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# The Profile of the Inmates' Adult Educator: A Greek Case Study

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**Abstract**
The inmates' adult educator implements the principles of adult education in the enclosed prison environment and makes efforts to reintegrate them socially. In Greece, inmates' adult educators mainly work in Second Chance Schools (SCS) operating in prisons. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the role of the inmates' adult educator at the Second Chance School of Chania Prison. The qualitative method was used in this research. According to the results of the survey, the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison believe they need to have knowledge of the principles of adult education as well as of the prison system. In addition, they perceive the skills to delimit their relationship with prisoners, empathic and problem-solving skills as decisive. Finally, the attitudes of accepting and respecting prisoners are fundamental for the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison.

**Keywords:** Prison Education, Role of the Inmates' Adult Educator, Second Chance Schools in Prisons

## 1. Introduction

Inmates' education is intended to improve the lives of inmates both during their sentence and after their release. Of course, the purpose of inmates' education is not perceived by everyone in exactly the same way. Thus, while Costelloe and Warner (2008) and Behan (2007) consider that the primary purpose of inmates' education is to reduce the devastating effect on prisoners of the incarceration, Magos (2014) highlights the transformational role of education in prison. On the other hand, Schuller (2009) points out that inmates' education should prepare inmates for professional rehabilitation and employment after serving the sentence.

Undoubtedly, inmates' education has a great value and multiple benefits for the inmates themselves, but also for the whole society. According to Tewksbury and Stengel (2006), inmates' education leads to increased self-esteem. Still, the chances for professional employment of inmates are 13% higher for those who have attended an educational program in prison comparing to those who did not attend (Rand Corporation, 2013). According to the Council of Europe (1990), inmates' education contributes a) to reducing the devastating consequences of the imprisonment of the prisoners, b) to compensating for the previous incomplete and negative educational experiences of the inmates before their imprisonment and c) the inmates' reformation.

The effectiveness of inmates' education is also considered to be of key importance at the macroeconomic level (Hrabowski & Robbi, 2002; Bazos & Hausman, 2004). Thus, Langelid et al. (2009) report that inmates' education costs only one packet of cigarettes per day for each inmate in Scandinavia. In the study (meta-analysis) of Rand Corporation (2014) in the USA, the main finding is that inmates' education is not only effective but also cost-effective. The European Commission (2011), however, points out that in inmates' education should be adopted not only an economically beneficial (Cost Benefit Analysis) but also a social approach.

Of course, many obstacles arise in inmates' education. First of all, from the existing educational inequalities experienced by the inmates as students in the formal education system (Vergidis, 2014) and secondly from the prison conditions themselves (Tsimboukli & Fillips, 2010; Papaioannou, Anagnou, & Vergidis, 2016). In addition, factors that impede the learning process in prisons are the bureaucratic procedures of the prisons, prison regulations, bad behavior and disobedience of prisoners and harassment of educators (Kabeta, 2017).

As far as the relation between the inmates' education and recidivism is concerned, it seems to be inversely proportional. Rand Corporation (2013) concludes that inmates who participated in educational programs in prisons are 43% less likely to recidivate after their release than those who did not participate in such programs. However, Ubah (2005) and Gaes (2008) consider that a variety of factors affecting social reintegration should be explored, not just the rates of recidivism in crime. Also, Costelloe and Warner (2008) in a critical view of the concept and function of the prison consider that the prison institution itself "nourishes" the crime and leads to recidivism of the prisoners. Finally, Wright (2014) reports that the close linking of inmates' education with low rates of recidivism is explained by the fact that the same process of education limits the devastating consequences of the stigmatization of the identity of the prisoners.

## 2. The inmates' adult educator

Despite the importance and effectiveness of inmates' education, especially in relation to reducing recidivism, inmates' adult educators do not enjoy special professional recognition either high appreciation (Sayko, 2005).

The incentives of inmates' adult educators to engage in this profession are usually internal and have as a common denominator the willingness to offer to the vulnerable group of the inmates (Bannon, 2014).

The inmates' adult educator plays at the same time many, different and demanding roles. At the same time, the inmates' adult educator must be a) an adult educator, b) an educator of a vulnerable social group, c) an inmates' educator and d) an educator at a Second Chance School in some cases, such as in Greek reality.

### 2.1 The role and qualifications of the inmates' adult educator

First of all, it is remarkable that the inmates' adult educators are not prepared for the cultural shock that they will experience within the prison environment (Wright, 2005). Also, many are inadequate to cope with inmates with learning difficulties, behavioral problems and disabilities (Kvarfordt, Purcell & Shannon, 2004, cited in Ely, 2011). Also, several inmates' adult educators have been trained with old fashioned and more inefficient methods (Desir & Whitehead, 2010; Bayliss & Hughes, 2008).

