Chapter 7
Education Within the Middle East and North African Prisons:
Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores prison education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with a particular focus on Lebanese prisons and prison education. The chapter takes Roumieh prison in Lebanon as a case study to operationalize Knowles' theory of andragogy. The chapter discusses the nature and types of curricula, learner-facilitator relationship, educational delivery methods and security favored by Knowles' theory that can promote a fairly successful prison education practice in MENA. In particular, the chapter submits that the application of Knowles' theory to prison education in MENA would lead ultimately to prisoners grieving over lost opportunities in past years, come to terms with their present life, and become intrinsically motivated to correctly invest in their own future.

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about prison education we are employing an unusual adjective, 'prison', to qualify a noun, 'education', that is heavily involved with fostering growth at all levels: cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and moral. In other words, we are associating the word 'jail' with the noun that 'take[s] seriously both the quest for life's meaning and the meaning of individual lives' (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 3). Education is seen as 'the agent through which the individual can develop personal

talents and find meaning and happiness in life' (Barcan, 1993, p. 5). However, how can we associate an agent of happiness with "misery" and miserable people? How can we consider fostering growth in a setting that may breed more violence and lead to greater criminality? Such an association would seem not only unusual but similar to a situation of 'texting' while driving!

Discussing prison education is tantamount to discussing a multifaceted complex topic. The context is complex and the culture is unusual, nothing comparable to education and training at schools, vocational institutes, universities, workplaces, or any other "normal place" we can imagine. In addition, there comes in an added layer of complexity underpinned by enormous challenges when this topic is contextualized within a very unsettled region, namely, The Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the status of prison education in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and to report on a case study carried out in a major prison facility of Lebanon.

BACKGROUND

The following constitutes the background information that is relevant to the theme of this chapter.

Operational Definition

This chapter adopts a working definition of prison education as the education of adult prisoners. This definition excludes juvenile prisoners. The rationale behind such exclusion is that the education required for juveniles differs from that required for adult prisoners.

Distinguishing itself from pedagogy (the art and science of teaching children), andragogy situates itself in adult education. The roots of the terms andragogy emerges from a Greek origin meaning "leader of" (*agogos*) "man, not boy" (*aner* from the stem andra) (Bartle, 2015). Although the terminology was first used in 1833 by Alexander Kapp (a German high school teacher) and later in 1926 by Lindeman (Biao, 2006; Reishchmann, 2004), it was Malcolm Knowles (1968, 1977, 1980, 1989, 1990) who, more recently, popularized the use of 'andragogy' as a theory of adult learning. Knowles notion of andragogy emerged from his strong belief that adults cannot be treated in the same manner as we treat children especially when it comes to education. He argued that adult learners are distinct in their experiences, expectations, and needs.

Knowles set out six assumptions in relation to andragogy (St. Clair, 2002, p. 3), starting with four initial assumptions

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