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Redefinition of professional direction and emergence of **career interests** through Drama in Education techniques in groups of **inmates**

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Redefinition of professional direction and emergence of career interests through Drama in Education techniques in groups of inmates

Aikaterini Dima, Valentina Michael



Abstract

The present study focuses on an intervention programme based on Drama in Education techniques that was used to redefine the professional direction of thirty (30) incarcerated adults in two detention facilities in the prefecture of Argolida, Greece and to highlight career interests in order to help them find employment during their reintegration in society. In this context, a study based on action research was designed, implemented and evaluated. It was implemented in the summer of 2019 at the Rural Detention Facility of Tiryntha and the Detention Facility of Nafplio. The sample consisted of two groups of fifteen (15) inmates in each detention facility. The results of the research showed that an intervention programme based on Drama in Education techniques can redefine the professional direction of incarcerated adults and highlight career interests.

Keywords: *Drama in Education; career interests; inmates; professional redefinition; Rural Detention Facility of Tiryntha; Detention Facility of Nafplio*

1. Introduction

The main objective of this research is to redefine the future professional occupation and highlight the career interests of a group of incarcerated adults with the help of Drama in Education techniques. Based on international research and relevant literature, incarceration, apart from the psychological burden it places on inmates, often has negative consequences after their release and during their integration into society.

With the valuable guidance of Emeritus Professor Alkistis Kondoyianni, an intervention programme was designed and implemented based on the techniques of Drama in Education and twenty-two interventions were carried out. Out of the twenty-two interventions, twelve were carried out in the Rural Adult Detention Facility of Tiryntha and twelve in the Detention Facility of Nafplio during the months of June, July and August 2019. The number of inmates who participated in the programme amounted to fifteen in each Facility. Through Drama in Education techniques such as role-playing, improvisations, body-activating exercises, creative writing but also through extensive discussions with the group of incarcerated adults, it was discovered that they had a professional background prior to their incarceration.

It was then examined whether their imprisonment affected their professional capacity. The possibility of them having a future professional status during their reintegration into society was explored in the last part of the interventions in the two detention facilities.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Educating incarcerated adults

In recent years there has been a significant effort in national penitentiaries to develop and enrich educational programmes for inmates with significant beneficial results which are recorded in relevant literature (Dimitrouli, Themeli, & Rigoutsou, 2008). One area that remains relatively unexplored is the vocational guidance of detainees and how they can be assisted through formal or non-formal education as far as work and career issues are concerned.

Upon their return to society, released prisoners will face significant difficulties in many areas, they will be stigmatised and experience marginalisation. According to surveys, 74% of released prisoners who faced work and housing problems returned to prison within a year (Pitsioli, 2014). Giovanoglou (2006) emphasises that the marginalisation of those released from prisons stems from the inadequacy observed at the level of educational process as well as at financial and mainly professional levels. Globally, a major problem for incarcerated people is their exclusion from the production process. In terms of professional status, they lost their jobs, in many cases, as well as significant assets due to their incarceration. In cases where there is no specific profession due to delinquency or other circumstances, the former inmate is called to enter an already difficult field, that of job hunting. At the same time, they face even greater difficulty in finding a job due to caution expressed by employers about their delinquent past, as well as due to the lack of support they receive from government services.

All these serious obstacles faced by a former inmate when called upon to return to society can lead to a relapse, new episodes of delinquency, and even new imprisonment. According to the report of Epanodos P.I.E. about the reintegration of

ex-prisoners in 2017, which records data from the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 52.63% of relapsed prisoners were sentenced to imprisonment once more, while 26.31% were sentenced two to three additional times after their first release.