Undoubtedly, however, the role of the inmates' adult educator is very important and decisive, especially in the relationship between inmates' education and low rates of recidivism (Wright, 2014).

The success of the inmates' adult educator lies in his role as mediator, that is to say in his ability to perceive the difficulties of the group and transform them into learning opportunities (Mezirow, 2007· Giannakopoulou, 2008).

Humor, dignity, real interest and respect for inmates are mentioned as necessary qualifications of the inmates' adult educator (Carr, 2000; Keen & Woods, 2015).

Nahmad-Williams (2011) reports that the necessary skills an inmates' adult educator must have, according to the results of her research in England, are a) the ability to cope with the inmates' attempt to manipulate the educators, b) the ability to understand the security conditions, c) the demonstration of a strong character, d) the ability to work with many restrictions, e) the ability to adapt to work status for two supervisors (education and penitentiary institution) and f) the ability not to disclosure personal information.

Inmates' adult educator should also stimulate the human existence and the dignity of his pupils (Jarvis, 2005). In fact, in prisons, where the population is not uncultivated (Vergidis, Asimaki & Tzintzidis, 2007), this translates as a tremendous need for the educator to have intercultural skills. It is therefore imperative that the inmates' adult educator demonstrates respect and acceptance to inmates with a different background (Desir & Whitehead, 2010; Magos & Simopoulos, 2010).

In addition, Walker (2016) considers that educators should not constantly ask about their inmates, their lives and behavior, but familiarize themselves with the mystery surrounding the inmates' lives and focus on their work purpose.

Gehring and Wright (2006) propose some reflective principles and practices for inmates' adult educators, stressing that the one-dimensional and dogmatic educational principles and practices such as "all fit for everyone" or "that's always the right one" fail.

Finally, Sayko (2005) refers that the inmates' adult educators should be careful not to allow the hostility of the prison environment to become part of their educational attitude.

*2.2 The role of the adult educator in SCS*
Inmates' adult educator in Greece, as an SCS adult educator, should promote the labor and social inclusion of inmates, negotiate their needs, interests, and expectations, encourage them, develop a positive relationship with them, and promote their active participation in the educational process (Vergidis, 2003).

Also, the European Commission's report on SCS points out that demonstration of empathy, compassion and the development of constructive relationships between educators and trainees is a determinant factor for the successful operation of SCS (Commission of the European Communities, 2001).

**3. Second Chance Schools in Greek Prisons**

There are currently 11 SCS in Greek prisons. More specifically, in 2004, the innovative institution of SCS was also introduced in prisons and the first school operated in the Judicial Prisons of Larissa. Since 2005, SCS has been established in several prisons in the country, such as Korydallos Attikis, Grevena, Trikala, Nigrita Serres, Diavata Thessaloniki, Patras, Eleonas Thebes, Domokos Fthiotida and Malandrino Fokidas. From 2016, the 2nd SCS of Chania city has been operated in the Agia prison (Crete).

Nevertheless, according to Anagnou and Vergidis (2008), although theoretically all SCS (inside and outside prisons) should be included in the strategy of social and professional development and social exclusion, this happens only with the case of SCS in prisons.

*3.1 The SCS of Chania Prison*

The SCS of Chania Prison is the 2nd SCS of Chania city and operates from 2016 at the General Detention Department "Crete I" in Agia town (Chania). Due to the recent startup of the school, the data for educators and inmates is not much. Thus, the students in the school year 2017-2018 were about 42 inmates in the two cycles of

studies. Their age ranged from 19 to 60 years. Inmates of Chania Prison often transfer to Korydallos Prison in Athens.

## 4. Research methodology

This section presents the research methodology.

### 4.1 Research question

The research question was: What knowledge, skills, and attitudes do the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison think are necessary in order to cope with their role?

### 4.2 Research Method - Strategy - Research Tool

The data collection method was qualitative because the purpose of the research is to investigate and understand a central theme (Creswell, 2011). The research strategy followed is a case study, since it concerns the inmates of a particular SCS, that of Chania Prison during the school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. According to Robson (2010), a case study is more a research strategy than a research method and focuses on a phenomenon in its context. This strategy was chosen because the SCS educational framework and the prison environment are very important and also difficult to be accessed by the researcher (Yin, 2003).

According to Mason (2003), the data collection technique or better the data production technique was the semi-structured interview, a tool that enables the sequence of questions to be modified (Cohen & Manion, 1994), the choice of emphasis in the most essential aspects of each respondent (Fylan, 2005; Robson, 2010), but requires critical communication skills from the interviewer (Galletta, 2013). Therefore, this tool has been chosen as the most appropriate to highlight the views of the participants.

