

Good practice: Vocational education and training – New Approach for effective social inclusion

21st Century Skill connected:

Learning skills: Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication

Literacy skills: Information, technology

Life skills: Flexibility, initiative, productivity, social skills

Give an explanation of how this good practice works. Examples from websites, videos or other media are necessary.

Prison sentence have a significant impact and consequences both for the individual, and for the society as a whole. Prisoners are likely to suffer from housing lost, unemployment, family breakdowns and social exclusion. Emotionally, institutionalisation can lead to few opportunities to make decisions or take responsibility for their own actions.

Prisons as institutions and correctional facilities have a key role in mitigating such damages and in promoting rehabilitation of their inmates, but also in enabling capacities to improve their chances of easier and better reintegration in society, upon the completion of their sentence. This is especially important, since a significant proportion of crime is a result of recidivism. Therefore, it is of crucial importance, during serving the sentence, to address certain factors that might influence the prisoner's chances of returning to crime. In that sense, education and training are key aspects of rehabilitative role of prisons.

The importance of **education and training** for all prisoners, as fundamental human rights has been widely acknowledged at the international level. At European level, Protocol no. 1 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms states that "No person shall be denied the right to education"(Art. 2) and the European Social Charter (revised) sets out the right to work, the right to vocational guidance, and the right to vocational training. Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty recognised the rights of EU citizens through the enforcement of the Charter of Fundamental Rights; Article 14 of the Charter recognises that "everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training". In addition, the Council of Europe has also approved a number of recommendations relating specifically to prisoners, most notably the 1990 Recommendation on Education in Prison and the European Prison Rules.

Providing learning and training opportunities for prisoners can have widespread benefits for the individual and for the society as a whole. Given that, in most cases, amongst the prison population, levels of education tend to be low, with many prisoners lacking basic skills, as well as, literacy and numeracy, the provision of learning and training services can significantly address these gaps in basic skills. This works to strengthen the employability and vocational skills amongst the prison population, which would enable their easier and wider reintegration in society, as well as improve their chances to effectively compete at the labour market and find employment, which is seen as key factor in reducing the risk of returning to crime. In addition, social alienation and exclusion are almost inevitable outcomes of criminality; however, provision of education and training can help in the development of social capital among prisoners, enhance their social and personal skills and essentially alleviate the rehabilitation process and the transition from prison to the outside world, after their release.

Although there are 11 penitentiary institutions on the territory of North Macedonia, this practice applies to Stip Prison and Tetovo Prison, both covering East and West regions of Macedonia and prison population (18-65 years old) as well as different ethnic groups (Macedonians, Albanians, Roma and Turks)

This practise aims to increase the **activation and involvement of persons at risk of social exclusion in the labour market** by improving their skills, education, qualification and facilitating their full integration into the society and in particular their access to labour market. Due to the perception in society, people that have served a prison sentence often experience social exclusion, which prevents them and creates many difficulties when trying to enter the labour market.

In order to overcome this within the action certain educational and vocational programs tailored for the needs of these individuals (In Macedonian language) were developed and implemented:

- Three (3) tailor made **educational programs** specifically adapted for the needs of people serving prison sentence (program for acquirement of basic literacy, program for English language, and program for basic computer skills);
- Two (2) tailor made **vocational training programs** specifically adapted for the people serving prison sentence (cooking/bakery program and hairdressing program);
- One (1) **manual/toolkit with educational methods for working with people serving prison sentence.**

The courses are repeated several times during a period of 9 months, to ensure that as many prisoners get to participate in as many different courses. Each course has its own structure and timetable (Programs/curricula are attached as addition to the document).

More specifically, the three special tailor-made educational programs consist of:

- one 8- month course in basic literacy education for up to 10 illiterate persons in 1 group;
- one 3-month courses in basic knowledge of English language for up to 10 persons in 1 group
- one 2-month courses, in basic knowledge in computer skills for up to 20 prisoners in one group (also depending on the capacity of the prisons and equipment)

In addition:

- the two tailor-made vocational training programs consist of two 3.5-month courses, in acquiring cooking/bakery skills and competences, for up to 20 prisoners; and,
- two 4.5-month courses,, in acquiring barberry/hair-dressing skills and competences, for up to 20 persons

The approach of designing educational programs that are tailored specifically for the people serving prison sentence means that they will accurately target their needs providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences required to become more competitive on the labour market.

This programme creates a favourable environment for fast, easy and permanent reintegration in society of persons after serving their prison sentence.

