prison schools and school units.

Detailed information	The number of schools		The number of school units	
	in the school year		in the school year	
	2013/2014	2014/2015	2013/2014	2014/2015
Total	51	35	161	154
Primary schools	2	2	4	3
Junior secondary schools	9	8	15	13
Basic vocational schools*	12	X	20	X
Secondary vocational schools	8	6	14	6
Post-secondary schools	1	1	3	3
Secondary schools	19	18	42	61
Vocational training courses	X	X	63	68

Source: *Roczna informacja statystyczna za rok 2015* (SW 2016). [Annual statistical data of 2015, Prison Guard, 2016].

Prison schools provide convicts with an opportunity to complete their primary education and to acquire a profession. Covering any deficiencies in their education and being granted with a certificate of school graduation come as a chance for convicts to enter the labour market.

Averagely, school education is organised for approximately 3500 convicts each year. They undergo educational procedures which come as most efficient elements of social rehabilitation. Convicts attending schools come as 4.5% of all convicts who service their sentences at prisons and custody suites. While planning the chain of prison schools, the most important is to provide convicts with a possibility of graduating from the primary and junior high schools, because convicts' further education will be impossible without such graduation certificates. The above-mentioned schools provide education for all the convicts who require courses at the discussed levels. At the same time, it should be emphasized that a relatively high number of convicts pass their examinations for the Matura certificate at prison high schools (SW, 2017a).

A table below presents statistical data referring to the number of convicts who were provided with education at various types of schools.

Table 2. Convicts who were provided with education at prison and non-prison schools.

Detailed information	People in a school year	
	2013/2014	2014/2015
Total	4 459	4 413
Primary schools	26	20
Junior secondary schools	419	323
Basic vocational schools*	264	X
Secondary vocational schools	191	86
Post-secondary schools	79	64
Secondary schools	1 426	1 568
Colleges	68	120
Vocational training courses	1 986	2 232

Source: *Roczna informacja statystyczna za rok 2015* (SW 2016). [Annual statistical data of 2015, Prison Guard, 2016].

Prison schools of various types address their offer, first of, all to juvenile delinquencies and convicts who serve their sentences for the first time. They form the most numerous group of convicts who learn at school. Totally, they come as 66% of all the pupils of prison schools. Such organisation of prison education, however, does not restrain possibilities to educate other convicts who belong to other classification groups. The most important for convicts is to express their will to continue their education at prison schools or units (SW 2017a).

Vocational training courses organised at prisons come as another important element of the education offer addressed to convicts. Such courses are attended mostly by adult convicts who do not have any professional skills or who need vocational re-qualification. Vocational courses are organised mainly for convicts who are about to leave prison, in order to improve their chances for employment and to prevent them from going back to crime. It should be stated that vocational training courses are organised in cooperation with employment agencies, and the scope of such courses is usually adjusted to the requirements of the local labour market. Vocational training courses are a highly desired form of vocational education provided to convicts. A relatively short time needed to provide a full cycle of such training and a considerable variety of courses come as the most attractive features of such education. Considering a relatively short average duration of sentences served at prisons, vocational training courses are a significant complementation to the educational offer for convicts with short sentences (SW 2017a).

The above-mentioned data indicate a great need for education, acquisition of an occupation and practical skills. At the same time, they suggest that there is hope for convicts that they will find employment after they leave prison, and they will never go back there again. They will follow the rules of living in the society, and they will make use of their acquired competences. It should be emphasized that convicts may learn not only at primary and secondary schools or attend training courses, but they are also given a possibility to continue their education at an institution of higher education, although such a procedure must be preceded by a consent of the prison warden.

It should be also mentioned that the recruitment and organisation of education at prison and custody suites schools are based on the Ordinance issued by the Minister of Justice on the

detailed regulations and modes of education provided at penitentiary institutions (2016) and in accordance with the Instruction no. 5 issued by General Director of the Prison Guard, on detailed organisation modes of school education and training courses provided at prisons and custody suites, of 25th November 2008. Convicts qualified for education are:

1. Convicts who are under 18 years old and who are statutorily obliged to undergo compulsory education, based on the Act on the Education System;
2. Convicts for whom a need for education has been specified in their individual correctional programmes, upon the request of the department of the penitentiary institution;
3. Convicts who have applied for education or its continuation at a specific type of school.

