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THE PEDAGOGUE IN PEDAGOGICAL-ANDRAGOGICAL WORK WITH CONVICTED PERSONS IN THE PROCESS OF RESOCIALIZATION

Abstract:

Prisons are complexly structured institutions where incarcerated individuals must undergo resocialization – a guided process of re-education and rehabilitation aimed at successful reintegration into society. This paper examines the theoretical and practical role of pedagogy and andragogy (educational work by trained prison educators) in resocialization programs, drawing on international research and the context of North Macedonia. A mixed-methods study was conducted, combining a survey of 100 inmates with in-depth interviews of inmates and staff, to evaluate how educational activities and professional educators influence rehabilitation outcomes. Quantitative results indicate that participation in prison education is associated with improved self-perception and optimism about reintegration, while qualitative narratives reveal personal transformations attributed to learning opportunities and mentorship. Trained prison pedagogues play a critical role in assessing individual needs, designing tailored learning plans, motivating inmates, and mediating the challenges of the prison environment. These findings inform recommendations for correctional policy – including improved educational infrastructure, specialized staff training, and inter-agency collaboration – to strengthen the resocialization process and support inmates' successful return to society.

Keywords: resocialization, prison education, pedagogy, andragogy, adult learning, reintegration

Introduction

Resocialization refers to the process of re-educating and rehabilitating offenders so they can return to society as law-abiding citizens. It aims not merely for rule compliance but for an internalized change in values, attitudes, and skills that reduces the likelihood of reoffending. Achieving such change is challenging, especially within the prison environment. Prisons are often described as “total institutions” that isolate individuals from normal society and impose rigid routines, which can impede personal growth. Incarcerated persons also face stigma—both inside prison and after release—embodied in attitudes like “once a criminal, always a criminal,” which undermine confidence in their ability to reform. Many inmates have deeply ingrained behaviors and worldviews shaped by criminal subcultures or personal trauma, making them resistant to traditional approaches. Effective resocialization must therefore overcome both the institutional constraints of prison and the personal barriers carried by offenders.

Modern correctional practice recognizes that confinement alone does not rehabilitate; proactive interventions are required to facilitate positive change. These include psychological counseling, vocational training, work assignments, recreational activities, and crucially, education. Education is increasingly viewed as a cornerstone of rehabilitation - it addresses deficits in knowledge and skills, instills prosocial habits, and can give prisoners a constructive purpose during their sentence. Research and international standards affirm that providing access to education in prison improves post-release outcomes (Council of Europe, 2020; UNESCO, 2015). Many offenders enter prison with low levels of formal education or literacy, factors that elevate the risk of recidivism. By improving their human capital and self-worth through learning, prisons can better prepare inmates for reintegration. At the same time, resource limitations (e.g. overcrowding and understaffing) in systems like North Macedonia’s mean one educator may be responsible for over a hundred inmates, severely limiting individual attention. Indeed, when inmates are left idle with no constructive programs, they often engage in negative “informal learning” from peers that reinforces criminal attitudes. Despite these challenges, rehabilitation remains essential: if prisons do nothing to improve inmates’ capacities, society will pay the price when those individuals reoffend. Even partial success with an inmate’s re-education is better than none. In sum, resocialization is a multifaceted process involving legal, social, and pedagogical dimensions. Within this framework, education has emerged as a key pillar of rehabilitation efforts worldwide.

The Role of Education in Resocialization

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone of prisoner rehabilitation. Most offenders have low levels of education or skills, which contribute to unemployment and recidivism. Providing learning opportunities in prison

helps inmates build human capital and prosocial habits, improving their chances of a law-abiding life after release. International standards (e.g., the European Prison Rules) call for all prisoners to have access to education, but in practice resources are often limited. In North Macedonia, for example, formal prison education programs have lapsed in recent years, leaving many inmates idle – a missed opportunity for positive intervention. Even so, our findings and global research indicate that when inmates do engage in educational activities (whether formal classes or informal workshops), it can boost their self-esteem, impart useful skills, and inspire hope for a better future. In these ways, education serves as a key pillar of the resocialization process.