### 4.3 The participants in the survey

The participants of the survey were the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison during the school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. All participants (convenience sampling) were 12 inmates' adult educators, 4 of whom worked in the SCS of Chania Prison during the school year 2016-2017, while 8 worked in the school year 2017-2018. These include the SCS Director and the Career Advisor. With regard to the work situation of the inmates' adult educators, 4 were permanent educators, 4 were hourly paid, and the rest 4 were volunteers. As for gender, 3 educators were men and 9 women. The age of the participants ranged from 33 to 58. Undoubtedly, the participants in this survey do not represent the entire population of adult inmates of SCS in Greece, and consequently, the research results are not generalizable.

### 4.4 Data analysis method

Content analysis was used as the method of analyzing the data resulting from interviews. In the thematic analysis, the focus is on concepts, meanings or themes, which refer to the phenomenon under study and how it is perceived by the participants in the research (Tzani, 2005). Also, the content analysis includes the process of locating, coding and categorizing complex and often contradictory data (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 2014). Furthermore, the thematic content analysis allows quantification of the results (Trowler, 1996; Vamvoukas, 2002) which was attempted in this research.

## 5. Results

This section presents the results of the survey.

*5.1 Knowledge necessary for the work of the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison*

The knowledge the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison consider necessary, and the frequency of their reporting in the survey are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Knowledge necessary for the inmates' adult educators of SCS of Chania Prison (school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018)

| Knowledge Category | Frequency of reports |
|---|---|
| Principles of adult education | 6 |
| Prison system/imprisonment effects | 6 |
| Teaching subject | 3 |
| Modern educational techniques | 2 |
| Behavioral management of inmates | 1 |

N=12

As expected, half of the sample educators indicated that they perceived the knowledge of the principles of adult education as necessary for their work. Thus, Inmates' Educator 1 (IE1) considers that the knowledge of adult education is necessary for inmates' adult educators, as well as for adult educators who work in an SCS out of prison: "Look, there are no differences between inmates and non-inmates in an SCS. [...] That is knowledge of adult education ".

Also, half of the educators of the SCS of Chania Prison made special reference to the knowledge of the prison context and the difficulties involved in the imprisonment. For example, IE9 states that she needs to know the boundaries and the ethics of the prison area: "It is certainly good to know a little about the context of the prison [...]to know the boundaries and the ethics of an area", while IE11 focuses on the knowledge of the difficulties involved in the imprisonment: "We must first know the difficulties of imprisonment. How is it to live in a prison? "

In addition, three educators have clearly stated that the knowledge of their teaching subject is essential for the effective completion of their work. Thus, according to IE8, the educator must be fully trained in his / her cognitive subject: "The educator should know first of all his / her subject."

Two educators referred to the need to learn modern teaching techniques for adults. As IE4 stated: "Certainly you should have a very good knowledge of modern teaching techniques aimed at adults and of course an inmate with psychological characteristics and imprisonment you cannot approach him with a simple lecture or even with a dry dialogue."

Also, one answer concerns more specific issues, such as knowledge of the behavior of inmates. In particular, IE7 states for the inmates' educator that: "He/She must know precisely the way in which he/she has to manage their behavior not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom of his / her students."

In the next section, we present the results regarding the skills that the inmates' adult educators of the sample consider necessary for the implementation of their work.

*5.2 Skills necessary for the implementation of the work of the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison*

The skills the educators consider necessary for the implementation of their educational work in the SCS of the Chania Prison are presented aggregated in Table 2.

Table 2. Skills necessary for the inmates' adult educators of SCS of Chania Prison (school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018)

| Skills category | Frequency of reports |
|---|---|
| Delimitation of the relationship between educators and inmates | 5 |
| Empathy | 4 |
| Flexibility | 4 |
| Problem Management | 3 |
| Understanding | 3 |
| Interpersonal skills | 3 |
| Use of active and participatory educational methods | 3 |
| Creating an interactive framework | 2 |
| Mobilization of interest | 1 |
| Creating Micro Instruction | 1 |
| Speech skills | 1 |
| Conflict resolution | 1 |
| Balance between the two contexts (education/prison) | 1 |

N=12

First of all, a basic skill for 5 of the 12 educators is the ability to set and maintain limits on their educational relationship with the inmates. IE4 refers to the need to respect the limits with a clear example from the prison's daily education: "Another aspect [..] is the limits you put. Since it's a school, there must be some limits, i.e., the arrival time, the departure time, the duration of the break, whether the inmates will come in the classroom or get out of it. "

Another skill that the inmates' adult educator should have is the management of problems and situations. For example, IE5 states that educators should be able to manage their relationship with trainees: "... to handle various situations that may arise therein, in the relationship between educator and trainee. [..] over there the educator must have management skills, .. ".