In order to start their education at school, convicts must apply to a penitentiary commission for education referral. While qualifying convicts for education at a specific type of school, the penitentiary commission follows the following criteria:

1. Current education certificates held by a convict; it comes as a basis for a curriculum necessary for the continuation of education at a selected type of school or a semester;
2. Convict's motivation and predispositions for education at a particular type of school;
3. Recommendations stated in an individual correctional programme;
4. Recommendations which result from psychological tests, if such tests have been carried out for a convict;
5. Convict's general health condition certified by a physician employed in the prison health care service;
6. The date of the conditional early release or termination of the sentence;
7. Convict's work experience in a particular occupation;
8. The conformity of the type of school and the field of education selected by a convict with the list of schools and the current list of fields of education and semesters offered there;
9. The purpose of the penitentiary institution at which the school selected by a convict operates;
10. The necessity of providing order and security at the penitentiary institution;

Convicts are qualified for school education if their sentences are not shorter than the expected duration of their education cycle. Convicts who have been temporarily detained may be qualified for education provided at all types of schools, if there are not less than 6 months to their conditional early release or their sentence termination, and who need to complete their education, or who present proper motivation to learn and to continue their education after they leave prison.

Admittance of convicts to prison schools depends on the results of the recruitment procedures carried out by the school recruitment committee. Candidates for the first semester at school are not required to pass any examinations or interviews.

School recruitment procedures last from 1st June until 10th June and from 1st December until 10th December each year (SW 2017b).

It should be noticed that prison education is organised to provide convicts with such professional skills that should give them a chance to find employment after they leave prison. These are mainly occupations which are desired in the labour market. In accordance with the data provided on 1st February 2017, such occupations are namely: a tailor, a confectioner, a building installation and machine fitter, a cook, a bricklayer, a plasterer, a construction installer, an electrician, a steel fixer, a concrete placer, a locksmith, a technician of nutrition and catering, an IT specialist, an assistant to the disabled, a hair stylist, a book-binder and others (SW 2017c).

All the above-mentioned occupations pertain to the service and industry sectors. Hence, there is a high probability that after leaving prison, convicts shall find employment on the labour market.

An important solution applied in the Polish penitentiary system, except for typical school and course education, are social rehabilitation programmes for convicts. The programmes involve operations which are focused on various fields of human activities, including education. At present, approximately 650 programmes are being implemented at prisons and custody suites in Poland. The programmes involve 30 000 convicts who serve their sentences. It has been assumed that such activities prepare convicts to life in freedom; after leaving prison, it is important for convicts to find work and to follow the principles of social life in order to avoid crime.

Prison University – a Road to Freedom is a programme initiated in 2004. It combines educational and corrective aspects. It is implemented by the correction officers, ward supervisors and the warden of the penitentiary facility in Białystok. At the ward of the custody suite there are women convicted to serve their sentences in prison conditions. The programme activities involve education on addiction and violence prevention, occupational activation, promotion of health and healthy life style, physical recreation and religious formation. Since its beginning, the programme has undergone some modifications contributing to its improvement. It has been important to adjust the programme assumptions to the participants' requirements and expectations and also to the conditions of the custody suite (Moroz, 2009, pp.101-105).

The project has been aimed at the organisation of activities providing education and information to women convicts in order to prepare them to life in freedom. The detailed aims of the project include:

- a decrease in negative consequences of prison isolation that must be faced by the convicts;
- skills which have been developed in order to allow convicts to actively search for employment and to spend their leisure time in an interesting way;
- promotion of healthy lifestyle,
- a need of proper and socially accepted relations with other people, developed in the convicts;
- legal support for the convicts;
- greater awareness of other people's needs and problems, the convicts' growing interest in social problems (Moroz, 2009, pp.101-105)

The imprisoned women convicts who participate in the programme represent various age groups, they struggle with different problems, they have various interests, needs and they represent different levels of intellectual development. The project is a long-term one, so it is updated after the end of each cycle which lasts for one calendar year. The correction methods and techniques applied in the individual and group forms involve: workshops, exercises, talks, presentations of the convicts' written work and creations, the elements of sociotherapy, a discussion club, audiovisual methods, lectures, seminars, physical exercises. During the implementation of the programme the following materials are used: audiovisual equipment and kitchen appliances, elements required for handicraft, stationery and office equipment.

The coordinators of the programme wish to provide each participant with a grade record book and a diploma certificate after the end of the programme. After the end of each preventive module, the convicts shall receive a certificate; the participation in the programme and the results achieved by the convicts shall be recorded in their personal profile documentation, part B.

An expected outcome of the programme is a change in the attitude of the convicts towards their functioning in life after they leave the prison. They should be able to use the acquired skills to cope with negative emotions, to manage stress and to look for employment. It is also important for the convicts to acquire proper hygienic habits, occupational skills, the sense of responsibility for their own choices and decisions in their life (Moroz, 2009, pp.101-105).

