

TEACHER TRAINING FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE INCARCERATED IN SLOVAKIA AND ABROAD

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the competencies of prison teachers and the issues involved in their training for teaching adults as well as teaching in a prison environment. It tries to answer the question of what a teacher involved in the formal education of incarcerated adults should be like, whether they should be trained before the process of education, and whether the system of further professional education gives them the opportunity to develop their competencies for teaching in prison. The current practice in the undergraduate training of teachers and their further professional education does not reflect the specifics of the formal education of the incarcerated. At the same time, models

for training prison teachers have existed abroad for a long time, and research reveals that the teachers themselves feel the need for specific training to teach in this specific environment.

Keywords: prison education, prison teacher, teacher training, adult education, prison teacher competencies

PRÍPRAVA UČITEĽOV PRE VZDELÁVANIE ODSÚDENÝCH NA SLOVENSKU A V ZAHRANIČÍ

Abstrakt

Príspevok sa zameriava na kompetencie učiteľov odsúdených a problémy spojené s ich prípravou na vyučovanie dospelých, ako aj na vyučovanie vo väzenskom prostredí. Snaží sa odpovedať na otázku, aký by mal byť učiteľ zapojený do formálneho vzdelávania dospelých vo výkone trestu odňatia slobody, či by mali byť učiteľia pred vzdelávaním školení a či im systém ďalšieho profesijného vzdelávania dáva možnosť rozvíjať svoje kompetencie pre vyučovanie vo väznici. Súčasná prax v pregraduálnej príprave učiteľov a ich ďalšom profesijnom vzdelávaní nereflektuje špecifiká formálneho vzdelávania odsúdených. Pritom v zahraničí sú modely prípravy väzenských učiteľov dňodobo k dispozícii a výskumy ukazujú, že samotní učiteľia pociťujú potrebu špecifickej prípravy na vyučovanie v tomto špecifickom prostredí.

Kľúčové slová: vzdelávanie odsúdených, učiteľ odsúdených, príprava učiteľov, vzdelávanie dospelých, kompetencie učiteľa odsúdených

In Slovakia, the training of teachers is not systematically researched and there is no system to educate them either. The teachers, whether novices or those with teaching experience, have no opportunities to develop their competencies outside their own professional focus and are dependent on informal ways of learning the profession of prison teacher. They are not prepared

in any way to teach adults, and even less the adults who exhibit a higher rate of problematic or antisocial behaviour or psychological disorders. The paper deals with issues involved in teacher training for formal education in prison. In contrast to the school environment, teachers of the incarcerated work in specific conditions and are confronted with different institutional goals and ways of achieving them. Moreover, they are exposed to a whole other organizational culture that is in contrast to that of a school in a free environment (Montenegro, 2021 and others). The target group of learners is particularly different. Their age, social and psychological characteristics, as well as their motivations related to learning, are also areas for which teachers are not trained. A low level of attention paid to the training of prison teachers is also reflected in the very low level of theoretical elaboration. As a result, only a few papers are available on this issue in Slovakia (Lukáčová, 2017; Lukáčová *et al.*, 2018; Temiaková, 2020).

1. LEARNING HOW TO TEACH ADULTS

Teaching adults, especially those socially excluded, presupposes the development and implementation of teachers' competencies, primarily in the area of communication (with an emphasis on intercultural communication) and cooperation (within the group of participants in education, with the school management and other people involved). The education of the incarcerated is on the fringes of interest in political and academic circles when it comes to forming public policies; thus, it is not surprising that very little attention is paid to the qualifications of those who educate prisoners. In addition to the lack of training for teaching in prison, most teachers are not trained to educate adults either (Irwin, 2008). In most European countries, teaching methods for adults are not included in the initial training of future teachers at a primary, lower secondary, or upper secondary level. In most cases, teachers can further develop their skills for teaching adults by means of a system of continuous professional development (in Slovakia, in the education system of pedagogical and professional staff). At the same time, as stated by Španková & Grenčíková (2012), the education of the incarcerated does not only focus on passing on knowledge. Instead, it is a complex program of social rehabilitation whose goal is to restructure the learners' personalities by modifying their behaviour and habits.

