

## **Beyond 'Offending Behaviour': The Wider Perspectives of Adult Education and the European Prison Rules.**

**Anne Costelloe and Kevin Warner**

This is a revised version of a paper first presented to the 9<sup>th</sup> EPEA International Conference on Prison Education, Langesund, Norway, June 2003.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper questions a rhetoric that appears to us to have become increasingly pervasive in many prison systems. It is a rhetoric based on a one-dimensional view of prisoners, a view that sees prisoners just as 'offenders'. At its heart lies the taken-for-granted assumption that the sole or overriding purpose of prison is to rehabilitate. The rhetoric is manifest most clearly in programmes that seek to address offending behaviour and in similar offence-focused work. Our misgivings lie not just with the rhetoric, *but perhaps more importantly*, with its unquestioned acceptance. We are suggesting that unless it is subjected to critique and thorough debate a suspiciously unchallengeable consensus will take hold. This paper is an attempt to generate some debate on the matter.

The basic premise on which this paper is based is our view that the rhetoric to which we refer is in fact more than that. It is a discourse (Foucault, 1972) which is a system of language that has developed socially in order to make sense of and give meaning to our lives. Those sections of society that create the discourse shape the meanings and work *ideologically* to 'naturalise' them into common sense. In other words, a discourse is a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, beliefs, habits and practices that construct the way people think, talk about and respond to daily life. It produces positions that people automatically take up because they assume them to be natural or normal.

A clear example of a dominant discourse that has come to be embedded in our public psyche is that of counselling. If somebody suffered bereavement or marital break down thirty years ago in Ireland, there was never any suggestion that they should talk to a professional counsellor about it; in fact there was

scarcely such a profession. Instead they looked to their family, friends or clergy for guidance and support. Today, counselling is almost forced on those unfortunate enough to suffer personal tragedy. Victims who suggest that they do not need counselling can be accused of 'being in denial' or 'not coping'. Furthermore, there is a counselling industry fuelling the discourse of counselling and in turn ensuring its continued dominance. In this paper we are suggesting that the rhetoric of offending behaviour programmes is similarly becoming the dominant and entrenched discourse of regime management.

This is worrying for us because the power of discourse resides in its exclusions. A discourse defines what is appropriate and that which is deemed inappropriate is then systematically marginalized, silenced and repressed. We are worried that alternative prison regime discourses are being sidelined, in particular those which give a more central role to prison education and those grounded in the central tenets of Council of Europe policy, **as expressed in the *European Prison Rules (EPR) published in 1987***. Thus we *argue* that critical perspective be maintained and the possibilities afforded by other viewpoints elucidated. It is our concern that education, like many other professions and activities in prison, is now expected to give priority attention to the new discourse and its advocacy of programmes that are presumed to address directly the 'criminogenic factors' in the prisoner. It would seem to us that the dominance of this discourse has shifted the ground rules. Prison education, like all other activities, must now defend itself primarily in response to the question, how it is addressing offending behaviour? It is no longer deemed acceptable or apt to suggest that perhaps the question is itself misguided. As a result evaluation of prison education tends to be based on whether its courses can be seen to reduce recidivism. **Consequently, also, there has been a huge expansion in some prison systems in courses that deal with addiction, anger-management, thinking skills, preparation for release, etc.**

We wish to stress that we regard encouraging *and* enabling people to turn away from crime to be of the utmost importance. Our concern is that over-focusing on so-called criminogenic factors, and on the prisoner's short-comings,

is a limiting and negative approach. Such an approach views the prisoner primarily as something broken in need of fixing or as an object in need of treatment. It appears to us to be a regressive concept reminiscent of the now discredited medical model of imprisonment. We are particularly wary of how the new discourse frames attempts to change the inmate while ignoring the wider context *from which they came and to which they will return*. This framing serves to highlight the significantly different social outlooks behind the offending behaviour approach and the Council of Europe approach. The former fits very well with (even if it is not synonymous with) a political mood that negatively stereotypes prisoners, that says 'prison works', that wants to 'get tough on crime' and thus lock up more people. It fits in part because it deflects attention from the social dimensions to the causes of crime and entirely onto individual responsibility. *Also, it deflects from how the larger prison system inherently damages people*. In contrast, the Council of Europe outlook is based on the assumption that (i) the prisoner is a citizen, and (ii) prison alienates further the person from society and *thus* hampers their development. *Therefore*, prison should be used only as a last resort.