Role of Pedagogues and Andragogues in Correctional Education

In North Macedonia (as in many countries), prisons employ dedicated educators (pedagogues, and adult educators or andragogues) as part of the rehabilitation team. These professionals assess each new inmate and develop an individualized plan of educational and therapeutic activities to address factors contributing to their criminal behavior (Koviloski et al., 2020). They then oversee and facilitate the inmate's participation in programs, provide one-on-one counseling and mentorship, and motivate the inmate to engage in positive pursuits. In practice, a prison pedagogue must often play multiple roles: teacher, counselor, case manager, and advocate. Effective educators build rapport and trust, tailoring their approach to each inmate's needs and using motivational techniques to encourage progress. However, their effectiveness is constrained by high caseloads and limited resources – in our study prison, one educator might be responsible for over 100 inmates, limiting individual attention. Even so, many inmates credit a supportive pedagogue with making a difference in their lives. A dedicated educator who believes in an inmate's potential can inspire that person to pursue education and change, illustrating how crucial these staff are to the resocialization process.

Methodology, results and analyses

We conducted a mixed-methods study at a medium-security prison in North Macedonia. Quantitative data came from a survey of 100 incarcerated men (ages 21–60) covering their educational background, participation in prison programs, and attitudes toward rehabilitation. Qualitative data came from semi-structured interviews with 15 inmates (a subset of survey participants) and 5 staff members (3 pedagogues, 1 psychologist, 1 external adult educator). Survey results were analyzed for descriptive trends and comparisons (e.g., between inmates who did vs. did not attend programs), while interview transcripts were coded for key themes. The qualitative insights were then used to

contextualize and interpret the survey findings, providing a richer understanding of how educational activities influence resocialization.

For the **quantitative survey data**, we used descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, percentages) were calculated for all items to characterize the sample's responses. Table 1 summarizes some key survey statements and the percentage of inmates who agreed (responses of "agree" or "strongly agree").

Table 1: Selected Survey Results on Inmate Attitudes toward Prison Education (N=100)

Survey Statement	% Agree (4 or 5 on 5-point scale)
Education in prison is important for my reintegration into society.	92%
I am personally interested in attending educational programs here.	78%
I feel there are sufficient educational opportunities available to me.	25%
I believe the skills I learn in prison will help me avoid reoffending.	80%
The prison pedagogue/educator has been supportive of my self-improvement.	85%

We also performed comparisons between subgroups. For example, we compared inmates who had participated in at least one educational program vs. those who had not on key outcome measures (like optimism about reintegration, self-reported change). This was done using t-tests for continuous outcomes and chi-square tests for categorical outcomes. We additionally examined correlations (Pearson's r) between extent of program participation (measured as number of programs or hours per week in programs) and attitudinal outcomes. A significance level of $p < .05$ was used for hypothesis testing.

The survey results revealed a strong interest in education among inmates coupled with dissatisfaction at its availability. An overwhelming 92% of respondents agreed that education in prison is important for their reintegration, and roughly four-fifths believed that the skills they gain would help them avoid reoffending. A similarly large majority said they were personally interested in attending educational programs. However, only 25% of inmates agreed that the prison offered sufficient educational opportunities. This suggests a large unmet need for learning. Inmates noted that programs were often limited or cancelled (for example, classes sometimes stopped due to lack of instructors).

Program participants generally reported more positive attitudes about themselves and their futures compared to those with no program experience.

They were more optimistic about finding work and staying crime-free after release, indicating that educational engagement was associated with a stronger confidence in reintegration.

The survey also underscored the role of prison educators: 85% of inmates said their pedagogue had been supportive of their self-improvement. In fact, educators were rated as the most helpful source of support inside prison (second only to family). This high regard suggests that, even under constraints, dedicated staff make a significant positive impact on inmates.