A teacher in second-chance education teaches a different age group of students compared to what they were trained for during their undergraduate

studies. The incarcerated have very different levels of knowledge, skills, and life experiences, which can be a real challenge for those who were trained to teach children and youths with a comparable level of competence. Moreover, adult learners most often wish to acquire what they need to know rather than what someone demands of them (at least in the system of informal education and in the process of informal learning). Prison teachers, therefore, should have the competencies of adult educators at least at the basic level in order to be able to reflect the specifics of adult learning in the teaching process. They should understand the principles of adult learning at different ages, be aware of the basic concepts of adult education, the types and styles of education, as well as have knowledge of the theory of adult education (didactics). In addition, they should develop their own social competencies necessary for effective communication and cooperation with adult learners (Prusáková, 2005).

- 1) A teacher in the formal education of children and youths operates in the conditions described by Švec (1995, p. 32–34), presented below for a better understanding of the contrast between the prison environment and the group of adult incarcerated learners. It is an institutional form of managing the learning process of a specific number of students (mostly in groups or classes) or individuals by a single teacher.
- 2) As a rule, school education is methodically organized into homogeneous categories of students according to age, abilities, and interests into successive grades and groups.
- 3) The group form of learning prevails, in which the pace is set by the teacher, while the principles and techniques of frontal/monologic (rather than personal/dialogic) teaching are used.
- 4) The education is predominantly organized within a mediated, artificial, model (rather than in immediate, natural, or real-life) situations and conditions; in school education, model-situational learning prevails over real-situational learning.
- 5) The process is purposeful, controlled, planned, carried out, and evaluated at regular intervals.
- 6) School learning is hierarchically structured in sequences of learning tasks within the subjects taken during individual successive grades. Therefore, it applies principles of goal-thematic (so-called curricular) planning of teaching in stages and levels of the educational development of learners.
- 7) Education is carried out in the conditions of formal relationships with defined social roles and positions, adhering to the principles and

procedures of leading a class and maintaining discipline. It is characterized by the responsibility of those involved for learning outcomes and the possibility of assuring the quality of work and the degree of learning success.

In adult education, the situation is significantly different. An educator of adults cannot apply such procedures that are characteristic for the education of children and youths, as it would jeopardize the effectiveness of teaching and the achievement of educational goals. For this reason, the following section presents the basic rules of adult education (Machalová, 2004), contrasts them with selected elements of teaching children and youths, and applies them to the teaching of incarcerated adults:

- 1) Partnership rule. The education of the incarcerated is to be based on the principle of equality and cooperation between the teacher and the participants in education. For the effectiveness of the educational process, it is necessary for the teacher to be a partner rather than an authority. Justová (2009, p. 72–73) holds a similar opinion, claiming “the education of adults is based on peer support rather than directive rules.” According to her, “[...] those imprisoned, just like any adult individuals, perceive authoritative action as an attack; they do not accept or learn forcibly imposed values.” In contrast, according to Švec (1995), in conventional schooling, the education process is teacher-oriented and subject/content-oriented rather than focused on the learner’s personality.
- 2) The rule of reciprocity. In adult education, emphasis is placed on reciprocity in communication between the educator and the participants in education, as well as among the participants. In the teaching of incarcerated adults, the principles of personal-dialogic teaching should prevail over frontal-monologic teaching, which, as mentioned above, is dominant in the education of children and youths.
- 3) Rule of shared responsibility. When teaching adults, both educators and participants are responsible for the course and results of education. Emphasis is placed on the participation, activity, and cooperation of those involved in education. Those who teach the incarcerated, thus, should not lose the sense of responsibility for the course and results of the education process simply because they work in more demanding conditions and are often limited in their activities. In contrast, in conventional schooling,

the primary responsibility for the course and results of education lies with the teacher.