IE5 refers to the need to have interpersonal skills: "Personal, interpersonal skills."

In addition, 4 of the 12 respondents underlined the importance of empathy. Characteristic are the words of IE3: "For a trainee in the SCS that is not appropriate... There we have to see it ... to have a little empathy and perceive it, to be able to interpret it. In the sense that they are people who may have their delinquency ... psychopathology, [...] have used drugs ... ".

The skill of flexibility is considered significant for 4 of the 12 interviewees. For example, IE6, referring to the heterogeneity of the prison population, argues that the educator should be flexible and adaptable to his / her teaching objectives: "to adapt teaching objectives to students who are highly heterogeneous, because they are from different countries, from a different cultural level."

At the same time, a skill reported by three respondents is the skill of using alternative educational techniques. Thus,  IE10 states that the educator should avoid the teacher-centered style and adopt more student-centered techniques: "For teaching techniques, this teacher-centered style does not help anywhere. [..] More ... student-centered let's say procedures. "

A similar skill is underlined by 2 participants and involves creating ways of interacting within the group of inmate trainees.

Also, 3 of the 12 inmates' adult educators emphasize the importance of understanding skills. In fact, IE11 refers to Alan Rogers' advice: "This reminds me of Rogers' advice: Stop talking and listen. First, it is to be able to hear people and understand what they have to say to you. "

Individual skills are also mentioned. Thus, IE2 notes the skill of provoking the interest of inmates-trainees: "The role is to draw the attention of your class, [...] to find an incentive to convince them to try ...". In addition, IE4 considers necessary the inmates' adult educator's ability to balance between the prison and education system. As she reports: "Prison is a very difficult environment in which you are in very delicate balances ...". Also, IE6 quotes the skill of creating micro-instructions: "I need to know how to make a micro-instruction ...". IE8 mentions speech skills: "skills concerning the use of language," while IE12 emphasizes the importance of conflict resolution skills: "... some skills [...] are probably seminars for conflict resolution ... especially because there are [...] too many nationalities in prison conflicts may arise".

In the next section, we present the results regarding the attitudes that the educators of the sample consider necessary for the accomplishment of their work.

*5.3 Attitudes necessary of the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison for the successful implementation of their work.*

The attitudes an educator must have in the SCS of Chania Prison towards the inmates, and the educational process are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The necessary attitudes of the educators of the SCS Prison of Chania (school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018) for the successful implementation of their work

| Attitudes category | Frequency of reports |
| --- | --- |
| Acceptance | 7 |
| Respect | 5 |
| Sincerity | 2 |
| Friendly mood | 2 |
| Open to the educational process | 2 |
| Without fear or pity | 2 |
| Love | 2 |
| Discretion / Confidentiality | 2 |
| Responsibility | 2 |
| Commitment to the project | 1 |
| Consistency | 1 |
| Sensitivity | 1 |
| Other | 1 |

N=12

First of all, an important attitude for 7 of the 12 educators is the attitude of accepting inmates. IE4 considers that the educator must first accept the inmate, in order to become accepted by the inmate-trainee: "... to accept basically that his world is a bit different from yours [..] So, you have to enter [...]their own way of thinking to be able to communicate and become accepted. "

Also, 5 of the 12 educators underline the importance of respect for inmates and the prison context. IE9 understands respect as follows: "Respect for us and respect for prisoners."

IE5 states that the educator should be open to the educational process: "to be open to the process of education."

In addition, IE2 states that educators should not be afraid of or sorry for the prisoners: "…there must be no fear[…] or pity. We are not to be sorry for them".

IE2 is also in favor of a friendly attitude: "The relationship between educator and student in a friendly, polite, yet delicate way."

Also, IE7 stresses the importance of sincere attitude towards the inmates: "I have come to the conclusion that the attitude towards my students must be characterized by sincerity."

Two educators consider it necessary to love their profession. IE11 refers to the importance of this attitude: "Ah, you must love what you do."

Also, 2 educators refer to the attitudes of discretion and confidentiality. For IE2, discretion is very important: "... discretion certainly [..] we do not ask or if they tell some personal data you try to pass them by". Concerning confidentiality, IE11 points out: "You have to be discreet."

IE12 considers that the educator should be characterized by a commitment to their duty and consistency: "they must certainly be very committed to their work [..] to be consistent with what they say".

