

THE EDUCATION OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD OF CRIME PREVENTION: ORGANIZATION, IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION*

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SUMMARY

This paper will present the course of criminality growth over the last decade. The noted growth of criminality and recidivism is pointing to the fact that the prevention strategies are either not functioning properly or they have serious shortcomings. There are many possible reasons for this. Before all, it depends on a country's criminal politics, willingness to solve the problem, organizational possibilities which include, among other things, financing, connecting various institutions and achieving the appropriate level of expertness. This paper will be mainly focused on the problems of education of professionals working on all levels of prevention. In the Republic of Croatia since the beginning of the 80's of the last century, a great number of different educations from the various psychotherapeutic forms (such as reality therapy, transactional analysis, cybernetics of psychotherapy, neuro-linguistic programming, gestalt, etc.) is being conducted. They are bringing together professionals of various work profiles who all work in the field of human sciences, from the kindergarden teachers to the prison rehabilitation teams. These education programs are often financed by the institutions themselves (in most cases this is not sufficient). Regarding the fact that the only indicators of crime prevention effectiveness and recidivism growth are the ones mentioned above, it would be logical to conclude that all of the undertaking efforts are either insufficient or aimed wrongfully. Analyzing the situation regarding the education of professionals and the usability of such education in their work in government institutions, we conclude that the Republic of Croatia is in a very unpleasant situation. The arguments are following: - the Republic of Croatia still does not possess the understanding on which forms of psychotherapy are officially recognized (besides psychoanalysis); there is still no sufficient data on which forms of psychotherapy are the most effective in treating different populations; the acquired knowledge is rarely used for the purposes of making precise treatment programs for any of the institutions in which these professionals are employed; existence of inertia and unwillingness of institutions to accept the changes; there is no co-operation between institutions - the professionals have no knowledge on creating programs that can be scientifically evaluated and, in that way, presenting the efficacy of those programs; there is always the problem of insufficient funds which results in the unsatisfactory number of educated professionals; education programs are not lasting long enough. These are only some of the arguments. In this paper, authors will yield the analysis of reasons for such a poor usage of acquired knowledge from the various psychotherapeutic forms and suggestions for its improvement.

Key Words: *staff education, crime prevention*

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the last several years a significant increase of criminal acts has been noticed in the Republic of Croatia (See Table 1). Besides that, some new forms of crimes that have not been identified as "worrying" during the last 10 years, have been introduced and labeled as a "disturbing crimes" in today's societies. These are people trafficking, cyber criminality etc.

Such an increase of crime rates points out the fact that preventive strategies for this problem are either malfunctioning or have serious deficiencies. The causes of these problems can be multiple, but they are mainly dependent on government crime policy in terms of readiness for the problem solving. This type of problem was of a particular interest of a known criminologist Walter Miller (Bersani, 1970), who stated out that some authors in their analysis have confirmed that public sensibility about delinquency issues serves to psychological functions of an individual.

Table 1. Data on reported and convicted offenders in Croatia

	REPORTED	CONVICTED
1997	43203	12390
1998	48643	12243
1999	44893	16205
2000	45485	16466
2001	52756	16508
2002	61889	19040

Adult offenders, reported, and convicted – statistical reports 2003, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2003.

These functions come down to an assumption that, in dealing with crime, effective programs and strategies represent a serious threat to the very persistence of each institution, which leads us to the conclusion that those institutions do not want this problem to be solved. In other words, if problem of crime could be dealt with in effective way, soon this problem would cease to exist in such scope and institutions would become obsolete. Having in mind that people who govern those institutions have great deal of power and money which they would loose if institution cease to exist, it is obvious that they do not want to deal with the crime problem effectively.

Nonetheless, constant increase of both crime and recidivism demands urgent and rapid answers of a society, because the society in whole would benefit if those problems could be dealt with in

more effective way. One of those answers is the education of professionals working in the crime prevention which will be the main theme of this paper.

