Occupational integration and recidivism among ex-prisoners on parole

Prisoner rehabilitation programs based on employment have been highly popular in the Western world (Nathan, 2010). Much has been written on the connection between unemployment and crime.

Employment and training programs for prisoners enable them first and foremost to gain occupational experience, work habits, economic stability, contact with a positive, normative reference group, and a strengthened self-image with respect to the possibility of rehabilitation (Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Maguire, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Warr, 1998).

Research studies indicate that social support and assistance in seeking work are important factors in the released prisoner's ability to find a job and maintain it over a period of time in the community (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Gillis & Andrews, 2005; Rakis, 2005). A key difficulty in the integration of released prisoners into employment is the serious apprehension that employers feel towards hiring them (Fletcher, 2001; Shoham & Timor, 2014). This has led to the development of special employment programs that emphasize the need for a more flexible rehabilitation-support approach on the part of professionals alongside an uninterrupted employment record that begins in prison (Peled-Laskov & Bailer, 2013).

Most researches show that integration of prisoners into the labour market following their release from prison and the holding of a steady job reduce the incidence of recidivism among them (Duwe, 2015a, b; Gillis & Andrews, 2005).

The present research examines the integration in employment of prisoners on parole who were under the supervision of the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority during 2007-2010. The supervision program included rehabilitation and caregiving in the community, with the emphasis on employment. The research compares integration in employment and rates of re-incarceration for the supervised group with prisoners who had been released from prison after serving their full sentences (655 prisoners in all).
Our research design attempted to reduce as far as possible the differences between the groups being investigated by using a two-staged approach.

In order to reduce the selection bias and control the possible effect of socio-legal and employment variables, use was made in the first stage of multivariable models such as the logistic regression model for the probability of integrating into the workforce, the linear regression model for the duration of work, and the Cox regression analysis for the probability of survival without re-incarceration. Due to the concern that these statistical models might not be sufficient, and in order to reduce the selection bias between the two groups, a second stage of research was carried out in which two sub-groups were constructed, one that had received guidance and supervision and one that had not, based on a similarity in propensity for participating in the guidance and supervision program (Propensity Score Matching).

The findings indicate that among prisoners who had participated in the supervision program there is a better integration in employment, a higher wage level, and lower rate of re-incarceration. Based on these results, it may be tentatively inferred that the supervision program possesses a high potential for reintegrating released prisoners in the community.