- 4) The rule of respecting psychological difference (otherness). This rule refers to respecting the individual characteristics of the teacher and those educated, accepting uniqueness and otherness in thinking, feeling, and behaviour. Due to the internal rules of the prison regime and in order to ensure security, prison teachers should also have basic information about the psychological characteristics of the prisoners participating in the education process. That should, however, also be preceded by specific pedagogical-psychological diagnostics carried out before the incarcerated enter education, which in Slovak correctional facilities is not the case. That might result in teachers choosing a strategy of distancing themselves from the students since they are unable to identify the causes of the problematic behaviour of the incarcerated.
- 5) The rule of credibility (of the participants) and trust (willingness to express themselves) stands for discretion and correct handling of information. A correctional facility has the right to ensure supervision and, for reasons of security, can insist on the presence of a member of the Corps of Judicial and Prison Guard in classes. In such conditions, it is only possible to observe the rule of trust if the security component is not directly present in the room where education takes place. In a conventional school, teachers are those in authority in the education of children and youths. If they manage to build it, the students trust in them, and the communication is characterized by openness and mutual support (Čonková, 2015).

The prison teacher primarily focuses on the participant and acts as a facilitator, while a plurality of styles, different learning strategies, and flexible forms of didactic communication dominate (Prusáková, 1999). Prusáková's (2005) model of andragogical competencies is generally accepted in Slovakia. It includes:

- professional competence (knowledge of the aspects of adult learning, the development of human resources, further education, goal setting, content creation, choice of methods, analysis of educational results and their evaluation, etc.),
- social competence (communicative and cooperative competencies, emotional flexibility, empathy, pedagogical tact, management skills, and decision-making),

- cognitive competence (searching for and structuring knowledge, production of new ideas, creative thinking, self-evaluation, and self-knowledge).

Buiskool *et al.* (2010) define the key competencies of teachers of adults on the basis of empirical research, which should be a reference framework for the European area of adult education. According to the same author(s) (Buiskool *et al.*, 2010), the competencies of an adult educator consist of:

- 1) generic competencies: personal, interpersonal, professional, specialist knowledge, didactic, competencies in supporting adult learners, in dealing with various people and groups,
- 2) specific competencies:
 - a) directly related to the education process: assessment of prior experience, learning needs, demands, motivation, and wishes of adult learners, designing the education process of adults, facilitating their learning, continuous monitoring and evaluation of the process, career advice, as well as life and further development, competence in creating study programs,
 - b) competencies supporting the education process: managing financial resources in adult education institutions, competencies in quality management, marketing and public relations competence, human resources, competencies in solving administrative problems, informing and supporting others, competencies in facilitating and supporting a learning environment based on information technologies.

In pedagogy and andragogy, the concept of competencies has been studied and sufficiently elaborated on for a long time. The area of competencies of teachers or educators of adults with specific learning needs is the subject of special pedagogical and andragogical disciplines (e.g. special pedagogy/andragogy, resocialization andragogy). There are differences between the education of incarcerated adults (i.e. second chance education) and education in conventional schools, especially in the dominant position of the teacher and teamwork (Meo & Tarabini, 2020). Yet, within the research authors of the present paper have carried out (Lukáčová *et al.*, 2018; Pirohová, Lukáč & Lukáčová, 2019), no record of team cooperation was found be it in the education of the incarcerated or in conventional second-chance education at large.

The level to which the requirements for what teachers should know, how they should prepare for class, and how they should behave in a class of

incarcerated adults are studied is insufficient, and so is the level of their theoretical elaboration in Slovakia. One of the few research studies conducted in this area is that by Lukáčová *et al.* (2018). It focused on the formal education of the incarcerated from a teacher's perspective, and the qualitative data showed that the teachers of the incarcerated expressed the need for training prior to entering the education process in a specific environment (prison) and in learning about the specifics of the group of people they were to educate. Inadequate training for a different group of learners in a different environment led the teachers to cautious behaviour and distance in their interaction with the incarcerated learners and, ultimately, prevented them from fully using the resocialization potential of education.

2. PRISON TEACHER

The question might arise as to why educators need to be trained to teach in prison. The answer to this question lies in the fundamental differences between education in schools operating in a free environment and prisons as total institutions. During their undergraduate studies, teachers-to-be are trained to teach students in accordance with the concept of creative-humanist education (Zelina, 1996). In prison, however, their activities are closely controlled and strictly regulated. The teaching process, the relationship between the teacher and the incarcerated learners, and the teacher's creativity in choosing appropriate forms, methods, and means of education are defined and often limited by the nature of the total institution. Messemer & Valentine (2012) identified two contextual dimensions that prison teachers must take into consideration when planning the teaching process – classroom characteristics and the safety imperative. Any decision the teacher makes is always within the security parameters set by the prison policy. The teachers' views of the education they bring with them are often incongruent with the prison culture. When entering the prison environment, teachers might experience something that can be compared to culture shock (Wright, 2005). These contradictions can become a source of stress for the prison teacher (Patrie, 2017). On the other hand, novice teachers may be fascinated by the new experience. At the beginning of their career, under the influence of this undoubtedly interesting and unconventional work, this exotic experience may influence their judgment about how prison education works (Wright, 2005). They can even romanticize their experience and the incarcerated learners in the classroom.