IE8 considers that the educator should operate without taking into account the prison environment and the conditions of detention: "They should forget that they are prisoners [..] in the program I just try to remove the prison environment". On the contrary, IE7 supports the demonstration of sensitivity to prisoners: "You must be sensitized to feel these people."

Finally, two educators report a commitment to responsibility. IE2 considers that anyone who chooses to work in prison education to avoid a lot of work will fail: "... a teacher who will see the SCS in prison [..] as an opportunity, [..] to shirk, will not succeed there ".

Below are the conclusions of the survey.

## 6. Conclusions

This section summarizes the main findings of the survey:
- Inmates' adult educators consider that the necessary knowledge for the implementation of their work in the SCS of Chania Prison concerns:
  a) principles of adult education,
  b) prison system/consequences of imprisonment. The conclusion is also confirmed by other researchers (Wright, 2005; Nahmad-Williams, 2011; Lekaditi, 2012; Zygogianni, 2014; Walker, 2016)
  c) the cognitive subjects being taught,
  d) modern educational methods of adult education. The importance of modern educational methods has been highlighted by other researchers (Vergidis, 2003; Gehring & Wright, 2006; Desir & Whitehead, 2010; Nahmad-Williams, 2011),
  e) behavior management of inmates-trainees. The finding is confirmed by other studies (Lekaditi, 2012; Patrie, 2017).

  Our sample did not mention knowledge of the local labor market and the conditions of local society (Karalis & Kokkos, 2008; Vergidis, 2008; Taliadorou, 2008; Demunter, 2003).

- The skills that the inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison consider to be necessary are

primarily skills:
   a)   of delimiting their relationship with inmates-trainees. Similar findings have been reported by the West Virginia Adult Education (2017), Gasouka (2006) and Zygogianni (2014),
   b)   of empathy. This skill has been highlighted by the European Commission (2001) and by many researchers (Wright, 2005; Jameson, 2008; Zygogianni, 2014; Touloumi, 2016; Christoforou, 2016; Patrie, 2017),
   c)   of flexibility (Ely, 2011),
   d)   regarding problem management. Also reported as necessary by Tsimboukli (2008), Nahmad-Williams (2011) and Patrie (2017),
   e)   of understanding,
   f)   of creating a context of interaction,
   g)   of using active and participatory education methods,
   h)   interpersonal skills  (Themeli, 2010).

Skills, which are mentioned less often are: (a) mobilization of interest (Keller, 2000; Desir & Whitehead, 2010), (b) use of micro-instructions (not identified in similar surveys), c) speech skills (Gasouka, 2006), d) conflict resolution (Courau, 2000) and e) balance between two contexts, education and prison (Wright, 2004; Nahmad-Williams, 2011).

In this research skills that have not been recorded by the sample are intercultural skills (Vergidis, Asimaki & Tzintzidis, 2007; Magos & Simopoulos, 2010), humor skills (Carr, 2000; Nahmad-Williams, 2011; Keen & Woods, 2015) and skills of connecting the content of education with local labor market and conditions of local society (Karalis & Kokkos, 2008; Vergidis, 2008; Taliadorou, 2008).

▪   The attitude of inmates' adult educators of the SCS of Chania Prison towards the inmates and the educational process should be characterized by:
   a)   acceptance. This is confirmed by several researchers (Wright, 2005; Tsimboukli & Fillips, 2010; Desir & Whitehead, 2010; Freire & Shor, 2011; Zygogianni, 2014; Touloumi, 2016),
   b)   respect. The attitude of showing respect is also found in other similar surveys (Carr, 2000; Zygogianni, 2014; Keen & Woods, 2015; Touloumi, 2016; Papaioannou, Anagnou, & Vergidis, 2016);
   c)   sincerity,
   d)   friendly mood,
   e)   love,
   f)   discretion and confidentiality. Discretion and confidentiality are considered necessary by Nahmad-Williams (2011), Zygogianni (2014) and West Virginia Adult Education (2017),
   g)   commitment to the work and consistency,
   h)   sensitivity and responsibility. The responsible and sensitive attitude of educators is highlighted by Ely (2011) and by Bennett (2008).

Also, the educator should be open to the educational process, try to ignore the consequences of imprisonment and not to show fear or pity for the prisoners. These two last attitudes have not been found in other similar surveys.

In conclusion, as shown by the reports of the sample of this research, the role of inmates' adult educators is not only very demanding but also crucial for the outcome of the educational process in an SCS operating in prison. In order to cope with their role, it is necessary that the educators have a set of appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Therefore, crucial is both the appropriate choice of inmates' adult educators and their continuous training, in order to cope with their complex work.

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