The continued education of inmates and released prisoners will give them additional employment opportunities while boosting their self-confidence. At the same time, the occurrence of relapse leading to immediate re-imprisonment will be significantly reduced. In 2003, the Greek Ministry of Justice, in the context of Adult Education Centres in detention facilities, initiated the creation of educational programmes. These programmes aimed at highlighting career interests and upgrading existing ones in order to create better conditions for equal opportunities for development and integration of trainees in the labour market. Counselling programmes are also provided in which inmates can participate voluntarily (Rigoutsou, 2005). However, the offer cannot cover the number of released prisoners from the country's penitentiaries where no educational programme related to the vocational guidance is provided due to different circumstances. This creates a significant gap which, however, could be filled by non-formal education programmes. One of these is the vocational guidance programme through Drama in Education which is presented in this article and is part of "Developing life skills in inmates at the Detention Facilities of Tiryntha and Nafplio", a programme implemented by the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese (Kondoyianni, 2018).

Some important and interesting publications on the subject of vocational guidance for prisoners and detainees have been recorded in international literature. The study by Filella-Guin & Blanch-Plana (2002) presents the evaluation of PORO, a three-tier vocational guidance programme designed to increase inmates' possibilities of finding work and reduce the recurrence of relapse and re-imprisonment. The programme was implemented in a prison in Catalonia. Evaluation results and practical suggestions for career development applications in prison populations are reported. Based on the conclusions drawn from the implementation of the vocational guidance programme, this is the best strategy to reduce recurrence.

The extensive and scientifically substantiated work of Diekroger (2011), a researcher from the University of Ohio, analyses comprehensive career counselling programmes for male prisoners.

A study by professors Vernick and Reardon (2001) from Florida State University demonstrates with scientific evidence that career development programmes in penitentiaries form a method that can reduce the relapse rates of ex-prisoners.

A scientific paper by Chen and Shields (2020) identifies the main professional orientation issues for ex-prisoners. It then links theoretical knowledge and research data from interventions to the career problems faced by this particular group of people.

The purpose of a research study by Stouri (2016), carried within the framework of a thesis at the Hellenic Open University, was to investigate the perceptions of prisoners regarding vocational rehabilitation and career counselling and to provide them with necessary guidance. The population under observation is a group of prisoners studying at the Second Chance School of Korydallos.

Finally, an article by Sofia Giovanoglou (2018) in the online journal of the Laboratory for Criminal and Forensic Studies of the Athens Law School cites with scientific evidence the need to rationalise the obstacles preventing the professional reintegration of prisoners. Furthermore, it addresses issues such as social reintegration, abstinence from crime and finding work.

2.2. The positive impact of Drama in Education on inmates

Drama in Education is a new approach to pedagogical practice, which uses exercises and techniques from the field of theatre as well as therapeutic methods such as psychodrama and adapts them according to its needs and purposes (Kondoyianni, 2012). It is in dynamic development as an educational method and is considered a fundamental process in human experience (Tsiaras, 2016). Drama, because of its playful form, acquires a social character too. In addition, it has the potential to motivate adults to use not only their body, but also their spirit and emotion (Kalidas, 2014), thus giving their education a multi-level role.

According to Kayavi (2007), drama as a methodology in informal forms of education in Greece has significant results in teaching Greek to immigrants as well as in programmes for inmates, people with mental illness or people in addiction recovery (p. 6). It has also been used by psychologists in workplaces with the aim of raising employee awareness, developing collaborative attitudes, management skills, etc.

Wooland (1999) applies drama techniques to programmes implemented in detention centres and explains that the most important thing is to motivate the adult learner. He also concludes that some population groups, such as inmates or trainees in Second Chance Schools, usually people with low self-esteem and self-image, very quickly gain through drama the feeling that they can make it. Additionally, they comprehend the concept of cooperation better and significantly develop their self-confidence.

Equally important is Martin Morgan Mitchell's research work at Cornell University on 8-year-old Theatre of the Oppressed programmes in penitentiaries in the United States (Mitchell, 2007). He has also published part of his research on Forum Theatre programmes in penitentiary establishments in the scientific journal of Duke University (Mitchell, 2001).