In European countries, the opinions on and approaches to the need and nature of teacher qualifications for the education of convicts vary. The discourse on this topic oscillates between two basic viewpoints:

- a) opinions that teachers must have specific competencies with regard to the characteristics of the target group and the prison environment;
- b) approaches that draw attention to the fact that the qualification prerequisites defined in this way imply that the incarcerated are a distinct category of learners who need to be approached differently (Hawley *et al.*, 2013).

Regardless of how narrow or broad it is, the system of university training of teachers-to-be is a key factor in the education of high-quality teachers, the quality of teaching, and the achievement of high-level educational outcomes at all school levels.

In foreign countries, more attention is paid to the training of prison teachers. In spite of the fact that a lot has been published about what should be taught and how, there is still a lack of research findings about the professional world of teachers in correctional facilities. Several authors point to the lack of interest in and support for prison teachers (e.g. Behan, 2021; Rangel Torrijo, 2019; Baratov, 2014). That is why the level of elaboration of pedagogical competencies necessary for teaching adults serving a prison sentence is insufficient. What dominates is research on the outcomes of education (Messemer & Valentine, 2012), studies into the characteristics of incarcerated learners (e.g. Addae, 2020), and the effectiveness of education (e.g. Muth, Sturtevant & Panno, 2017).

There are several inspiring publications, papers, and methodological manuals issued abroad that deal with teaching in prisons, the teachers training for this specific practice, reflection on their activities, as well as professionalism and support (e.g. Patrie, 2017; Hawley, Murphy & Souto-Otero, 2012; Hawley *et al.*, 2013; Messemer & Valentine, 2012; Hurkmans & Gillijns, 2012; Kendall *et al.*, 2010; Eggleston, 1991). Sayko (2005), for instance, explored what it is like to be a prison teacher through the lens of the conflict between imprisonment as a punishment and a place of rehabilitation. Ten years ago, Hawley, Murphy & Souto-Otero (2012) issued a report on the methods of training teachers for education in prisons in EU countries. Rogers, Simonot & Nartey (2014) published a valuable paper stating there is a lack of research into the profession and practice of prison teachers (educators), which confirms that teachers of the incarcerated are not paid enough attention. Therefore,

they carried out research addressing prison teachers in England. Wright's (2005) paper is also stimulating; she used the acculturation theory to consider the adaptation problems of 'novices' – teachers coming to teach in prisons. In this way, she pointed to the importance of reflection on one's own practice by teachers who have long-term experience in educating the incarcerated.

A continuous system of professional development for prison teachers could help them to better meet the needs of their students (Mathur, Clark & Schoenfeld, 2009). According to Hawley, Murphy & Souto-Otero (2012, p. 67–68), only four of the 26 observed European countries required prison teachers to have specialist qualifications. A slightly better situation was revealed by their research in the field of continuous education. Most countries reported that training was offered to prison teachers, but eight countries reported that no further training was provided to teachers while working in prison. Inadequate specific training can not only render prison teachers powerless, but it also often leads to a reduction in the effectiveness of education (Gehring & Puffer, 2004; Wright, 2005; Sayko, 2005). Prison teachers tend to apply practices used in conventional schools and, thus, also pursue the achievement of the same educational goals (Ravneberg, 2003). Inadequate adaptation of teaching goals and strategies to the conditions of the prison environment and the needs of the incarcerated, however, does not necessarily result from teachers unduly wishing to adhere to the procedures established in their practice at conventional schools. Training for teaching incarcerated adults and knowledge of the specifics of the prison environment and the incarcerated learners could contribute to the necessary transformation of traditional schools in prison into a space in which prisoners could develop not only the knowledge and skills necessary for the labour market but also wider and effective social adaptation on their release from prison, which could also contribute to a higher degree of work satisfaction on the part of the teachers.