Another important programme is *Re-adaptation through Education*. It is implemented at the Custody Suite in Poznań, and it is addressed to any convicts who are interested in it. The most important objectives of this programme include:

- facilitation of social re-adaptation and prevention of crime recidivism through the improvement of occupational qualifications;
- continuation of previously interrupted education;
- continuation of education in the field of Polish or foreign languages;
- popularisation of knowledge in the fields of science, technology and history (Marczak, 2009, p.353).

The formal requirements defined for the article do not allow the author to present all the solutions applied in Poland, and new projects continually appear one after another. The discussed programmes come only as two examples, and they do not present the whole range of solutions and possibilities applied in the Polish penitentiary system. It should be emphasized that the fundamental aim of the applied solutions is to eliminate any negative consequences which result from social exclusion and which are related to negligence in education. Convicts acquire qualifications, and they are offered real chances for rejoining social life after they leave prison.

Summing up, it is also worth emphasizing that although the number of convicts who are interested in the improvement of their qualifications and in the continuation of their education is growing, there are numerous problems that can be identified in this field. As H. Iwanicki observes, such problems include:

- the lack of proper motivation for education and for improvement in qualifications;
- several-year delays in education of convicts;
- deficiencies in the use of methods and techniques applied in intellectual work, the lack of intellectual work practice;
- problems with the acquisition of basic notions, serious difficulties in knowledge acquisition;
- insufficient access to source materials and insufficient resources of school libraries;
- the lack of a proper room dedicated for intellectual work, reading, self-studying;
- restricted access to teaching aids (Iwanicki, 2007, pp.51-54).

It can be assumed that the above-mentioned factors negatively affect the process of convicts' self-education and improvement in their qualifications. At the same time, however, it is possible to observe that Polish penitentiary institutions strongly foster education of convicts. It is related to the transformation in the Polish penitentiary system in general. It should be also emphasized that the organisation of convicts' long leisure time comes as a very favourable and constructive process. In Polish penitentiary institutions the staff develop various solutions that foster convicts' self-education. Such solutions involve publishing newsletters, organisation of prison performances, exhibitions and other initiatives (Iwanicki, 2007, p.54).

It should be emphasized that convicts at penitentiary institutions find themselves in a specific situation. The fundamental inconvenience they have to face at prison is isolation and freedom restriction – in physical, psychological and social aspects. Isolation excludes convicts from the society to protect its members from the results of any possible criminal activities. Isolation at prison does not allow convicts to perform professional duties, to study or to perform any social roles. Therefore, education provides opportunities for convicts to spend their excessive free time in a constructive and advantageous way, to develop intellectual work practice, to continue regular learning and to acquire knowledge.

On the one hand, education is a factor which forms human identity, on the other hand, it comes as an indispensable creative condition for human natural development (Śliwerski, 2003, p. 906). All the time, people imprisoned at penitentiary facilities frequently struggle with their educational delays, sometimes as serious as the lack of primary education. The acquisition of

knowledge comes as a considerable problem, which results not only from the intellectual level of convicts, but also - and most frequently - from negligence they have suffered from in their communities. Convicts who start their education at prison schools do not know how to apply methods and techniques of intellectual work, as they have never been prepared to the process of self-education (Jaworska, 2012, p. 323).

Education of convicts and, first of all, their preparation to a professional career after they leave prison come as the most important aspect of penitentiary corrective activities. During the implementation of departmental programmes, the improvement in the conditions required for vocational education and the provision of additional education facilities and training courses for convicts are the priority tasks. As a result of the above-mentioned activities, operational conditions of prison schools have been considerably improved as well as the quality of vocational education of convicts (SW 2017a).

It is important for convicts to have opportunities for education, as it may turn out to be a significant factor of their re-adaptation. In the world where flexibility and continual learning are so important, education of convicts may actually contribute to the prevention of crime recidivism. It should be also remembered that the level of education is closely correlated with one's self-reliance. It is a feature which may *considerably stimulate social re-adaptation of people who leave social rehabilitation centres* (Szecówka, 2007, p. 251). Hence, education may become a chance for convicts to lead an independent and worthy family life and to have a professional career, in accordance with social standards.

The problems discussed in the article are presented in the following figure. It comes as a graphic representation of the collected material. It systematises the contents and indicates the most important issues presented in the text.