The qualitative interviews provided personal context behind the numbers. Many inmates described education as a turning point in their incarceration experience. For example, one inmate joined a literacy class simply to write to his daughter, but as he learned to read and write he developed a pride in achievement that led him to pursue a vocational training course. Another long-term prisoner said that taking an entrepreneurship course with an encouraging instructor made him envision a future without crime for the first time. These stories illustrate how engaging in learning can spark hope and a new pro-social identity. Staff accounts corroborated this: a prison psychologist observed that inmates active in classes often display better behavior and more optimism, partly because they do not want to lose their place in a desired program.

Interviews also underscored that the pedagogues often acted as mentors. Many inmates admitted they would not have enrolled in programs without the persistent encouragement of an educator who believed in their potential. Educators earned inmates' trust by taking interest in their hobbies or skills and then gently guiding them toward constructive activities (for example, encouraging a talented artist to join an art workshop). This personalized, respectful approach proved effective in engaging initially skeptical inmates. As staff noted, one cannot force adult prisoners to learn, but one can patiently invite and motivate them until they choose to participate.

Despite success stories, participants identified significant barriers. Structurally, the lack of continuity in programming was a major issue. Inmates noted that some courses stopped abruptly when external funding or instructors fell through, leaving them disappointed and less inclined to try again. Staff also expressed frustration that chronic under-staffing and heavy administrative burdens pulled them away from educational duties, echoing the need for more personnel and support (as noted in our recommendations).

On a personal level, some inmates initially avoided or dropped out of classes due to fear of failure or being mocked by peers. A few also cited stress or depression that made it hard to concentrate on learning. These issues indicate that educational efforts must be paired with psychological support and confidence-building. *(Peer support also played a role: in a few cases, educated inmates informally tutored others or organized a small book club, with staff encouragement. Such peer-led initiatives, though modest, fostered a more positive atmosphere.)*

In summary, the qualitative findings confirm that education (and the staff who deliver it) can be catalysts for change, fostering self-esteem and hope

among inmates. However, systemic shortcomings and individual hurdles often limit the reach and effectiveness of these efforts.

The findings of this study underscore the transformative potential of educational interventions in prison, while also revealing significant obstacles that limit their impact. Inmates' strong endorsement of education aligns with a broad consensus that education is a cornerstone of rehabilitation. This reflects the human capital perspective: equipping offenders with knowledge and skills addresses root causes of criminal behavior (such as unemployment and social exclusion) and increases the chances of a crime-free life after release. In fact, a meta-analysis found that incarcerated individuals who received correctional education had 43% lower odds of reoffending compared to those who did not (Davis et al., 2013). Our study did not measure recidivism directly, but the attitudinal and behavioral differences we observed – higher optimism and better discipline among program participants – are encouraging proxies for improved post-release outcomes. These changes suggest that educational engagement can serve as a turning point in an offender's life, facilitating a shift from a criminal identity to a prosocial identity. This dovetails with desistance theory, which argues that for individuals to desist from crime they often must adopt a new narrative of themselves as changed, productive members of society (Maruna, 2001). The personal stories in our data (e.g. inmates starting to see themselves as students or workers rather than "criminals") exemplify this re-identification process.

The high regard inmates had for the prison educators highlights the importance of the relational aspect of rehabilitation. It is often noted that *who* delivers an intervention can be as crucial as *what* the intervention is. Our results support this idea: inmates frequently credited their pedagogue for motivating and mentoring them, implying that trust and personal connection were key ingredients in their positive changes. This finding resonates with literature on the therapeutic alliance in corrections, which shows that a supportive staff-inmate relationship can significantly enhance an intervention's effectiveness. For policymakers, this underscores the need to invest not only in programs but also in people – specifically in hiring and training compassionate, skilled staff who can build these one-on-one supportive relationships.

