

18.06.2021

EDUPRIS WEBINAR

Content of the webinar

Format: online

Number of participants: 70

Profile: facilitators, academia, penitentiary staff, psychologists, education sciences specialists

Time: 11-13 CET

Host: Dr Bianca Dramnescu & Professor Florin Lobont

The EduPris Webinar was held online on Zoom, on the 18th of June 2021. The format was semi-structured with few short talks and foresaw the active engagement from participants regarding an exchange of knowledge and best practices. The online presence averaged around 70 participants who either listened or spoke throughout the event and provided valuable input from different professional perspectives, allowing for main hurdles to be removed by one's addressing potential solutions. The participant group was made up of corrections/penitentiary staff: representatives from various prisons; academia (Babes Bolyay University Cluj, WUT, Iasi University etc); education sciences specialists, psychologists, social workers; facilitators; Iasi/Ploiesti/Buziaş/Craiova/etc; ANP; ANP Moldova.

Introduction was done by Dr Bianca Dramnescu who greeted & welcomed participants and introduced Professor Florin Lobont.

Professor Florin Lobont uttered his gratitude for the number of participants and said that it was great to see so much interest towards a subject not very often approached. Then he mentioned findings from previous event and the lack of dedicated correctional pedagogy programmes in academia for studying and implementing solutions for this important category of people.

- Introduction done for Professor Mihailă from Iaşi Univ with background in probations by Professor Florin Lobont.
- Should we blend juvenile education with special needs? One opinion would be NO because this would stigmatise the individuals even more. Therefore there are clear shortcomings of this proposal, says Professor Mihaila.

- We need solutions informed from practice says Professor Mihaila as she claims that a better link between education & corrections is needed.

Prof. Mihaila describes her main areas of interest: criminology & victimology; social assistance, family & child protection & academic research presentation

- Role of family climate in the desistance of young offenders
- Different methods of intervention
- Criminological research takes into account more factors in order to identify behaviours & social reactions of criminal policy and practice
- Discussion on typology on youth crime and juvenile delinquency
- Restorative justice – educational purpose for preventing crime
- Assisted desistance
- Desistance & victim protection
- Family climate & paradigm of desistance
- Negative family climate -> delinquency risk factor -> predictor of relapse
- Positive family climate -> protective or inhibitory factor -> predictors of rehabilitation
- Reduction of relapse risk in cases of sexual abuse – the objective is social rehabilitation and behavioural change
- Psycho-social interventions in the pre-liberatory stage – RRR program
- Process of change from a prosocial perspective – cognitive-behavioural approaches; social resources; opportunity to use the capacity of community interventions for rehabilitation;

Gary Hill: practitioner with “hands-on experience” since 1963! – ideas and experiences – how things are done & how they should be done:

- Role of security – the **guard** plays a crucial role for the target audience of EduPris
- Consistent across all of corrections systems – line-level CO who is in constant contact with the target group => huge influence potential

- Juvenile officer job description: besides maintaining order/safety/security – their job goes a little further and involves monitoring their health (physical and mental) and supervising their daily activities => observant
- Difference from adult officers – focus more on rehabilitation/role-modelling; have more of a youth mentoring function
- Actions must be consistently PROSOCIAL – respected adult who IS a role-model
- Mentoring has been shown to improve self-esteem; academic achievement; peer-relations -> helps reduce addiction and substance misuse and increases likelihood of (re)integration
- Staff must remember that everything they do and say is seen and heard – their role is not a performance of reacting to something at a particular time – **must be constant and consistent**
- Importance of celebrating the successes of the youth – discussed an example of staff who carry little coins to give to fellow staff or detainees who achieve something great – **physical symbol of achievement** – helps with sense of accomplishment
- Everything becomes a school/classroom – success can be determined by **what** you know, not **who** you know
- When we teach staff how to work with juveniles, we need to highlight boundaries, lines etc – can be explained and addressed as an educational process, not **orders**
- Respect to fellow staff must also be expressed – extremely important – one of the hardest things for those who have great power over others is to manage that power effectively
- Learn to listen – listening is a skill! – must be taught
- Education is a process that never stops
- Part of our job is help educate the prison staff on how to act and react

Dorin Muresan brings up EU crime statistics: over 10500 youth are held in CJF in EU

- Experience homelessness and come from precarious backgrounds
- Incarceration has a detrimental effect on their development

- The experience of incarceration as a youth increases chances of reoffending
- What is on *paper* is different to the reality of prison education

What affects the quality of it?

- Prison is about security and safety as a primary concern – high rate of both students & teacher turnover (students are not just students, they are inmates, might need to go to court, medical section etc affecting their attendance) & teachers are not staff who are dedicated specifically to the mission of teaching youth in detention
- Many students have had negative experiences with education
- There is no specific training available for teachers in the prison environment
- Teachers rely on computer programs that students might not know how to use!
- Teachers might falsely think that if you are familiar with a smartphone, you have advanced digital skills and have the ability to use digital education – in a prison environment this is truly a problem – **digital literacy is limited**
- Teachers often base instructions on textbook approaches and worksheets but should try and overcome deficits in their target audience through other evidence-based means
- Addressed various challenges and barriers from both perspectives (behavioural & academic) – how can they be overcome?
- Establish a positive relationship/environment – this is a trial-and-error process that involves all layers of staff
- Apply rigorous curriculum
- Decisions must be data/evidence informed – teachers should collect performance and diagnosis data from all their students – adjust the structures through which youth are engaged
- Intercultural education
- Flexible instructions & assessment that can be adapted to specific needs!
- **If you think education is expensive, wait until you see how much ignorance will cost in the 21st century!!!**

Florin Lobont is wrapping up presentations as he admits three different perspectives as he opens the floor for discussion and sharing experiences and for challenging questions:

What would the relationship between correctional education and special needs education be?

Should we integrate correctional education within special needs?

Would that add to the existing stigma?

Is this furthering the negative labelling of individuals?

Do social difficulties (that hold an individual back from education) class one as a special needs individual, despite one's not exhibiting cognitive deficits?

Gary Hill steps in and says that there is not one single profile!

Gianina Craciun (Deputy Rehab Director) says that we must acknowledge the individual profiles & must adapt social behaviours; juvenile justice has programmes related to instructions & behaviours and these should cover the social adaptability needs of youth in CJF

Florin Lobont: a legislative niche should be established and asks the question: "where does correctional pedagogy stand in other countries?"

Prof. Mihailă: we must acknowledge that individuals develop personality disorders as a result of contact with CJS

- 1 in 3 students have developed depression symptoms as a result of covid restrictions – we must ask what incarceration does to people
- If we go into psychiatric concerns – from the perspective of medico-legal expertise, we dive into forensic psychiatry – **medico-legal expertise attests ability to make decisions** – institutions must be prepared to support that individual – youth diagnosed with a psychiatric disability vs adults

We need a reform on what we understand through special needs – cultural differences/understanding; vs medico-legal practice; how can we bridge cultural gaps in what we understand by special needs, without necessarily linking them with disability and cognitive impairment

Gianina Craciun claims that there is a huge difference between juvenile education and adult education and concludes that none of them is special needs in the legal sense/not even in the cultural sense of it

Step 1 would be for us to have a discussion with Ministry of Education

Step 2 would be for us shift the outlook on the education of the masses

Step 3 would require us to carry on discussions with ANP as security personnel must be involved in such discussions, so that they understand their role as educators. Webinars like this one would need to target officers!