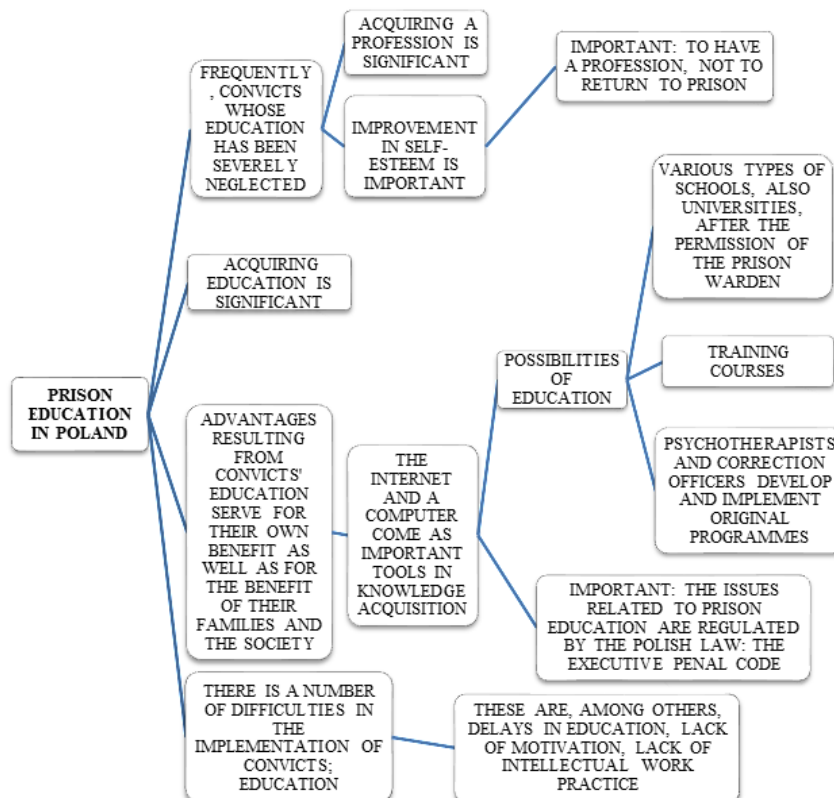


Figure 1. Prison education in Poland.

Education of Prisoners in other Countries

The limited framework of the article and the problems discussed here do not provide much space for a detailed analysis of solutions for prison education applied in other countries. However, it would be worth indicating some opportunities which are offered in other countries. Since the article refers to prison education in Poland, the solutions applied in other countries and opportunities which appear there shall be only mentioned in general.

It is worth to say, that education and training for prisoners helps reduce the social costs of crime and supports the rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration into society. One of the authors notices, that effective role of prison education is becoming increasingly important. In the UK, the discourse of prison education is now receiving closer Government attention. It is connected with the fact, that the most important task expected of prison education is to increase the chances of employment by ex-offenders and reduce coming back to prison. So probably it is the way to connect and convince different people, also the prisoners to the further benefits of prison education. It may exist more liberation in loosening the limits of providing mainly basic skills classes or becoming integrated within all prison activities and by having more involvement with the outside community. Probably it is a good way to develop (Bayliss, 2003, pp. 157-172).

Prison education has a good influence for preventing the recidivism. It is more profitable to fund education classes for inmates for two reasons. Education reduces recidivism dramatically and educating felons eliminates the costs associated with long term warehousing. It is possible to find the arguments in statistics and in the results of scientific research for example, in the interviews with professionals working with people in prisons (Esperian, 2010, pp. 316-334).

According to the report for the European Commission, it further provides an overview of key European policies and funding programs related to prison education and training. It also makes better highlighting their added value and contribution to the development of innovative and new approaches to education provision in prisons. It is needless to add, that the conclusions in this document identify key elements for efficient and effective education and training provision in prisons as well as specific needs for further research on the complex interplay between education and criminal behaviour. It means, that there are many forms of educational possibilities in prisons and – as well – many needs. In the authors' opinion there are many different ways *in which the attractiveness, quality and efficiency of prison education and training can be improved. These include increasing cooperation inside the prison between different actors as well as between prisons and local communities in order to ensure that the education and training provided in prisons is supported and can continue post-release* (Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero, 2013, p. 5). Innovative learning methods, which put the emphasis on the learner and build on their knowledge and experience, are important to attract prisoners into learning. It is important to include the use of ICT and distance learning, which let expand the scope of learning opportunities and ensure that learning can continue even in situations where the prisoner changes prisons. In this process the teacher is very important. They should represent specific skills and a good understanding of the demands and limitations of providing education in prisons.