Another very important research programme is the one implemented by Moller (2003) at the Sing Sing Prisons in New York, which examines the impact of drama on preparing inmates for their social re-integration. Also, Robert Landy (2001), an Honorary Doctor at NYU Steinhardt University, introduced the role model (Role theory) which he applied to correctional programmes in New York penitentiaries in 2014. Regarding Greek prisons, an important publication is based on research work by Italian researcher Montefrano (2015) from the University of Pisa, which concerns the presentation of theatre performances by groups of inmates in Greece and Italy.

At the same time, the fundamental right to education that incarcerated adults have can give them the opportunity to modify their behaviour and perception of the world (Koutzeklidou & Lionarakis, 2019). Based on the above, it was deemed important to investigate the pre-existing professions and career interests of 30 inmates in the two detention facilities and to redefine their professional direction through Drama in Education.

3. Methodology

To this end, action research was selected as an appropriate method. The choice of action research as a methodological approach was considered the right choice for the researchers, due to its collaborative character, the interconnection of theory and practice as well as its special nature where the participant acts and is led to understanding, change, and improvement (Grundy & Kemmis, 1988). An important factor is that action research begins as a need created in a member who is involved in the educational process, whether the instructor or the participant (Magos & Panagopoulou, 2008), a process we made sure to follow. The study of the current social situation, and in our case of the two detention facilities, has as its main purpose to improve the quality within it (Elliot, 1991).

3.1. Research purpose and questions

The purpose of the research was to investigate whether an intervention programme based on Drama in Education can highlight the career interests of inmates in order to lead them to a redefinition of their professional direction. Based on this, the following research questions arose:

To what extent can an intervention programme based on Drama in Education redefine the professional direction of inmates?

To what extent can an intervention programme based on Drama in Education highlight the career interests of inmates?

3.2. Sample, time and place of action research implementation

The Rural Adult Detention Facility of Tirynta and the Detention Facility of Nafplio were selected by expedient sampling. Then, 15 adult men were randomly selected from the general population of the Rural Detention Facility of Tirynta and 15 from the Detention Facility of Nafplio. They were 20-50 years old, 12 of them were foreigners, 10 Greek Roma and 8 locals. The educational level was generally low with some exceptions.

The action research was implemented in the summer of 2019 and lasted 12 weeks, from June to August.

3.3 Tools

In order to collect and control the data that emerged from the research, the multimodal approach was considered the safest way (Magos & Panagopoulou, 2008). This way the research is valid and more complete (Bell, 2001, p. 106).

For this purpose and to enhance the research, various research tools were used such as the questionnaire, participatory observation, the research diary, focus groups, and the semi-structured interview.

Specifically, the anonymous Questionnaire of Interests of the Municipality of Korydallos was used, which was utilised within the framework of the Social Development programme of the Municipality of Korydallos.

The closed-ended questionnaire was modified and weighted in order to be used in the investigation of the career interests of inmates. The Stakeholder Questionnaire was given at the beginning of the research to be completed at the end of the programme by both groups of inmates at the detention facilities.

The methodological approach of the focus groups lies in the group interview of participants on a specific topic (Iosifidis, 2008). In the two focus groups that were created, one in each detention facility, the Career Orientations Assessment questionnaire of Akmal, Arlinkasari and Andryani (2017) was used. It was translated (with double translation) and adapted to the culture of the sample so as to be used to control the redefinition of the professional direction of inmates. The questions in the questionnaire were used in the group interview tool where the type of the semi-structured interview was chosen (Faulkner et al., 1999).

With the methodological tool of participatory observation, the research diary, a more complete picture of the experience of detention facilities was obtained (Wright, 1993, p. 26). The research diary is recording from memory what was said by the participants and what was observed by the researchers (Magos & Panagopoulou, 2008). The research diary was kept by the researchers throughout the workshops.