3. TRAINING FOR TEACHING THE INCARCERATED

It is often stated that there is little information available about prison teachers, that very little attention is paid to them, that their work is very demanding, etc. Still, less is known about what a teacher (educator) of incarcerated adults should be like. Definitions of competencies prison teachers should possess are brief and only to be found in some foreign works (e.g. Rogers, Simo-

not & Nartey, 2004). Specific professional, methodological, and especially personal competencies are usually defined based on practical experience coming from long-term teaching in prison. A unique attempt to define the competence profile of a prison teacher in Slovakia can be found in the study by Temiaková (2020). The author analyzed the model of a teacher's competencies, as defined by Kasáčová & Kosová (2006), which could be a suitable starting point for research, analysis, and design of a competence model for teachers of incarcerated adults.

The ways in which teachers are trained to teach the incarcerated and how their competencies are continuously developed vary, as was described above. In some places, specific training is required from teachers before they start teaching in prison (initial training or pre-service training); in other places, a system of education is offered during the teachers' work in prison (on-the-job training or in-service training) (Behan, 2021). In some cases, both forms are available. Elsewhere (including Slovakia), no specific training is required or offered to them during their career as prison teachers. At the same time, there are a significant number of teachers of the incarcerated in Slovakia in formal education (primary, secondary), as the CJPG provides school education in several facilities throughout the country. Establishing, for the time being, an informal association of these teachers would, therefore, be worth considering. It would at least serve as a platform to exchange experience and good practice.

One of the more concise models of competencies was presented by Maeyer (2011). It defines the characteristics of a competent prison teacher who, in his view, stands for:

- an educator who is not a member of the prison guard,
- an educator who is sufficiently familiar with the life history of the inmates, which allows him/her to take into account the experience of the incarcerated in the teaching process,
- an educator who creates suitable conditions for learning (e.g. members of the guard cannot be present at the lessons, or even overtake the teacher's role).

In their handbook, Twiss & Hodgson (2008, p. 27–28) focused on novice teachers in several important dimensions. They provided several specific examples of solutions to problems typically arising during the education of the incarcerated. For instance, when setting educational goals, they recommend the following to be taken into account:

- the duration of the student's education,

- academic strengths and weaknesses of the students,
- the emotional state of the students, their level of attention, interpersonal skills, ability to manage anger and frustration,
- the educational and professional plans of the students on their release from prison and their personal interests,
- resources available in the classroom,
- the number of students in the class and the amount of time for individual help and support.

It is important for the teachers to realize that the motivation and activity of the incarcerated are significantly shaped by their lack of freedom and their desire for freedom. Therefore, one of the requirements for a prison teacher is the ability to respond realistically to the diverse needs of the inmates (Manger *et al.*, 2010). Since, at least in Slovakia, teachers are not trained to teach the incarcerated, they are condemned to find their own ways to accept and implement this new, specific, and often demanding role. Those who teach children and youths at primary and secondary schools are not ideal teachers of incarcerated adults. For this reason, Jarvis (2002) recommends training in ‘the art of teaching adults’ and emphasizes the need for such prison teachers who are sufficiently competent in andragogy as well as in the education of the incarcerated.

In some research studies, the teachers themselves expressed the need for specific training, especially before the start of their career as prison educators. Simonot *et al.* (2008) report that most teachers who participated in their research would appreciate specific training before teaching the incarcerated for the first time. They most felt the need to learn more about how to deal with specific issues and the demands of teaching in a prison environment. They were also interested in how to help the learners acquire specific skills. Thus, it could be said they felt a lack of knowledge in areas related to the prison environment and the specific characteristics of incarcerated learners. Other studies offer similar conclusions. For instance, the results of the paper by Reis-Jorge (2009) highlighted shortcomings in the training of teachers for working in penal institutions. The same author also lists the main areas in which education should help meet the developmental needs of the teachers, the educational needs of the learners, as well as the expectations of the prison system. Such education should include a range of topics related to prison culture and prison as an organization, as well as the culture of the prison