It is needless to say, that there exist some different initiatives of EQUAL Development Partnerships with a focus on education and training for prisoners. They help to boost the employability of prisoners and develop skills and competences to increase their chances on the labour market on release, through for example work experience opportunities and the development of skills for entrepreneurship or self-employment (Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero, 2013, pp. 20-21). It is important to prepare prisoners to exist outside prison.

In the majority of European countries provision of education and training is a legal requirement. The provision of education and training in prisons can be divided into three

main categories. The first one is general education – for example, courses in subjects such as mathematics, sciences, history, geography, foreign languages, literacy. The second one is vocational education and training for example, education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market. The last one is non-formal learning, for example, some art and craft activities and offence-focused programmes to help prisoners to address issues such as anger management, thinking skills and substance abuse, as well as preparation for integrating in society on release (Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero, 2013, pp. 23-24).

According to The Council of Europe Recommendation on Education in Prison 73 and the European Prison Rules it is important to provide with education of training. It is important to use new technologies in the process of education of prisoners for example, to organize e-learning. It is also important not to forget, that previous negative experiences of education is one of the most important barriers to learning for prisoners, together with the lack of motivation. Well prepared teachers with personal and pedagogical skills are very needful in these relations (Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero, 2013, pp. 26-38).

In Denmark, convicts who stay in local prisons have a right for 37 hours of education or work per week (those who stay in central penitentiary institutions are obliged to learn and work). Convicts should graduate from a secondary school (or secondary vocational school) at minimum. In France, convicts have a right for primary education, and those who lack education at all and underage convicts are obliged to learn. They are also provided with vocational training courses which prepare them for professions which require low qualifications. Such courses take at least 6 hours a week. Prisoners may benefit from distance learning provided by non-government organisations. The state is obliged to take proper measures where non-government education programmes prove to be insufficient. All the activities related to general and vocational education, libraries, sports and culture are coordinated by local pedagogues who are responsible for education at the regional or departmental levels. In Germany prisoners are obliged to work or to learn. The details are defined in a social re-integration plan which is designed in cooperation with a prisoner. The plan also defines what training courses and what kind of education the convict is supposed to receive, and what steps should be taken in the convict's professional career. In Great Britain convicts have a right for the development of their interests, participation in basic education courses, and certified vocational training courses which are commonly recognised on the labour market. Prison education in England and Wales is provided by private entities on contractual basis. Taking advantage of the provided opportunities, convicts may participate in distance learning courses without any limitations.

While serving their prison sentences, convicts in Norway are provided with exceptionally good conditions. In accordance with the Norwegian law, convicts must be given education opportunities. Therefore, social rehabilitation involves various vocational training courses. Convicts can improve their qualifications and, after they leave prison, they can find their own place in the society. Educational activities are run by the staff employed at penitentiary institutions. Convicts must make a decision as to their education course, according to their interests and needs.

The Swedish penitentiary system is based on humanitarianism and normalisation. Education is supposed to prepare convicts for life after prison. In prison they can acquire knowledge, professional qualifications and formal certification of the acquired skills.

Conclusions

In terms of social values, it is important to foster convicts' pursuit for the development of their qualifications. The essential tasks of prison education are focused on preparing convicts to work in their acquired professions and to improve their formal qualifications. The individual

aims are equally important: improvement in convicts' self-esteem, especially in those who have not succeeded in graduation from any school. It shall provide them with a chance to find employment after they leave their penitentiary institution, and it shall considerably contribute to the prevention of crime recidivism.

A lot of convicts still do not want to learn for various reasons, such as embarrassment resulting from their deficiencies in education, the lack of interests in general or the lack of faith in their own potential. At the same time, the participation in various forms of education allows them to avoid social exclusion and to fully and actively participate in life in society.

Outside the prison walls continual transformation takes place in terms of knowledge, new technologies and communication tools. Education of convicts allows them to follow the development of technology and ever changing reality. The lack of knowledge of foreign languages, new technologies and the lack of formal certificates to confirm skills and qualifications can condemn convicts to social exclusion and – with a high probability – to the return to prison. It is also essential to develop good practice of self-education and learning habits in convicts. In our contemporary world it is difficult to manage without extending one's knowledge in numerous fields. It is possible to underline the need of involving local communities and employers into the activities focused on prison education. A good solution might be also workshops or training courses run by representatives of employment offices and agencies. Obligatory education and course attendance for convicts also seems to be a reasonable idea. Now education is provided to convicts only upon their own request, and it is optional. Such solutions may directly contribute to the employment of convicts and establishment of social relations after they leave prison. Taking all these facts into consideration, it is possible to understand the value and purpose of prison education both in its social and individual aspects.

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