THE VIEWS OF EDUCATORS ON THE UTILISATION OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) IN CONTROLLED EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS: THE EXAMPLE OF THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Reintegration constitutes a systematic strategy for integrating individuals in correctional facilities into the community. It methodically addresses the factors that contribute to the recurrence of delinquent behaviour while simultaneously reinforcing those that will aid in the stability of this integration. From this perspective, incarcerated individuals need to be educated on how society and the state operate. A crucial part of this education, not as a privilege but as a necessity for reintegration into a world where technological advancements affect the structure and functions of social systems, is familiarisation with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). For this reason, educators who undertake the task of educating delinquent individuals have an exceptionally challenging job. They strive to prepare individuals who are already disadvantaged in various aspects of their lives for their return to society, in highly restrictive environments, both in terms of educational and technological infrastructure. This research is part of a postdoctoral study on education and reintegration. It focuses on the views of educators who teach in therapeutic reintegration communities regarding utilising information and communication technologies in the education provided in these structures. The method of interviews was used with a total of 8 educators teaching in therapeutic communities in Greece.

Keywords: Therapeutic communities, information and communication technologies, educators, correctional facilities

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Social reintegration is a central objective of correctional policy, aiming to support offenders during their transition back into society and to reduce recidivism by addressing the factors contributing to delinquent behavior. Key components include addressing individual needs through specialized services, cognitive skills enhancement, and rehabilitation programs targeting issues like substance abuse and mental health. The study[3] looks into how information and communication technologies (ICT) are used in therapeutic communities[4] for educational purposes. The research especially focuses on the views of educators who teach in therapeutic reintegration communities regarding the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the education provided within these structures.

According to the research, ICT is important for instructors, but the organizational, regulatory, and pedagogical frameworks do not support the teaching process. During the academic year 2023–2024, eight secondary education instructors from various correctional facilities participated in the study. Three males and five women, all above the age of forty-one, took part. The study used qualitative interviews. A set of 24 questions was used to guide the interviews with the teachers. These questions covered a wide range of topics, such as sociodemographic information, teaching and technological experience, availability and access to technological options and pedagogical approaches, needs and service evaluation, experiences with disabilities in the therapeutic community, and assessments of the use of technology in such communities.

Data interpretation - Research Restrictions

Because of the qualitative nature of the research methodology, each interpretation in the content analysis seeks to comprehend the present status of technology use from the viewpoint of the instructors themselves and to interpret the results in a way that will enhance the education of students who are jailed. Even if generalization is impossible, this is accomplished by analyzing the viewpoints of the pertinent stakeholders to create improvement ideas at the conclusion. A core tenet of the study is that, because

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[4] The therapeutic community (TC) for addiction is perhaps the most popular treatment model used in community-based, hospital-based, and criminal justice drug programs.

technology has permeated every aspect of contemporary society, pupils who are incarcerated must a diverse range of abilities in order to comprehend, assimilate, and contribute to society. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Lee et al., 2003) was used to interpret the data, and it includes an analysis of the impacts. The TAM was used to analyze how educators and incarcerated students accept and use available technologies within a restrictive environment, focusing on perceived usefulness and ease of use.

Being incarcerated isolates a person by nature. It has been noted that this alone is a very difficult transition and a major source of stress for those who are detained. A prisoner who experiences a decline in their ability to communicate through time, means, or other channels loses access to the educational resources and support system that are essential to their effective reintegration. Using ICT to teach in confined spaces highlights how information, communication, and systems play a key role in modern society. The reintegration process is centered around the pedagogical process, regardless of circumstances. This is the exact reason that any endeavor needs to be defined by its primary objective, which in this case is nothing more than getting people ready to reintegrate into society. In any event, the reintegration process revolves around the pedagogical process.

Considering this, it's crucial to emphasize two points:

   a) Reintegration basically entails giving some people a new direction in life—one that offers better circumstances than the ones that drove them to engage in criminal behavior and develop dependencies.

   b) Establishing the conditions for reintegration is a multi-stage process that calls for a comprehensive and ongoing emphasis on a variety of concerns.

Consequently, it is neither a luxury nor a compromise to establish an educational setting within a contemporary framework in therapeutic communities.

What are the main questions and answers of the research?

   1. What were the two main hypotheses formulated for the research?

•   H1: ICT in education within therapeutic communities are significant for teachers.

•   H2: Education within therapeutic communities is not sufficiently supported by the organisational regulatory framework and resources in ICT

   2. What challenges do educators face when teaching incarcerated individuals?

Educators face the challenge of preparing disadvantaged individuals for reintegration in highly restrictive environments with limited educational and technological infrastructure.

3. How do educators perceive the role of ICT in therapeutic communities?

Educators view ICT as significant for enhancing educational processes but face challenges such as limited access to technology and resources.

4. What were the main findings regarding the educators' experience with technology?

While educators had advanced knowledge of technology, they did not frequently use it in their lessons. They primarily utilized videos and online conferencing tools, indicating a reliance on traditional teaching methods.

5. What barriers to the effective use of technology in education within correctional facilities were identified?

Barriers include controlled access to the internet, lack of sufficient technological resources (such as computer labs and interactive whiteboards), and a general restrictive educational framework.

6. Why is face-to-face communication considered more effective in therapeutic community education?

Educators believe face-to-face classroom teaching is more effective for engaging students in therapeutic communities compared to remote or digital learning, which may not adequately address the students' needs.

7. What are the implications of inadequate technological resources in therapeutic communities?

Inadequate technological resources can hinder the implementation of effective educational and therapeutic methods, ultimately affecting the reintegration process of incarcerated individuals.

8. What recommendations does the research suggest for improving the use of technology in correctional education?

Recommendations include developing innovative teaching methods, aligning educational objectives with information processes, and increasing access to digital resources and training for educators.

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