Firstly, it is important to emphasize the fact that the Croatian high-education system is not in coordination with the European system. Undergraduate education is fairly rigid and inadequate, which means that the curriculum has already been made for the students so they have very little, or more likely, no possibilities of choosing the lecture courses for specialization in a field by their own choice. For example, on some faculties courses exists specialized in management principles. Knowledge and techniques learned on such courses can be greatly useful in creating and managing prevention programs. But, the problem here is that students do not have the opportunity of attending such courses during their regular undergraduate education because these could not be found in the curriculum of their faculties, which means they are deprived of these valuable principles, methods and techniques.

The undergraduate study in the Republic of Croatia lasts for four years, and after the graduation, former student is considered as a fresh-made "expert", but these "experts" are not specialized in any particular field. As an example, Faculty of education and rehabilitation sciences (to be more precise, Department of behavior disorders) during its undergraduate study offers knowledge and work techniques both for juvenile and adult offenders, but the opportunity of specialization of work with either of these populations has not been offered to the students. So, after graduating, we have an expert who knows a little bit of everything, but without any concrete skill or method which he can use either with a juvenile or an adult offender. That is why after graduation they attend various additional education which give them needed knowledge.

Postgraduate study is mostly academic and not specialized, so, again, the "expert" doesn't acquire any technique that he can implement or use in his field of work. In the field of human sciences various types of scientific researches are being conducted, but there are no research in the field of treatment efficiency.

It is important to stress out that there is no specialized postgraduate study in the field of criminality here in Croatia which could make possible the implementation of new methods and skills in the field of delinquency prevention. Under the framework of the postgraduate study research are being made and various scientific results are achieved, but those results are basically useless in the practice.

The results of scientific research do not apply in everyday practice due to several reasons; for example, practitioners and persons who have power to decide both rarely read scientific literature. Furthermore, the application of the results demands the great investment of energy and resources – there is no enough motive for this. Also, there is a general resistance concerning implementation of new practices and policies.

Therefore, we can conclude that the Croatian academic system lacks true training, learning of skills and methods that can be used in practical work.

As previously mentioned, these “gaps” in practical knowledge are being supplemented with various education.

This paper will give an overview of three types of additional education:

1. **Education from the various psycho-therapeutic courses (reality therapy, cybernetics of psychotherapy, neuro-linguistic programming, gestalt, transactional analysis, etc...)**
2. **Education in forms of short seminars, courses and work-shops**
3. **Education related to a specific programs which are already being conducted**

2. EDUCATION FROM THE VARIOUS PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC COURSES

These courses *came from the* western countries and *started with their implementation* in the late 1970's. These are all courses that represent alternative approach to psychoanalysis. These have not been recognized as official psychotherapies by the Croatian authorities, and persons who have certificates from these courses are not enlisted in the official registry of psychotherapists.

Education *like these* last for several years and are quite expensive, so the institutions who are interested in sending their practitioners to attend them are hindered almost in the beginning. Because of the expenses, only a few practitioners were being sent on these courses to *really learn some* valuable skills and methods. *It is not a rare case* that practitioners have to pay for them out of their own pockets in order to do something for themselves.

These courses are attended by a practitioners from various fields and levels of prevention, from kinder-garden and school teachers, social care and services, to jail and prison treatment staff. So, a large number of people *has finished certain education* and received a certificate that says they have

gained some new knowledge and skills which can be implemented in their work in order to improve it. Regarding what has been previously said, it would be logical to expect their competence and results to reach a higher level. But, instead of precisely structured programs with possibility of the scientific evaluation, *we got nothing*. It looks that practitioners still can not communicate in terms of programming. They have an understanding of treatment that differs from scientific understanding. Most of them do not think that treatment should be highly structured, well designed, thoroughly conducted and evaluated. For them, treatment is every contact with the client - solving their daily problems, dealing with their requests and complaints, etc.

So, the question can be stated, what is the reason for this situation? One possible answer *lies in the fact* that “certified practitioners” do not apply newly gained knowledge and skills, or they do apply them in a very rare occasions, so there are no visible results. Their employers do not expect nor *demand of them to use those* new skills in their work. Is this knowledge being applied or not, and how? No one knows the answer!

But, the real fact is, there very few programs that are based on the knowledge and principles achieved through these courses. Those programs are limited on small areas – only several schools in whole Zagreb area.

