

PRESENTATION OF THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN

THE 2nd AVLONA GYMNASIUM & LYCEUM CLASSES IN THE AVLONA PRISON FOR YOUNG

OFFENDERS

AND

THE PROGRAMME OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES "CRIMINOLOGY"

OF PANTEION UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES

By

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The object of the criminological science is the criminal phenomenon as a whole. The basic elements of this phenomenon are: the establishment of rules (*penalization*), the breach of the rules (*crime*) and social reaction to the breach of the rules (*formal*: penal sanctions and *informal social reactions* – fear, anger, sadness etc.).

In view of the fact that Criminology is simultaneously a theoretical and an applied science, prisons are a key area of study and application of the science. The introduction of criminal sanctions by the legislator and the application of these sanctions for all citizens who violate criminal laws, represent a conquest of democracy. In this way arbitrariness and discrimination against certain categories of citizens, who are weaker, is avoided. However, criminal sanctions are not only reduced to the imprisonment but alternative sanctions, such as community service, social order service, probation and more, are also foreseen. Especially for minors, detention to the Prison for Young Offenders, is the exception rather than the rule. In Greece, juvenile criminal law has been amended several times in recent years towards a more favorable treatment. Within "juvenile prison", however, not only minors are detained, but also young people up to the age of 25. In any case, although the trends in crime, during the last 20 years, reflect a general deterioration, confinement of juvenile

offenders does not usually have the desired effect in terms of "treatment/correction". Instead, it often contributes to their integration into a criminal career.

Having the status of a postgraduate program, we understand the importance of the way sentences are served and, for this reason, we include the educational experiences in various prisons, but mainly in juvenile detention centers, into our academic modules. In this specific detention centre we started, back in 2010, to engage in a joint session with the students of the Gymnasium and of the Lyceum, which continues until today. Additionally, from 2013, this *joint session* has been enriched with a *cooperative painting workshop* and with other approaches of artistic expression. All these activities were carried out in collaboration of the speaker, as Director of MSc Criminology, and Mr. Damianos, Director of the Gymnasium and Lyceum of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders, by special permission of the Directorate of the Prison and the Ministry of Justice, which was given without any problems all these years. The choice of this specific prison was made for two reasons: a) it is the largest juvenile correctional facility and b) it is a "model" prison where a number of educational activities and functions of an artistic nature take place. The environment is therefore favorable for the development of creative activities of an innovative character.

Let us now, briefly, look at the highlights of this collaboration.

2010

On April 27th 2010 the first Visit - Session of postgraduate students of Criminology of the Panteion University at the Gymnasium – Lyceum of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders on "***The role of social factors in juvenile delinquency***", took place.

The topics of the module were directly related to young prisoners and allowed them, through the knowledge provided, to reflect further not only on their individual situations and of their peers but also on the concept of delinquency in general, which was one of the main features of their behavior. On the other hand, is also provided the opportunity for the postgraduate students of Criminology not only to learn about issues concerning the science they were studying but also to be able to communicate directly and exchange views with young inmates, listening to their thoughts and opinions. In addition, all this took place within the detention facility, thus providing a special view of the alternative utilization of space

with the presence of individuals from both "extra" and "intra muros", on the basis of equal participation.

2011

On May 4th 2011 the second Visit – Session of the postgraduate students of Criminology at Panteion University at the Gymnasium – Lyceum of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders entitled: ***"The punishment of imprisonment and alternative penalties under the scope of the protection of human rights. The specificity of minors and the intra muros living conditions"***, was held.

The first matter focused on the development of custodial sentences and alternative penalties in the light of human rights as well as on the "reality" of the prison system, focusing on issues such as detention, groups of detainees, prisoners' relations - prison staff, etc. The scientific approach was incorporated in the light of a dialogue capable of contributing to the development of communication between young scientists and young prisoners and to highlight the importance of human rights as an evaluation measure of the effectiveness of any criminal sanction.

During the discussions, the detainees made comments, emphasizing the need for reforms in their penal treatment, with proposals regarding the legal framework, the severity of the sentences and the living conditions in the closed prison system. The most commonly mentioned suggestions were: a) to reduce the length of imprisonment, especially for offenses related to drugs, b) to replace incarceration with alternative criminal sanctions, c) to abolish the quarantine measure after returning from leave, d) to increase the frequency of visiting, e) to develop specific areas to allow interaction with their partners, f) to improve hygiene, for larger cells and to increase activities and to provide relevant equipment (for sports, etc.). In general, the desire expressed mostly by the prisoners was for their right to a second chance.