population. It should also cover theories of education, adult learning, and specific approaches to education focusing on incarcerated adults. Similarly, Jurich, Casper & Hull (2001) identified several areas in which prison teachers would like to be educated. This overview, albeit older, allows for a better understanding of the educational needs of teachers, which should result in possible and necessary interventions in their training and continuous development. Out of the ten most requested workshops that teachers expressed interest in, eight related to skills or knowledge development. The requested workshops included: learning styles, fundamentals of criminology, safety, classroom management, and communicative skills. Since most educators come to teach in prison with the experience of traditional education, much of their needs focus on how to adapt their current teaching styles to adult learners in a prison environment. The main areas in the training of prison teachers should, therefore, include the following:

- 1) Communicative skills:
 - a) problem solving,
 - b) de-escalation of tension,
 - c) non-verbal communication.
- 2) Understanding human behaviour:
 - a) dependencies,
 - b) psychology/psychopathology,
 - c) sociology and criminology.
- 3) Specialized teaching techniques:
 - a) teaching in a prison classroom,
 - b) learning disabilities,
 - c) heterogeneous classes,
 - d) differentiated group teaching (Patrie, 2017, p. 19).

In Canada, the trigger for the foundation of a training and mentoring program for teachers was the expansion of the capacities of correctional educational facilities. After its introduction, this program proved to be a successfully implemented system enabling the support of teachers of the incarcerated in all phases of their development. Therefore, this program has separate educational modules in the form of initial formal training, initial informal training, and ongoing informal training (Patrie, 2017). In this way, the educational needs of teachers of different specializations and different stages of their careers can be covered. Similarly, Mathur & Schoenfeld (2010) emphasize

the need for initial training as an invaluable source of knowledge for novice prison teachers. What is, however, also needed is a set of meaningful educational activities aimed at the professional development of those who already work with the incarcerated (the above-mentioned on-the-job training or in-service training).

Another example comes from West Virginia (USA), where those who wish to teach the incarcerated have to participate in a program for correctional educators. These people are not teachers at schools that carry out formal, second-chance education in prisons, but members of the prison staff, and prison employees at the Department of Education (in Slovakia, an equivalent of a prison pedagogue). Those who teach in core skills programs are then required to develop professionally both prior to and throughout their careers in compulsory and elective courses. For instance, they have to work for a certain number of hours in an institution providing adult education as well as in a correctional facility before they start their regular employment as a correctional educator (WVABE Instructor Handbook, 2013–14).

The above examples document the diversity of approaches to the professional career of prison teachers. Specific competence-development programs are usually part of teacher training in those countries where the penal system is extensively developed (such as the USA or Canada). The education of prison teachers is generally considered necessary and important.

CONCLUSION

The paper deals with the training of prison teachers. It points out that teacher training in this area is not a given, in spite of the fact that the professional literature is consistent in how important it is. In those countries where the system of training prison teachers has been in place for a long time, evaluation of such educational programs is also included. That is a key element in the implementation of educational activities for incarcerated adults. All those involved in education can benefit from the results of honest and regular evaluation of educational activities – teachers, the incarcerated, prison staff, as well as researchers, policymakers, and the lay public (Chalatsis, 2016). The results of the research study by Rogers, Simonot & Nartey (2014) also indicate that, in addition to the offer of education at various stages of professional development, it is necessary to deal with the quality of educational activities. In their investigation carried out in England, more than 50% of the incarcer-

ated were critical of the quality of the education provided. Therefore, when planning educational activities for prison teachers where none are provided, it is necessary to first carefully analyze their own learning needs, the learning needs of the learners, as well as the goals and needs of the penal institution. Ultimately, these goals (which, at first glance, might appear to be isolated) should be integrated into the complex goals of the social rehabilitation of the incarcerated.

Introducing the evaluation of formal education (as well as other types of education) in Slovak prisons could trigger necessary changes in the education of the incarcerated. It is not even known how effective the currently implemented educational activities are, whether they reflect the needs of the incarcerated, whether they meet the goals of the prison and how the teachers cope with the planning and implementation of educational activities. A true image showing the effectiveness of education could reveal the real face of prison education in Slovakia which might initiate relevant professional debate about the need for specific training of prison teachers.

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