It is expected of implementation of this knowledge to improve the general competence and results. But, what means “better results?” And who supervises the implementation? The persons who should be doing all that are employers. Are they doing it? It seems not.

Second in the line of possible answers are, of course, insufficient funds. Even when the practitioner has a will and new ideas how to improve things, he or she often comes to a dire street because of the lack of needed funds.

Besides that, a problem of passive resistance of the fellow co-workers also should be mentioned and questioned. Mostly, the co-workers are afraid of changes or they have no time for new things since they are overwhelmed with their regular job duties. This problem will be addressed further in the paper.

3. EDUCATION IN FORMS OF SHORT SEMINARS, COURSES AND WORK-SHOPS

The second type of education courses which has been in growth in the Republic of Croatia during the last few years, are in forms of seminars,

courses and work-shops. They are short-lasting (mostly 2-3 days) and are conducted by the Croatian experts. For example, *these* are series of education on alcohol abuse in the Center for education of the Croatian Ministry of Justice, short seminars on substance abuse for jail and prison's treatment staff, social care and service staff, school and kinder-garden teachers etc...

This type of education courses are based on supplying general information on the given problem, and in best cases, on practicing a few skills in dealing with it. In most cases, this is not sufficient enough for a practitioner to really learn some new things and to improve the old ones. Furthermore, this type of education offers only specific skills for a specific problem, meaning, they are based on educators experiences that can not be always applied *on the whole population*.

Since this education obviously does not give enough knowledge or chance to practice some client-based work skills, a few questions can be brought up – what is their purpose then? How much can a person learn in 2 or 3 days and is there any sense in what *he/she has* just “learned”? And exactly how good are those educators?

So, if the hypotheses made by Miller (Bersani, 1970) are true, *meaning* institutions involved in making, conducting and applying programs for solving delinquency issues are not really interested in dealing with those problems in appropriate way and that the public concern about delinquency serves only to psychological functions of an individual. The possible conclusion is: this education serves only to satisfy the concerned public, or in other words, to create an illusion that something is being done *on the field of prevention* criminality. People who are the main educators on these seminars are quite often *person exposed* in media and presented by the same media as “the experts on this particular field”. Behind all that is not a real concern for the effective prevention strategies; instead, it is gratification of particular psychological needs of an individual, as *early* mentioned which, of course, includes making a great amount of money.

And what happens after these work-shops and seminars?

The form has been satisfied, meaning, general public eyes are blurred with the notion that something will be done. Certain people have earned a lot of money. What about the practitioners, what did they get? All they got was a little general information about the problem and virtually no practical skills.

Now, assuming that those practitioners are people who want to learn some new ways, new

skills, who want some practical knowledge and applicable ideas, the question is: why are those practitioners so quiet when they found out that their expectations have not been fulfilled? They have been sitting there and listening something they already know, and for what?

Possible answers may be these: since the educators are presented as leading experts in the particular field, the professionals who work in that field are not feeling competent enough to ask a problem question or even dispute what was said earlier. Also, since they are overwhelmed with their everyday-jobs, it suits them well to escape from it for a day or two, therefore, if they have to be somewhere for a couple of hours and listen without any further obligations, then why not?

But, even if they find something they can implement in their work after one of these short courses, there is an identical problem mentioned earlier when we were talking about the first type of education. Namely, their employers are not asking nor demanding of them to use those new skills, much less directing and supervising their work if they decide to do so.

4. EDUCATION RELATED TO A SPECIFIC PROGRAM

Third type of education stands for Education which *are* part of the program *that* is already being conducted and *are* designed for all the people working on the specific program. *These* Education *are* rarely conducted and the reason for that is quite simple: there is a very small number of structured programs for a certain targeted population, with precisely defined goals and methods of work, and conducted by the people who have learned and implemented principles of education courses from the first type. Sometimes, professionals involved in these programs have completed some of the education from the first type, and some of them have attended some short seminars and workshops. It would be ideal if they all have completed the first and the second type of education, but this *is really a rare case*.

The main goal of such education is providing new, applicable, working skills and techniques that can be implemented and will certainly give positive results.