3.4. Research description

Since the methodology of action research is a cyclical spiral process, we divided it into three cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Each cycle describes the design of the intervention chosen by the researchers and its implementation. Subsequently, the intervention, which ends with reflection on the process, and its results are assessed, and any changes needed for the research to proceed in the next cycles are introduced (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

3.4.1 First cycle of action research

In the first cycle, at the beginning, both groups of inmates were given the Interest Questionnaire in order to investigate the professional and personal interests of the participants before their incarceration. The questionnaire contained 35 questions where participants had to answer with a YES or a NO in order to initially explore their interests. The 30 detainees were asked to respond with a YES to interests they agreed with and a NO to interests with which they were unfamiliar.

The first four experiential workshops were then designed and implemented. For the design of the workshops the age of the sample, the particularity of its nature, the educational and social level of the participants and the spaces that could host this action were taken into account. The drama techniques that were chosen would enable inmates to trust themselves and the rest of the group and develop collaboration. Such techniques were improvised dialogues, role-playing games, freeze frames, emotion detection, and the corridor of consciousness.

In the first intervention, the initial goal was to get acquainted with the group of participants using mainly playing-through-theatre techniques, such as the cycle of acquaintance. The second goal of the meeting was to explore the professional background that the group of participants might have.

In the second intervention, the goal was the recollection of positive or negative events from the professional lives of detainees. Specifically, this was done by creating theatrical scenes in groups based on the participants' answers to the questionnaire.

In the third intervention, through emotional memory, the participants recalled moments from their childhood and their adult life in order to focus and acknowledge their own

interests. In addition, through improvisation, an attempt was made to represent a scene of a car collision, where everyone took on the role of a professional who was present at the accident scene. The improvisations would be enriched with scenes of interviews with professionals and interviews of citizens with professionals. We also used the freeze frame technique in conjunction with the brainstorming game, in which words related to professions such as unemployment, school, university, failure, money, vacations, work in a car repair shop were discussed.

In the fourth intervention, the themes were theatrical improvisations with transformation games, but also the creation and presentation of a TV show focusing on work and different professions.

The first cycle was completed with reflection on the process and its evaluation. The emergence of new interests by the participants led to some changes in the design of the second cycle.

3.4.2. Second cycle of action research

The second cycle started with the observations made by the researchers about the inmates, the events in the previous cycle and the changes that occurred. In action research the cycles do not alternate linearly but spirally. One cycle is shaped by the previous and prepares the next one (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). In the second cycle, four interventions were performed.

The fifth intervention in a row was implemented through storytelling by the researchers. Actions with the group such as activation exercises and motion exercises for "transfer" to the place where a story unfolded were created. The group of inmates took on roles such as farmer, doctor, stockbreeder, police officer, teacher, and priest as well as demonstrated characteristics of the role and attitude of the characters. Then a new division into groups was made and the inmates created dynamic images with the characters of the story that had previously developed.

We decided that the sixth meeting should mark a cycle of elaboration of the action research, so we devoted time to reflection through expressive means of discussion, visualisation, and movement. This facilitated the redesigning of our programme in terms of the choice of Drama in Education techniques and the aspects of the subject in relation to the interests and needs of the inmates.

After the reflection we proceeded to the next interventions, the seventh and eighth, with the aim of investigating any changes in the professional orientation of the participants.

The second cycle was again completed with reflection on the whole process and the recording of the observations made by researchers in order to integrate the changes that had emerged in the third and final cycle.

3.4.3 Third cycle of action research

The third cycle of our research consisted of the last four interventions which involved theatrical techniques. In one of the workshops, the team at each detention facility was divided into smaller groups of three people. The participants chose a profession and the specific role they would have in this job. The researchers asked the "work team" to pose for a souvenir photo. Then they were given a situation to improvise. In this situation there also had to be the element of dramatic conflict,

e.g. the boss is unhappy with the performance of his employees. In this way extreme situations would be tested, such as a group working in a good climate versus a group where loud voices and tension prevail.

In the eleventh experiential workshop, the semi-structured interview based on the Career Orientations Assessment questionnaire by Akmal, Arlinkasari and Andryani (2017) took place in both focus groups at the detention facilities.