2012

The session of this year was on the subject of violence, and the first oration, from the postgraduate students, involved the ***"The school violence"*** Particular emphasis was placed, in this context, to the "switching" of roles between the perpetrator-victim, which is indicative of the amplification of the cycle of violence, the role of the teacher in cases of

school violence and bullying and the effects on psychosocial growth and development of the child victim. Tackling the problem requires systematic prevention and adoption of policies that will contribute to its' eradication.

Of particular interest, in this session, was the discourse of the students of the Gymnasium – Lyceum of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders, who presented their reports, on which they had worked in groups, which were centered on the importance of the school as it was perceived by them. The reports were constructed on the famous work of Papanoutsos "**The law of the fist**", in collaboration with their teacher Ms. Tyraski, and which demonstrated the different angles and characterizations of what a school is for incarcerated students. An important contribution was that of their English Professor Ms. Samara who helped facilitate communication with students who do not handle the Greek language well. The diversity and variety of these views was often accompanied by the emotional expression of words and the relevance of demonstration which was given by each of the students. Some characteristic and representative quotes of the students on the school include "a fishbowl with fresh air", "escape", "something that gives value to dreams for the future."

The conclusion derived from their views is that the school is a means of escape from the sad routine of prison, since it leaves them with a "taste of freedom" and, during school hours, they also retain their status of the student, allowing them to be equal with every student in our society.

During the second section of the session, the postgraduate students referred to the "**general social prevention of juvenile delinquency**", while the discussion focused on the phenomenon of racism and xenophobia. The young prisoners admitted that nationality and citizenship is the primary characteristic which is taken into account for the inclusion into a group and that these are the features on which the treatment of the person by the other inmates depends upon. At this point the interventions of the postgraduate students concentrated on highlighting the negative effects of such discrimination which divide the group, making living conditions in prison even more difficult.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the observation made by Mr. Damianos: "*What is the factor that causes aggression in a person or a group?*" It is mainly the fear of the unknown. A defensive reaction against anything which summarizes and represents what we might call the "other" or the "alien" to our habits, our beliefs and ultimately to ourselves. This

tendency is not confined to prison. It is reproduced consciously or unconsciously outside of prison too, except that "within the walls" the phenomenon is magnified, sometimes uncontrollably.

Let us remember the words of a student during the discussion:

"The "large" come from the "little". Effort and struggle. Respect, trust, communication, learning to understand opinions, even if I do not agree. We have escaped from the laws of the jungle "

As well as from one of his classmates: *"The school is important to me. It is the family that I did not have, my classmates my siblings and my teachers, my parents ... I want to have a good life ... "*

2013

In 2013, two consecutive Visits-Sessions on the 23rd and on the 26th of April 2013, entitled **"Drugs: Phenomenology and particular questions of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation"** and **"Art and Prison. Representations of prison through art and the specific forms of artistic expression "**, respectively, took place.

The second visit was enriched, for the first time, by a collective painting workshop between the students of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders School and the postgraduate students of Criminology at Panteion University. The choice of the theme of the second Visit-Session was based on the painting workshop that followed and which was proven to function more interactively by allowing both, on the one hand, young prisoners to communicate in a direct way and without language restrictions on the means available to a prisoner to express their reality and, on the other hand, for the postgraduate students to understand the importance of the need of young prisoners to communicate this reality through art, a need which is directly linked to the issue of freedom. The importance of this session emerged in the most beautiful way in the art workshop that took place. This experience, in addition to the significant educational benefits for the postgraduate students of Criminology, is also a life experience that presents the opportunity for fruitful reflection. Given the well-established cooperation between the two organizations, which has the type of signed protocol, such initiatives strengthen efforts towards a common goal: the social reintegration of juvenile detainees.

The presentation of the second visit topic - module was aimed, through a series of various artistic creations (music, graffiti, painting, poetry, theater, dance pottery, video production animation etc.) by prisoners from different detention facilities in Greece, to highlight the educational and therapeutic role of art as a form of expression. Starting from the semantic analysis of the concept of art and the forms it assumes, the art forms which have historically developed within the prison were mentioned, with the most characteristic example being the rebetika songs. Subsequently, special emphasis given to various cultural events and projects carried out with the participation of prisoners. Exhibitions of paintings, embroidery and sculpture, poetry, music and theater shows performed by various detention facilities in Greece and abroad, helped to redefine the concept of creative use of 'free' time in prison. Particularly aesthetically pleasing and of effective sensitivity was the video-animation, that was presented for the first time in public in the context of our visit, and which was implemented by a group of students of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders School, under the responsibility of Art Teacher Ms. V.Douzeni. This video-animation was based on the story "The Giving Tree" and its' faultlessness proves the consistency and perseverance with which the students who participated in the production team worked.