Some of the programs who *conducted these* Education are: Family violence prevention program, (Martinjak, 1998); “Yoga-nidra” Relaxation Program in the Minimum Security Penal Institution Valtura-Pula, (Brgles, 1996); Institutional and post-penal treatment of drug abusing offenders, (Mik-

šaj-Todorović, Butorac, 2003); Education of School Teachers – successful and quality work with students and their parents, (Kranželić-Tavra, Ferić, 2003); Treatment of alcohol abusing offenders in the Medium Security Prison in Turopolje (Mikšaj-Todorović, Buđanovac, Tatalović, 2001)

As mentioned earlier, institutions have no interest in dealing with the delinquency problem, because it could question the whole purpose of certain institution. Because of that, all preventive programs are condemned to multiple problems since *beginning*.

The main goal of the “Family violence prevention” program was revealing crimes against juveniles and applying equivalent measures once they are revealed. Since the practitioners (from health department, science, social care and police) working on this program had insufficient knowledge, it was necessary to educate them in how to recognize child abuse symptoms and how to work with the child once the symptoms have been revealed (we should point out here that the Ministry of Health have decided not to co-operate). It is interesting how these experts had no previous knowledge of how to deal with abuse children, therefore, they had to be educated from the beginning by the project leader. After one year of working on the project, the number of revealed crimes against children doubled, stating that the program was more than successful. But, when the project leader was assigned to another place, the program was terminated.

“Yoga-nidra” Relaxation Program in the Minimum Security Penal Institution Valtura-Pula” was conducted in the Minimum Security Prison Valtura in Pula. A treatment staff worker came up with the idea, and along with the professors of the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, designed the program. The project leader with the help of physician conducted the project. The project goal was to regulate offender’s aggressive behavior, or more precisely, to facilitate offender’s behavior transformation by educating them how to check their aggressive behavior and to reduce muscular tension by the techniques of “yoga-nidra”. The program was evaluated and yielded good results. So, the project leader, who is certificated “yoga-nidra” teacher offered this program to the Ministry of Justice for the application in other institutions, but he got no positive reply nor money to continue. Eventually, the program was terminated too.

Education of practitioners has also being conducted in the program “Institutional and post-penal treatment of drug abusing offenders” on a three levels: prison treatment staff, practitioners in the

Center for abuse prevention and students. The education was conducted by project leaders.

The main problems are insufficient funds for staff education, and their work on the Program is not adequately paid. So, the team manage this problem through a mutual collaboration, support, knowledge exchange and collegial supervision (Mikšaj-Todorović, Butorac, 2003). Besides this, the institution practitioners are overwhelmed with their regular work (mostly administrative work), therefore, it leaves them little time for the work on the program - literature study and planning the use of techniques and skills. They can not fully concentrate on the program.

“Education of School Teachers – successful and quality work with students and their parents” program was intended for school teachers as significant *persons* directly involved in shaping student’s personality and behavior, *and for parents*. The main goal of this program was education and training of teachers and parents in techniques of quality relationships, more adequate knowledge transfer, non-aggressive problem solving, recognition and expression of emotions. Also, the teachers were given knowledge’s about constructive work with parents in order to help them deal with student’s problems.

Problems started to appear even before the program was initiated. Namely, the funds for the program were supplied by the Ministry of Education, but they were almost immediately cancelled without any explanation, so the headmasters had to pay for the education out of the school’s budget.

The second problem was the teachers. The education was on a “non-voluntary” basis and the schedule of the education was inadequate (Friday afternoon and Saturday).

Passive resistance also occurred, since the teachers were not ready to hear someone from the university “telling them how to do their own job”.

Nevertheless, the program finally started and the attendants seemed to be a little interested in the subject, but just enough to demand “a magic wand” which could solve all their student problems. By that they showed how much they were overwhelmed with the job and that the “burnout” syndrome is on a pretty high level.

In the end, the supervisions became a kind of “complaint” sessions; they complained how hard it is for them to work in such harsh conditions, how no one understands them. They talked about general education issues, forgetting the Program itself.

They stopped talking about of knowledge they gained, about current program issues, etc.. Thus,

supervisions lost their original meaning – the monitoring of Program delivering.