Similar activities have been implemented in the period between 2008 and 2011 in both prisons in Tetovo and Stip.

At that period these activities were implemented and financed by DVV International and included several educational cycles that provided the prisoners with basic knowledge and skills in: using and working with computers, as well as in English language. These workshops also focused on providing vocational training, building the competences and the skills of the prisoners in the fields of:

- Woodcarving (in Tetovo)
- Cooking and bakery (in Shtip)

Explain how this good practice helps solve problems/stimulates social vocational skills in your country. If possible, provide data of how successful the good practice is.

This activity consists of identifying and designing of appropriate relevant and effective, special educational programs for prisoners, which at the same time will provide the necessary education and fulfil the gap in skills, but also motivate prisoners to actively participate in the activity. The basic assumption of the activity is that the variations in prisoner structure, the social and educational background, the age and ethnicity, as well as the various personality structures of prisoners, should be taken into account in the design of the educational programs. For that purpose, the educational programs shall be functional, based on current, relevant practices and in accordance with the needs of the labour shortages and skills gaps on the labour market. Additionally, the educational programs offered shall range from basic to advanced, depending on the knowledge and skills of the participants in the courses. The courses themselves will also gradually increase in quality and complexity, with the progress of the course cycles.

The demography is similar in both prisons: age of the prisoners varies from 18 – 65, but most of them are around 35. Only small parts of the prisoners are with high education, the largest percentage has either primary or high school, while 15% of them do not have any education. Although they do not have education, in the discussions with the prison staff they show interest to upgrade their education, as well as to gain vocational skills and competences. This is one of the reasons why the activities focus on providing this kind of educational programs. The other one is that the people that have served prison sentence by default are discriminated and not accepted in the society. The lack of education and skills multiplies and enhances this discrimination effect, thus preventing this people to enter the labour market and find jobs and in the long run it prevents them from reintegrating and re-socializing in the society.

To that saying, VET trainings in prisons are a combination of several segments that help increase the capacity of prisoners.

1. With the opportunity to participate in VET trainings, their free time has been used in a quality way.
2. Strengthen their skills for entering the labour market after graduation.
3. They have the opportunity to master a new skill or technique that will be useful to them after leaving.
4. They learn ways of communication and teamwork, as well as life skills at work.

Data from the activity:

- 20 people without primary education obtained diploma for completed basic education (one eight month course x 2 prisons x 10 people = 20 people);
- 40 people obtained certificate for basic knowledge of English language (two, three month course cycles X 2 prisons x 10 participants at course = 40 people) ;
- 60 people obtained certificate for basic knowledge in computer skills (three two month course cycles x 2 prisons x 10 participants at course = 60 people);
- 20 people obtained certificate for skills and competences in bakery (two three and a half month courses x 2 prisons x 5 participants at course = 20 people);
- 20 people obtained certificate for skill and competences in hairdressing (two four and a half month courses x 2 prisons x 5 participants = 20 people).

Upon completion of the course cycle (for each course) the participants receive diploma for completed basic education, which could then be utilized after the completion of the sentence.

In addition, one fully equipped workshop was established in each prison, a barbershop workshop in the prison in Stip, and a bakery workshop in the prison in Tetovo, for delivering vocational education and trainings. Each workshop was equipped with the necessary equipment to conduct the vocational training. Both sets of equipment were used in the vocational training part, but also they remain as an asset that the prisons can use in the future.

With the activities implemented in the period between 2008 and 2011 (woodcarving and cooking and bakery), 52 people from the prison in Shtip and 46 from the prison in Tetovo had opportunity to participate and complete the courses.

The analyses that were done during and after the implementation of the activities showed that there is raising interest for participation among the prisoners, which brought the conclusion that similar activities are necessary in the future as well and that they have positive effect on the process of re-socialization and rehabilitation of prisoners.

Explain in one or two sentences how this good practice matches with the connected 21st Century Skill.

With this activity, the prisoners have a chance to spend their free time productively and maintain their social skills through communication and collaboration with the inmates in their VET course. In addition, with choosing the VET training that they prefer, they are stimulating their critical thinking, development of self-awareness and analysis and their literacy skills such as learning to use new technology and gathering useful information.

Supporting documents attached:

- Best practice 1_Baker curriculum.pdf
- Best practice 1_Barber_hairdresser curriculum.pdf
- Best practice 1_ITC curriculum.pdf
- Best practice 1_English language curriculum.pdf
- Best practice 1_Horticultural worker curriculum.pdf
- Pictures