At the same time, our study revealed a clear implementation gap. Inmates' desire to learn far outstripped the opportunities currently available to them. This gap between policy ideals and on-the-ground practice is not unique to North Macedonia – many prison systems, especially those with limited resources, face similar challenges. The European Prison Rules and UNESCO's lifelong learning framework set high standards for prisoner education (Council of Europe, 2020; UNESCO, 2015), but meeting those standards requires sufficient funding, staffing, and institutional commitment. In the prison we studied, educational provision was ad hoc and largely dependent on external initiatives, indicating that the system has not yet made education an integral part of the prison regime. The implication is that governments must treat prison education

as a core service (on par with security and healthcare) rather than an optional add-on. Without such commitment, well-meaning policies remain ineffectual.

Our findings also highlight that andragogical (adult-learning) principles are critical in practice. Inmates engaged most when learning was clearly relevant to their own lives (for example, acquiring skills they could use upon release). Conversely, top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches led to apathy or resistance. The emergence of peer-led study groups in our study suggests that giving prisoners some ownership of the learning process can foster a more positive peer culture. Designing programs that respect inmates' autonomy and speak to their personal goals will likely yield better participation and outcomes.

Moreover, several inmates found that education gave them something essential: hope. By setting goals and imagining a non-criminal future, they gained motivation to change. It is important that this hope be sustained after release—through post-release support like job placement or continued education—so that hard-won progress is not lost. Finally, our findings point to the importance of prison culture. When the institution values rehabilitation (when staff encourage inmates to improve, and achievements are recognized rather than mocked), inmates are far more likely to engage in programs. A positive, “second-chance” culture in prison can thus significantly augment the impact of educational and other rehabilitative efforts.

Conclusion

This study reinforces the view that education is not a peripheral activity but a central pillar of effective prisoner resocialization. In the context of incarceration, educational engagement can catalyze positive identity change – shifting individuals from seeing themselves as offenders to seeing themselves as learners or aspiring workers. Our findings echo broader research in showing that inmates who participate in education are less likely to relapse into crime, and we documented how personal transformations can occur even in a restrictive environment when learning opportunities and supportive mentors are present. In other words, prison education, delivered by dedicated staff, can significantly advance the rehabilitative mission of corrections.

At the same time, we identified serious gaps between the ideal of providing education to every inmate and the reality on the ground. Many prisoners in the studied facility had little access to consistent educational programs due to resource shortages and institutional neglect of this area. These gaps mean the prison system is currently failing to fully capitalize on a critical tool for reducing reoffending. Closing this gap will require concerted efforts: investing in educational infrastructure and personnel, expanding program offerings, and embedding educational objectives into the core prison routine (rather than treating them as secondary). The recommendations below outline steps toward these improvements.

In sum, resocializing incarcerated individuals is a complex challenge, but this work highlights that pedagogical-andragogical practice – education coupled with guidance – is a potent force for change. Strengthening prison education is not only an investment in those behind bars, but in public safety and social betterment. Educated ex-prisoners are less likely to reoffend and more likely to become productive citizens. With the right policies and resources, prisons can fulfill their role as correctional institutions that truly *correct*, offering people who have offended a genuine chance to reform and return to society as positive contributors.

Recommendations

- Increase and train rehabilitation staff. That would mean to hire additional prison pedagogues/andragogues to drastically lower the inmate-to-educator ratio (e.g. from 1:100 to closer to 1:25). Lighter caseloads will enable educators to provide more individualized attention and consistently follow up on each inmate's progress. Investing in professional development for these staff, including training in adult education methods, motivational interviewing, and counseling skills, so they are equipped to engage resistant learners. Improving salaries and career prospects for rehabilitation staff can help attract and retain qualified educators in the prison system.
- Upgrade educational infrastructure and technology, dedicate adequate space and resources for prison education. Establish classrooms, workshops, and library areas in each prison, equipped with learning materials (books, tools, computers) appropriate for adult learners. Modernize educational delivery by introducing secure e-learning platforms – for example, set up computer labs or provide tablets pre-loaded with offline educational content (strictly controlled and without open internet access). These technological tools can expand access to learning (especially in subjects where teachers are scarce) and allow motivated inmates to study at their own pace. Technology should supplement, not replace, human instructors; regular teacher guidance is still essential.
- Diversify and certify programs. Offering a broad range of educational and vocational programs to meet different inmate needs. This should include basic literacy and numeracy courses for those who lack schooling, opportunities to complete primary or secondary education (or equivalent diplomas), vocational training in trades that have demand in the labor market (e.g. carpentry, auto-mechanics, plumbing), and personal development courses (life skills, anger management, parenting, financial literacy). Whenever possible, programs should lead to recognized certifications or diplomas that inmates can use to find jobs post-release. Courses should be scheduled regularly and reliably (not just one-off pilot projects), so that inmates can actually complete them during their sentence.