Alcohol abuse offender's treatment program in Medium Security Prison in Turopolje was cancelled because the Ministry of Justice had a quite indifferent attitude towards the program. It was up to the project leader's good will *shell he* continue with the work or not. Now, the treatment program for alcohol abuse offenders still exists, but it is not being proceeded according to previous strategy.

To conclude, all the above programs showed that they had not been or not being conducted systematically because of the insufficient funds, indifferent attitude, lack of motivation, passive resistance, and "burnout" syndrome. The members of the institutional staff initiated some of these programs and couldn't find the resources to continue with their work.

One of the biggest problems we are dealing with is that institutions whose practitioners have achieved some education, is that they are not prone to implement those skills and methods in direct approach to clients. Also, they don't allow their own staff to start new programs. Therefore, third type education is almost never initialized from inside the institutions.

We should point out that it is important for a practitioner to be involved in both first and second type of Education, so the skills can be applied in the third type. In another words, those practitioners should be *the educators* of their work colleagues and creating with them some new, better prevention programs. But, *as early stated out*, the institution administrators do not insist in applying those new skills, so it's up to practitioners and their good will to use them. In *regard* to constant crime rate growth and malfunction of prevention programs, seems obvious that they chose not to apply them in their work.

Also, "Yoga-nidra" Relaxation Program in the Minimum Security Penal Institution Valtura-Pula" and "Family violence prevention" programs showed how it is virtually impossible to create and run a prevention program (regardless of how good it is) without psychological and financial support of institutions. So, practitioners use the newly learned skills, but without any structure and evaluation possibilities, and without any official support.

Referring to the fact that first and second type education *are present* for almost three decades, it is logically to presume that the number of third type education and related programs should also increase. Sadly, this is not the case. Even if there are such programs, there is no written evidence of them.

Therefore, our experts (who have finished Education from the first and the second type) are either not working in preventive programs or do not report on their work. If we look back on the crime statistics, the first presumption is more likely to be the correct one. We can ask ourselves – why?

One possible answer lies in the fact that very small number of practitioners *has* enough money to complete any of the Education from the first type *since* they are too expensive. Because of that, the majority of them choose *s* the second type of education, which is much less expensive and short-termed, but they receive almost no practical skills, so in the end they *feel incompetent* for creating new prevention programs with clearly stated goals, working skills and strategies in which they would have an educator's role.

We have mentioned earlier that many of the people working in the institutions are suffering from so called "burnout" syndrome, which makes them unprepared for any kind of change. The reason is following: those changes demand additional commitment, which include consulting updated literature, and since the nature of their job is that it doesn't stop at the end of the working day, additional commitment means doing two separate jobs. Also, we must emphasize the fact that their work is burdened with huge amount of administrative work which leaves them less time to work with their clients.

This whole problem area has already been recognized in other countries, which have conducted several research and meta-analysis of this problem and came up with findings that can be applied to all other countries with the same difficulties. According to these results, there are some obstacles that are in common to all programs (Gendreau, 1979).

The first one is called theoreticism and that involves accepting or rejecting knowledge on the basis of one's personal values and experiences. It means that every program is put into the socio-political context of the society in which it takes place. If such program demands significant change in the institution's model of work, it is likely that the program will receive a verbal support or even permission for conducting it, but without any necessary funds. Of course, those programs are expensive, because they bring almost revolutionary changes; therefore, they represent a serious threat of existence to some institutions. One of the biggest problems here is that bewildering array of disciplines (e.g., criminology, economics, law, management, psychiatry, psychology, social work and sociology) and occupations (e.g., academics, administrators, clinicians and the police) are compet-

ing in an unseemly fashion for the holy grail of intellectual hegemony (Gendreau, Ross, 1979). That leads to anti-intellectualism, to not drain knowledge from other reliable sources.

This also includes a phenomenon called "ethnocentrism". Once it is taken for granted that our disciplinary boundaries and the sociopolitical context we live in adequately define how things should be, then it is a small step to tacitly assume our reality is superior to others'. It is not a rare case that various "experts" are forgetting the multi-causality of problems, so they ignore the results from other disciplines working in the same field. This can create quite a mess in heads of other professionals in practice who tend to read outside their disciplinary boundaries.

