

Resocialization and Reintegration of Convicted Individuals: Possibilities and Challenges*

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The goal of every imposed prison sentence is resocialization of a convicted individual, but its effectiveness is often questionable and opens numerous dilemmas regarding which factors and reasons disrupt its success. Regardless of its success, convicted individuals will be reintegrated into the social environment, which in the case of unsuccessful resocialization during the serving of the prison sentence creates a high level of risk of recidivism after the release. Resocialization is possible regardless of the category of convicted individuals, but in order for it to be successful, all stakeholders participating in this process must give their maximum contribution in order to change the criminogenic structure of a prisoner's personality and get him to accept the system of proper values. In the phase of reintegration of a convicted person into the social environment, post-penal treatment is important, as a form of support and continuation of efficient work within the institutional re-education programme. Only such well-rounded process can be fully effective and lead to the final resocialization that we strive for from the moment the convicted individual starts serving the prison sentence. In this paper, we deal with the dilemma of whether resocialization, as well as re-education treatment in prisons, is possible and effective, and which factors may influence effective reintegration of convicts after their prison sentences have been served. This paper reviews the possibilities of what can affect the (in)efficiency of resocialization and how to overcome these problems during and after serving a prison sentence.

KEYWORDS: resocialization / reintegration / convicted individuals / re-education treatment / formal and informal system

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Resocialization of Convicted Individuals and Re-Education Treatment

Successful resocialization and reintegration of convicted individuals into the social environment is the final goal of any imposed criminal sanction, but that path is not simple at all. The re-education treatment determined individually for each convicted individual goes through various phases, ups and downs, punishments and rewards, crises, passive and active resistance, but as such it must be built through the persistent work of educators and convicts, as well as other participating stakeholders in this process. All this happens to people outside prisons as well, i.e., crises, challenges, obstacles that prevent us from reaching our goal, but the most important thing is the desire to overcome it all, to persevere and achieve a positive result.

In the present conditions, due to the post-penal treatment not functioning, the resocialization process is reduced to institutional re-education treatment only. We will pay particular attention to it precisely because of the importance of this form of treatment. According to some authors (Macanović, 2023; Nadarević & Macanović, 2023; Radoman, 2003), re-education treatment implies elimination of individual causes of criminality. Others consider it a dynamic process, not defined by time. Treatment in penological andragogy primarily refers to dealing with criminal offenders, both in criminal proceedings and in the process of execution of criminal sanctions and also subsequently in the post-penal period. It is observed in all phases from the point of view of resocialization, as the most important goal of criminal sanctions. Accordingly, there is a distinction between judicial treatment and treatment of prisoners during the serving of a criminal sanction, including treatment in the post-penal period.

The treatment of prisoners while serving their sentences can be classified in several ways, namely: according to content, according to the category of prisoner and according to the approach to implementation of the treatment. Treatment includes individual therapy, work, general and vocational education, cultural and educational work and organisation of free time. Division by category of prisoners implies general and special treatment. General treatment of prisoners consists of individual work with the prisoner, work engagement, cultural-educational and recreational activities. Special re-education treatment refers to prisoners who cannot be included in general treatment successfully. These include: old and infirm prisoners, alcoholics and drug addicts, as well as people in need of general and vocational education. In contemporary penological practice, numerous approaches to the institutional re-education treatment of prisoners are applied, which are represented differently depending on the development of prison systems. In correctional-penitentiary institutions, the following approaches are most often used, which also represent institutional re-education treatment

components: moral-pedagogical upbringing and education, occupational therapy, free time, rewarding and punishing (Macanović & Nadarević, 2014).

The Importance and Role of Re-Education Treatment in the Resocialization of Convicted Individuals

The re-education treatment should be adapted to the individual during his stay in prison and the construction of a "new man", who will be removed from his criminal career and criminal behaviour, with the aim of successful reintegration into the family and society. Therefore, the treatment should be a comprehensive programme of activities and measures determined once the prisoner starts serving his sentence for each prisoner individually, with the aim of helping him adapt to the living and working conditions in the institution, to train him for a certain work activity, maintain his working and health capacity, and remove certain negative aspects in order to properly integrate him into the social environment he came from after his sentence has been served (Macanović, 2011).

Much is expected from re-education treatment in terms of resocialization of prisoners. In this regard, it can be concluded that re-education treatment is the central issue of penological andragogy today. "The process of re-educating convicted individuals starts in prison, where, through the application of various forms of treatment, the convicts' criminal value system starts to change. Certainly, the resocialization process does not end in prison, but continues through post-penal treatment after the convicted individual is released." (Konstantinović-Vilić & Kostić, 2006, p. 147).