2014

In 2014 there were two visits-sessions on the 9th and 10th of April 2014. The theme was **"Youth and Education Intra Muros: The Greek Experience"** and **"Youth and Education Intra Muros: The European Experience"**. These presentations were prepared by the postgraduate students of Panteion University. The detainees, in turn, posed questions and expressed personal concerns and requests, which were heard with great attention.

The choice of the theme was held with the aim of informing young prisoners on the overall situation in the educational system of prisons, both in Greece and abroad. In this regard, the opportunity was given to explore further projects which could be implemented in the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders schools, with the simultaneous support of the students and the teachers and, of course, with the consent of the competent services.

The second visit took the form of a collaborative painting workshop among students of the Avlona School and the postgraduate students of Criminology **on the subject of release from prison.**

During this common workshop, the students of the school and the postgraduate students were able to communicate more directly and in depth. More specifically, in the context of this year's module, the exchange of questions between the students of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders School and the postgraduate students of Criminology was attempted, in order to identify research opinions, thoughts and concerns. The young prisoners made many interesting and relevant questions. The contribution of the Director of the Gymnasium – Lyceum of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders was important, in order to involve a large numbers of students, by recording their questions and grouping them in classes before they were presented.

Most of the inmates' concerns, related to issues on punishment (fair/unfair) and the way of enforcing it, such as "Why are long sentences given for minor offenses?", "Why do the dates and court decisions differ between the accused, even if it is the same or similar offense? ", "why are people unjustly in prison? ", " how do you believe that punishments between minors and adults for the same offense should be differentiated? ", etc. The desire of students to communicate directly with relatives and friends from their environment was also expressed and was delivered with questions like "why are open visits to relatives not authorized", "why is permission not given for 'free' visits when there are spaces in which these can be performed ".

With the encouragement of the postgraduate students, the young prisoners expressed the first word they thought of when hearing the word "release". These words were: **freedom, family, love, life, school, sea , fun, joy, good food, love**. In this way, therefore, the school's students and the postgraduate students co-created, in a visual manner, the "dream" of release based on these words. In this artistic "dream", creatively optimistic symbols such as the sun, the sea, music, and general life outside the prison, were portrayed, but the pupils' concerns about the transition were also expressed.

The artistic achievement was particularly important as it gave the opportunity for pupils and students to interact and communicate through a common creative action, not only through words. It is worth mentioning, at this point, that many of the foreign prisoners, who did not participate in the discussion because of difficulties in understanding the language, attended the artistic events, with pleasure. The cooperation of the school's and the university's students was excellent on both sides. The different colors and sketches were quick to "break

the ice", creating a sense of intimacy and closeness, and, gradually, the blank canvas turned into a rich, emotional and symbolic artwork.

The eye looks through the wire mesh of the detention facility, the divided person on one side is happy and positive and envisions the future, while the other is presented as being frightened, an ear that hears music and is synchronized with life, the sun is in the center of the artwork to "shine" it's glow on the rest of the artwork, a shining beacon, a frigate and several pictures and snapshots of everyday life such as sea, fish, flowers, heaven, people, were some of the images created.

The fervor, zeal and desire of the students to express themselves and their special talent were impressive. Painting is a universal language which unites people and facilitates their communication and it was strongly felt throughout the course of this artistic communication.

For the 5th consecutive year, the cooperation between the Gymnasium and Lyceum of the Avlona Prison for Young Offenders and Postgraduate Programme of Criminology succeeded in offering a lifetime experience to graduate students with educational benefits. Additionally, the young prisoners were given the opportunity of a responsible communication and creative interactivity with peers who do not treat them with negative stereotypes. In all our meetings, the postgraduates offer small snacks and refreshments to their fellow speakers as well as drawing and sporting equipment and materials. Similarly, the young prisoners, their teachers and the Directorate of the Prison honor us with invitations to inspired celebrations organized by them, and it seems as if they enjoy our presence and collaborations.

This collaboration is scheduled and will be held in April **2015**.

On this basis, the main goal of these meetings, which is to create new routes for the reintegration of prisoners, is achieved.