



ROMANIAN ACADEMY
Romanian Academy School of Advanced Studies
Research Institute for Quality of Life

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Education, the foundation of training of prison staff

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SUMMARY OF MAIN IDEAS

The purpose of the research was to identify the aspects that require changing and adapting the professional training process to the national and international regulations in the field and to the concrete needs of the system, at the level of the research area in the North-East Region.

The approach to the research topic was carried out from the perspective of **classical functionalism**, in which the training of the penitentiary policemen was analysed as a social fact. The educational institutions responsible for preparing this professional category were analysed as socialising factors with a determining role of social change, and the education act was presented from the perspective of the transmission of information and intra- and intergenerational values. The overall objective of the training process has been described as homogenising professional behaviour, the emergence of social solidarity and attachment to the group. Within the framework of the work, this purpose consists in defining the professional identity and the unitary professional training at the level of the European area.

Interdisciplinary analysis involved the use of concepts specific to pedagogy, psychology and criminology.

Keywords: education, training, policeman, updating, school, need, law

Framing the research topic in the social universe in the prison environment

The progress of the penitentiary systems has also been accompanied by the diversification of the employees' typology.

In Romania, after 1989, the penitentiary system has evolved rapidly and asymmetrically, with practical initiatives preceding the emergence of regulatory acts. Thus, successive time sequences implied readjustments in the field of human resources as well.

The demilitarisation, which began in September 2004, coincided with the change of the unit's profile from a punitive to a humanist one. The situation has led to increased heterogeneity in staff training.

2006 marked the beginning of the development of working tools adapted to the prison environment: programmes, projects, guides, manuals, brochures, evaluation and

monitoring tools. The documents also contributed to the initial and ongoing training of staff.

The peculiarities of the period 2016-2018, in terms of events and their effects on human capital, were also the motivation of the choice of the research theme. In a period of increased staff mobility, 43.56% outgoing and 33.7% new employees (National Prison Administration, 2016, p.32; 2017, p. 34, 35; 2018, p. 34; 2019, p. 36; 2020, p. 46), the new generation was challenged to adapt to the working environment, manage and overcome the situation created by the Covid pandemic 19.

Objectives of research

The scientific objectives of the study consisted of:

- O.G.1 Evaluation of the process of initial and ongoing training of prison guards in order to identify training needs, particularities and malfunctions;
- G.2. Identifying the directions of development (strengths and weaknesses) of the training process for prison guards;
- G.3. Identifying the views of the prison guards on the process of general education and specific training (initial and continuous);
- G.4. Development of a draft occupational standard;
- G.5. Development of recommendations on the initial and ongoing training process.

Research methodology

The applied exploratory analysis was focused on the knowledge of training needs, particularities and dysfunctions of the training process for finding reasoned solutions on updating the initial and continuous training of the prison guards. Complementarity of investigation methods (Mărginean, 2000, p. 126 and Vlasceanu, 2008, p. 21) was achieved by using in research: sociological survey by questionnaire, study of documents and analysis of statistics of institutions in the field.

We used non-probabilistic sampling in view of ensuring the representativeness and relevance of the study group in relation to the research topic. The socio-demographic criteria for the selection of the sample were: group of membership, age, completed studies.

Summary of chapters

The thesis is structured in 6 chapters, which ends with a set of own conclusions that contributed to the general conclusions of the work.

The first chapter was intended to present the conceptual and theoretical framework that guided the approach throughout the work, starting from classical functionalism, elements of adult education and detailing the specific concepts of the professional training of prison guards. The presentation of several types of training programmes from the Romanian, European and international space was aimed at facilitating comparisons for identifying particularities and common guidelines.

The second chapter focused on the presentation of the characteristics of the working environment that implies specific skills and competences for carrying out current activities. The history of the penitentiary institution in Romania from 1989 to 2020 has also highlighted the changes in human resources and professional training. The general risks and vulnerabilities, added to those of the analysed period, indicated the need to recruit and select candidates with a specific psycho-emotional profile. The way in which the human rights of convicts and employees are respected revealed the humanist vision of prisons, but also the fears about the risk of a potential imbalance of authority.