Experiences from contemporary penology show that institutional resocialization alone is not sufficient, that adaptation to the living conditions in an institution cannot be achieved to the full extent in the absence of adequate treatment in the form of post-penal assistance once the prisoner is released. Such assistance and protection are necessary for two reasons. Firstly, it helps the former prisoner to reintegrate more easily into social life, and secondly, adequate post-penal protection greatly reduces repeated criminal behaviour (recidivism). Post-institutional assistance depends to a large extent on the successful application of treatment in the institution. The worse the treatment is, the need for post-penal assistance is greater (Maloić, 2020).

Factors Affecting the (In)Efficiency of Resocialization and Institutional Re-Education Treatment

In the prison environment, there are many criminogenic factors complicating the process of resocialization and implementation of institutional treatment. Unfortunately, in prisons there is an increasing number of psychoactive substances addicts who fail to solve their drug addiction problem in prison,

because in most prisons drugs are available through illegal channels organised and run by representatives of the informal system at the top of the prison pyramid (Radonjić & Vuković, 2024). Numerous deprivations (Jovanić et al., 2020) make social adaptation to a new environment difficult and are often frustrating for prisoners who often turn to the informal system for protection. Violence is a frequent occurrence in prisons, where the law of the strongest among convicts' rules (Luketić, 2024). Also, violence in prisons is a tool used by convicts in the informal system to prove themselves in a group, advance in the prison pyramid, racketeer other convicts, etc. Oftentimes, prisoners pay abusers for their peace of mind and safety during their prison sentence (Gudelj & Aladžić, 2024). All this reflects on the psychological atmosphere inside the prison, which is very important for the implementation of the institutional treatment itself (Ljeljak & Bubalo, 2018).

One of the most frequent issues which complicates the implementation of re-education treatment, and consequently the process of resocialization itself, is the criminogenic infection of prisoners. This problem is particularly serious in closed penitentiary institutions, where, due to pavilion-type accommodation and the impossibility of categorization by criminal offence and the length of punishment, as well as due to the large fluctuation of prisoners, often multiple returnees, foreign nationals, persons who are serving sentences for traffic violations and persons imprisoned for murder, drug addicts, etc. stay in the same dormitory. In addition to the problems mentioned, there are numerous deprivations in closed institutions. Quite often, younger prisoners find role models and identify themselves with recidivists or local "bosses", trying that way to draw attention to themselves and ensure the best possible status within the group. They are the ones who most often refuse re-education treatment and consistently adhere to the prison code principles. Unfortunately, with such prisoners, socialization deficits are the most obvious and re-education and resocialization are the most necessary (Macanović, 2023).

Often, the concept of resocialization is criticized and its success called into question due to the increasing number of returnees to prison institutions. Milojević (1984) points out that a part of the returnees is increasingly mired in crime, specializes in a certain type of crime, acquires special knowledge and techniques, cooperates with other criminals, having crime become the source of their material income. The way of life and social relations take on a special character. Social parasitism and underestimation of useful work and numerous negative habits accompany and seriously complicate the process of re-education of returnees, making it almost impossible to accomplish.

All these factors influence the (un)successful resocialization, but also the later reintegration of convicted individuals into the social environment.

Conclusion

The main purpose of resocialization is educating prisoners to respect social values and to re-join society based on that. They should become useful members of the community, although it should be known that this education process is not simple and without difficulties. On the contrary, numerous obstacles and hindrances are encountered. It is not possible to "teach" a prisoner to accept the behaviour of man as a cultural being, and to behave in the spirit of the demands of the social environment. Apart from that, during the resocialization process, there are also negative influences that hinder its successful implementation. During the serving of the prison sentence, the values and norms of the prison society, which we have talked about and which are contrary to the prevalent system of values, and therefore intensify the existing deviant tendencies and work against the goal of re-education treatment, very often come to light.

Numerous empirical research pieces, scientific publications, and experiences of colleagues in penology practice indicate that there is no simple recipe for successful resocialization. Its success depends on a number of exogenous and endogenous factors, but certainly also on those small, almost invisible steps (first meeting, look, contact, conversation, story, reward, mutual respect, support when approving benefits, perseverance to not succumb to the influence of the informal system and its rules, etc.).

The society's dysfunctionality, the crisis of the value system, the political and economic crisis are also often reflected on life in prison and the psychological atmosphere within the institution. That is why a balance between the formal and informal system is very important in order to create all the preconditions for the implementation of institutional re-education treatment, on which resocialization actually depends. In the end, resocialization is possible and we need to fight for every convict to get him back on the right track.

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