At the twelfth and last meeting, the Interest Questionnaire completed at the beginning of the research was given again to the participants.

The third and final cycle was completed once again with reflection and a final evaluation of the research. The changes that emerged in terms of the participants' professional orientation and goals in combination with their future reintegration-professional redefinition were investigated. Finally, at the end of the programme, a personal report and a recording of the professional profile of each participant followed. The workshops were completed by informing the inmates about the support programmes available in Greece for their smooth reintegration.

4. Research results

After the completion of our research process, the findings were analysed in addition to checking whether our initial goals were accomplished.

4.1. Questionnaire results

The answers of the participants to the questionnaires before and after the interventions were collected and evaluated.

In the initial questionnaire of interests, as shown in Table 1, the most popular tasks chosen by the group of inmates at the Rural Detention Facility of Tiryntha were "To cultivate the land", "To help others in solving their personal problems", "To take care of the elderly and the helpless", "To run my own business". At the Nafplio Detention Facility, the group of inmates chose "To lead a team in completing a project", "To decorate and design interior and exterior spaces", "To work with an experienced engineer or technician", "To run my own business", as shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Number of popular affirmative answers (YES) before interventions at the Rural Detention Facility of Tiryntha.

Questions	Number of affirmative answers (YES)
	Before
To work in building construction	7
To cultivate land	10
To help others solve their personal problems	8
To take care of the elderly and the helpless	8
To run my own business	9
Quantity of sample (N)	N = 15 incarcerated

Table 2. Number of popular affirmative answers (YES) before interventions at the Nafplio Detention Facility.

Questions	Number of affirmative answers (YES)
	Before
To lead a team in completing a project	9
To decorate and design interior and exterior spaces	9
To repair cars	8
To work with an experienced engineer or technician	9
To run my own business	13
Quantity of sample (N)	N = 15 incarcerated

The differences in the answers in terms of choice of work between the inmates at the two detention facilities lies in the different educational level and the different tasks in which they had been engaged before their incarceration. An important observation is that the educational level in the Nafplio Detention Facility was higher compared to that in the Rural Detention Facility of Tiryntha.

After the interventions ended and the second questionnaire was completed, a shift in interests was recorded in several of them. For instance, the following data is mentioned in the summary tables of the popular affirmative answers for the two detention facilities:

Table 3. Number of affirmative answers (YES) after interventions at the Nafplio Detention Facility.

Questions	Number of affirmative answers (YES)
	After
To repair cars	14
To work for a charity	15
To decorate and design interior and exterior spaces	13
To cultivate land	12
To lead a team in completing a project	12
To work with an experienced engineer or technician	10
Quantity of sample (N)	N = 15 incarcerated

The most popular answer in the Detention Facility of Nafplio was "To work for a charity". This was a choice that pleasantly surprised us, as it became evident during the discussion of the results that the participants understood the meaning of this particular form of work and were in a position to explain

why they chose it. The second most popular answer was "To repair cars". Other popular answers were "To decorate and design interior and exterior spaces", "To lead a team in completing a project", "To cultivate land", "To work with an experienced engineer or technician". Also popular was the answer "To run my own business". Less popular answers were "Working to help mentally ill people" (0%) and "Organising a business filing system".

At the Rural Detention Facility of Tirynta, according to Table 4, the most popular answer was "To take care of the elderly". Other answers selected were "Working in a rehabilitation centre", "Organising excursions", "To help others solve personal problems", "To run a business", "Writing a detailed list of services or products", "Editing and Printing". "To work in building construction" was less popular. Unpopular responses were "To update files or folders", which no one selected, as well as the option "To organise a company's filing system".

Table 4. Number of popular affirmative answers (YES) after interventions at the Rural Detention Facility of Tirynta.