The third chapter was intended to present the normative framework in the field of professional training of prison guards at international and national level for making comparisons between the regulations of this activity, the types of employees and training institutions, intergenerational differences. Studies conducted at international and national level have demonstrated the need to update the professional training of prison employees and the current state of research in this area, estimated as early (Añaños et al., 2021, p. 11 and Românu and Tudoroiu, 2019, p. 33-34). *The originality* of the thesis consists in the radiography of the professional training process.

Chapter Four was devoted to presenting the methodology used in research: the motivation of the choice of the theme, its purpose and objectives, research questions, research dimensions, operationalisation of concepts, research methods and techniques used. By corroborating the data obtained from the analysis of social documents, the sociological survey through the questionnaire and the analysis of statistical data, we obtained an X-ray of the initial and continuous professional training activity, but also an insight into the general education responsible for the information baggage and the qualities of the candidates aspiring to the status of penitentiary police.

Chapter Five was intended to present the results of the content analysis of the 50 European and national documents governing vocational training and the analysis of statistics provided by human resources and vocational training structures in the research area of the North-East Region. The analysis revealed the relationship between the major topics of interest for the Romanian and European prison system and the specific topics in the field of human resources and professional training.

In chapter six we presented the results of the field research. The first sub-chapter described the construction of the questionnaire, the ethical elements in research, the limitations and difficulties of the study and the solutions adopted. The second sub-chapter covered the views of prison guards on the role of general education in the career orientation towards the prison system and their opinion on initial and continuing training. In the third sub-chapter were presented the conclusions resulting from the content analysis of the official documents and the questionnaire investigation, conclusions that supported the need for skills training in line with the specificity of the prison activity, guided and limited by fixed rules.

Conclusions

Professional training in penitentiary systems in the European area varies from state to state in terms of: length of training period, methods of evaluation and appointment to function, relationship between theoretical and practical training. However, Member States' training regulations follow similar lines of action established at international level.

Polls conducted in international and European prison systems have highlighted the need for employees to learn, especially through practical experimentation. This need for training was also confirmed by the responses of the 316 research subjects.

The cross-border mobility of the general population in the European area has also caused dysfunctions in prison systems. The solutions adopted by the administrations of each state were to create a single coordinating body, create common working tools, digitise for efficient time management and reduce bureaucracy. These actions have highlighted the need for uniform training for staff working in European prisons.

Although specified in the text of the Methodology for the professional training of the Romanian penitentiary system staff, the mentorship activity was insufficiently exploited for the employees in the analysed period (2016-2018) due to the limited period of time necessary for intergenerational learning. Background which, complemented by the

data obtained in the sociological survey, has shaped the need to complement and diversify this type of training.

The ambiguity of the role of the personnel in the detention units, their numerical domination by the group of convicts, the long duration of the time spent in the penitentiary environment are the factors favouring the process of behavioural contagion, the decrease of the labour efficiency and the appearance of disorders of the homeostatic balance. The results of the sociological survey support the need for socio-emotional education, knowledge of the notions of social psychology and the development of the ability to solve the moments of vulnerability through effective communication and practical exercise.

Respondents in the research area have made proposals to make training and ongoing activities more effective through digitalisation. The solutions offered can be implemented with benefits in compensating human capital, reducing working time and reducing bureaucracy.

The humanist view of the execution of prison sentences and the promotion of restorative justice as a remedy and a measure of accountability for all the parties involved also implies an intensification of the existing formative practices in the field of human rights, professional ethics and ethics.

The replies of the respondents in the sociological survey through the questionnaire indicated the value of general education in the professional orientation towards the profession of penitentiary police. It is an argument that advocates an individualised education since the period of small school, in which the educator is the first professional advisor of the individual in training.

Personal Contributions

The development of an *occupational standard model for specialised functions* encompassing the specific competencies of the penitentiary environment, the thematic plan and the curriculum of the dual-status penitentiary policemen is one of the innovative elements of the study.

The second innovative element is the *formulation of the proposal to introduce the socio-emotional education of staff* for the development of interpersonal skills, self-knowledge and increased capacity for self-control, which can also be implemented through a public-private partnership.

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