- Individualized learning plan in order to make education a formal part of each inmate's correctional plan. Shortly after intake, a pedagogue should meet with the inmate to create a personalized learning or development plan that sets specific goals (e.g. "improve reading level to Grade 8" or "complete electrician training course"). This plan should align with the inmate's sentence length and be integrated with other interventions (like therapy or work assignments). Progress on the plan should be reviewed periodically, and reaching milestones (such as passing an exam or earning a certificate) should be recognized and rewarded. For instance, completing educational goals might be considered favorably by parole boards or earn privileged rewards, which provides an incentive for inmates to participate earnestly.
- Strengthen partnerships and continuity, which means collaboration with external educational institutions and organizations to enhance prison programs and ensure continuity after release. Form partnerships with adult education centers, vocational schools, and NGOs so that external instructors or volunteers can teach courses inside prisons (under appropriate vetting). For example, local teachers might conduct evening classes, or NGOs might run workshops on entrepreneurship or computer skills. Establish formal agreements so that if an external program begins (e.g. funded by a donor), the prison administration will strive to sustain it even if external funding ends, preventing programs from abruptly stopping. Also, coordinate with community colleges, job training centers, and probation services to create a bridge for inmates who have studied inside: when they are released, they can be referred directly to equivalent programs or advanced courses on the outside. Ensuring that inmates can continue education or vocational training after release greatly increases the long-term impact of prison programs.
- Embed education in policy and legislation. Formally recognize in national law or prison regulations that education is a right of inmates and a required element of the prison regime. Mandate minimum educational provisions in every correctional facility – for example, that each prison must offer adult basic education and at least one vocational training option – thereby protecting these programs from being cut due to budget pressures. This approach aligns with international standards that education in custody should have "no less a status than work" in prisoners' daily schedules (Council of Europe, 2020). Legislators and prison authorities should also consider introducing mechanisms like sentence credits for completing accredited programs, to institutionalize the principle that rehabilitation efforts (not just good behavior) earn tangible rewards.
- Foster a rehabilitative prison culture. Improving the internal prison culture among both staff and inmates to embrace rehabilitation. This involves training all prison personnel – including correctional officers – on the importance of educational and therapeutic programs, so that they facilitate rather than hinder inmate participation. Staff should be encouraged to see

themselves as partners in the rehabilitation process (not just security enforcers) and to take pride in inmate successes. Highlight success stories of ex-prisoners who got jobs or stayed crime-free after education, as inspirational examples. By consistently sending the message that the prison is a place of growth and second chances, a rehabilitative culture will gradually take hold. Over time, this can make a huge difference: when inmates perceive that self-improvement is expected and respected, they are more likely to invest effort in it, and when staff see rehabilitation as a core part of their job, they are more likely to support and motivate inmates throughout the process.

Implementing these recommendations would move the correctional system closer to realizing the full potential of pedagogical and andragogical practices in resocialization. The ultimate goal is a virtuous cycle: better-educated, rehabilitated individuals leave prison and are less likely to reoffend, leading to safer communities and proving that investing in rehabilitation yields tangible benefits. Each step above contributes to building a prison environment where the capacity for change is nurtured rather than neglected, giving incarcerated people the best possible chance to turn their lives around.

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