Questions	Number of affirmative answers (YES)
	After
To take care of the elderly and the helpless	15
To work in a rehabilitation centre	13
To organise excursions	13
To help others solve their personal problems	14
To run my own business	12
To write a detailed list of services or products	12
Editing and printing	10
Quantity of sample (N)	N = 15 incarcerated

4.2. Interview results

As a result of the semi-structured interviews conducted in the focus groups, different occupations were recorded in each detention facility, which the detainees reported to have followed in the past, i.e. before their incarceration.

At the Rural Detention Facility of Tirynta, the inmates reported that prior to their incarceration they mainly did manual work, such as agricultural work. Several participants mentioned the profession of a junk dealer (a profession that is often found in Roma people). Many said they had worked in the fields but also in livestock production. Occupations such as car mechanic, butcher, and store clerk were also mentioned.

On the contrary, at the Nafplio Detention Facility, the inmates, as far as their profession prior to their incarceration is concerned, did not refer to agricultural work and livestock, but to various professions such as car mechanic, carpenter, store clerk, factory worker, police officer, businessman, professional diver, waiter, professional driver, and archaeologist.

After the interventions that took place in both detention facilities, the inmates received new stimuli and information, while skills they did not even know they had also emerged. For the majority of them, there was a shift in their career path. They stated that they would like to do some kind of office work or filing. Many expressed a desire for volunteer work and giving back to the community, in general.

According to the aforementioned results of the semi-structured interview, the inmates expressed new career interests and questioned their professional direction.

4.3. Results of participatory observation

According to the diary kept by both researchers, a progressive shift in the professional interests of inmates was recorded in the methodological tool of participatory observation.

During the role-playing games, some people found that they could work as employees in a store or even as assistants in a TV show, while in the past they found that such professions related to public exposure or socialising caused them a significant amount of stress.

They also stated that finding work prior to their incarceration was vital because they were the ones who had to support their families, as evident in statements such as "The job was very important to me because I was supporting the whole family", "I had to bring money home because my family was hungry", "I am not afraid of work", "I loved my job but I wanted more money".

Some participants who had seniors at home, either their father or mother, and took care of them, could make helping seniors a profession. Through the improvised dialogues and the various information they received, they expressed the desire to help others.

Additionally, when they worked in teams, they collaborated with each other, listened to other opinions, were invited to enter work roles they had never played before and were guided by others who knew the profession, and as a result many of them expressed the desire to pursue these professions after their incarceration.

5. Conclusions

According to the results that were recorded from the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview, and the participatory observation, the same thematic categories of analysis emerged. The inmates demonstrated career interests after the interventions, which made them reflect on their professional direction and redefine it. In both facilities, the need to continue their education, secure a diploma to help their families and rebuild their lives was emphasised. It is notable that many of them attend the voluntary courses offered by the University of the Peloponnese on a regular basis.

These conclusions are in line with the study of Filella-Guin & Blanch-Plana (2002) as well as the work of Diekroger (2011). It was also found that in both detention facilities the majority of participants had a specific professional background and a permanent or temporary job before their incarceration, which they would like to continue doing in the future or start something new.

Some limitations were identified during the investigation. Initially, the limited time we had at our disposal to conduct the investigation and the inherent difficulty presented by the prison space available for planning and conducting the series of

interventions. In addition, the sample was slightly reduced as sometimes participants were absent. In terms of the interview, there was a loss of details and depth of information because recording and videotaping were not allowed. Other contributing factors, albeit to a lesser extent, were the subjectivity of respondents in terms of understanding the questions as well as the influence exerted by the simultaneous presence and the answers of other inmates.

In conclusion, it is important to say that incarceration creates, among others, concerns and intense anxiety in inmates regarding their future career path.

What the inmates are really looking for in terms of their reintegration into society is support from the State and the social institutions for a smooth return into their professional field.

With the present research, the relevant literature, and our personal experience, we propose the implementation of educational programmes in detention facilities with an alternative learning methodology, such as Drama in Education. Furthermore, we strongly encourage an elaboration of important topics for the needs of inmates, such as vocational guidance, with multiple benefits for themselves, both during their incarceration and after their release from prison.

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