The second obstacle can be called "unsuccessful technology transfer" (Gendreau, 1995), meaning necessary information are not getting into hands of those who need it. It came out that many substance abuse practitioners' clinical decisions are never based on reading professional periodicals. If practitioners do receive information that changes their approach to treatment, it tends to be from workshops; even then, it is relatively small percentage who profit.

Over the years, the criminal justice system has witnessed a new generation of high-level administrators who are generalists with little or no training in the helping professions (Gendreau, 1996:152). These administrators have attended several workshops or short courses and *find themselves* competent enough to create a strong, precise preventive program that can be objectively and scientifically evaluated, and of course, that brings positive results. This represents politically correct programming, meaning those administrators create such programs that are mostly *ad hoc* organized for a single purpose: that politicians can say something is being done!

Administrators in Croatia often attend some types of education, but they, same as the practitioners, do not use their knowledge to create new programs and to improve and support existing methods of work.

There are pretty clear examples of theoreticism and lack of true administrative support in the Project "Institutional and aftercare treatment of convicted addicts". Project received mostly verbal support from the administration and very little financial and material support. Furthermore, some members of the medical profession "attacked" the Project several times – they do not accept the concepts different from theirs; however, in the field of addiction treatment there is enough place for all

kind of professionals, same as for their collaboration.

5. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Most of the articles in Republic of Croatia that are related to the issue of prevention and treatment of delinquency end in so-called "should-be-ology"; it is a well known notion, which can be defined as presentation of the changes, methods and so on, that are necessary for improvement of certain field of work, if only it could be implemented in the practice. The authors usually list the problems that should be resolved. Sometimes they present a way in which the situation could be improved and sometimes they do not.

However, such way of writing articles is completely useless for the practice, and there are at least several reasons for that:

1. Very few people read the articles, and those who do most often are not in the circle of decision-makers. So, most of the published articles remain unnoticed and soon are forgotten.

2. If someone of the decision-makers do read such article, it has no effect, because in the decision making, the facts based upon the scientific researches are the least important ones. The dominant interests are professional interests, interests of the dominant groups or personal interests of the people who promote their own ways and methods regardless of their efficiency.

3. The decision-makers often do not have the intellectual capacity needed for understanding the messages of such articles.

4. New ideas about organization are hard to perpetrate into the rigid Croatian system, because of following reasons: It is easier to continue using old methods, even if they are inefficient; people in the positions of power do not want the changes that could expose the inefficiency of old methods (for example, introduction of evaluation); Some individuals who are occupying the positions of power have personal interests in old ways of work (for example, giving lectures in quasi-education); There are no basic preconditions for introduction of new ideas – reorganization of the system, providing the material resources, employment of new professionals etc.

The only way in which some new idea can be accepted is this – that someone from the position of power sees some kind of personal gain in it – material or promotional (for example, victory in elections). Unfortunately, the ideas that are implemented out of such motives rarely benefit the community,

and most often only people who benefit from them are those who introduced them. Besides, such projects last very shortly, only as much as the people who introduced them need to gain some benefit.

If it is so, then the question can be asked: why write the articles that propose introduction of new ideas at all? It is very probable that they will not have any direct impact on the practice, and that they will end up as the part of the exams for the students and literature for those rare enthusiasts.

They should be written primarily because permanent writing and promotion of such articles, along with the attempts to make an impact on practice, in some 30, 50 or 100 years may result in some positive breakthrough in theory and practice.

This process in Republic of Croatia was, is and will be long-termed, hard, from time to time stopped and set back by wars and promotion of medieval ideas made by the ignorants who rule the country without consulting the experts. It is also totally uncertain, because there are no guarantees that anything will be better in the future.

Such pessimistic attitude is, unfortunately, reinforced by years of experience, which showed how the war and the change of system made a setback for the whole country, and especially the field of social care and work with problematic population – convicts, addicts, juvenile delinquents etc. There are no guarantees that the near future will not bring a system even more backward than the present one.

The articles should be written because in 30, 50, 100 or 200 years, the expert of the future will be able to see that in our times there were people with keen perception of the problems, who proposed adequate solutions, and analyzed the reasons for their non-implementation. In such way, the future experts will be able to learn through our mistakes.

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