Our paper challenges this narrowing of perspective and draws attention to what we feel is being lost or neglected. What is being lost is the fundamental philosophy of the Council of Europe and its awareness of what prisons are and should be doing as delineated in the European Prison Rules (EPR) (1987). What is being neglected is the adult education perspective at the core of Education in Prison (1990). Here we look at both adult education (*in Part 2*) and 'European' penal policy (*in Part 3*) in an attempt to widen the focus once more.

## ADULT EDUCATION

One of the more tangible impacts of the new discourse is that it has forced many prison educators to question exactly what it is they are doing. This is a positive move as sometimes we can become complacent, falling into the trap of viewing prison education

as an inherently good thing, which as such requires little or no further justification. Instead we are now being asked to rationalise both practice and policy. We are being asked why and how are we educating prisoners? Perhaps the **traditional** response to the first half of that question from prison educators **in Europe** is that prison education is a moral right that meets a basic human need. This response sees education as a key element of human development, **and this perspective is at the heart of *Education in Prison*. Illustrations of this approach to prison education in practice may be found in Nordic countries (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005) and in Ireland (Warner, 2002; Prison Education Service, 2003; Prison Education Service, 2004; Behan, this volumn).** In essence this perspective considers personal development to be an aim, a process and a result of adult learning. It is concerned with the development of the whole person through the process of self-actualisation and can be best achieved by providing a liberal education within a broad curriculum. In applying this perspective to the prison context Morin (1981) claims, “for the inmate, this vision is full of hope and promise. It introduces him to the search for life’s meaning, it allows him to grope with the fundamental why and wherefores, with the what for and what questions, for the idea which he has of himself will justify his existence, give meaning to his life and determine, in large measure, his conduct and behaviors.” Accordingly, we can see that it has much to offer any adult learner, be they within or beyond the prison walls. However, the second half of the question, how do we educate prisoners, deserves more attention. It is widely and rightly accepted that in terms of methodology and curriculum, prison education must mirror the best practice available in the community. It is the issue of the context of prison education that is more problematic. But before tackling that we should outline the basic principles of adult learning. In any adult learning situation, teaching and learning are considered to be interchangeable and dynamic, learners participate on a voluntary basis and take active responsibility for their learning. The educator can facilitate this by creating the climate for learning and in many cases ‘teach’ the learner how to learn, but the learning must be always self-directed. The learner, **in dialogue with the teacher**, sets the agenda in terms of goals, self-appraisal, curriculum and evaluation. **A particular example from Ireland of this approach is the way**

**adults develop their literacy (NALA, 2005). These methods are replicated in literacy work in Irish prisons (Prison Education Service, 2002).**

The ideals of collaborative learning, particularly small groups engaged in supportive discussion and problem solving are relevant, as is a constructivist view of learning. Rather than the teacher being the giver of knowledge and the only guiding force in learning so that all learners reach the same conclusion, in constructivism the learners construct their own meaning because it is believed that knowledge can not be passed from one individual to another but is for each individual to process. Constructivism stresses learner inquiry, natural curiosity, engaging in dialogue with other students and the teacher to help provide multiple representations, cooperative learning, real world situations in context and authentic life experiences.

Acknowledging the past experiences of learners and applying these to the construction and consideration of new knowledge and skills is important. The approach is inherently student-centred; people and process are considered to be more important than the subject taught.

That is not to say that the curriculum is unimportant in adult education. A broad curriculum is especially important in the prison context particularly if the following quotation from John McVickar (a heavy-duty English criminal who became an academic) is any indication of the impact of education on a prisoner's life. McVickar claims "nowadays it is not so much that I find crime repugnant as that I am more interested in other things" (Duguid, 2000). The fundamental appeal of a broad curriculum for prison education lies in widening the interests and choices available to the student by providing them with the opportunity to become 'interested in other things'. We feel this open-ended approach is one of the strengths of Irish prison education (Warner, 2002). It is also in line with the philosophy and good practice of adult education in the community and of course this wide concept of education is a key feature of the Council of Europe's Education in Prisons (1990).

Returning to the issue of context and prison education, we should consider Caffarella and Merriam's (1999) contention that "learning cannot be

separated from the context in which it takes place.” The necessity to contextualise learning makes it incumbent on prison educators to question the type of education provided. We must be clear about the theoretical and ideological perspectives that frame our work and **what ? calls** critical reflexivity must be an essential element of our daily practice and policy endeavours. It is no longer good enough to suggest that prison education is just adult education in a different setting. While the principles must mirror best practice on the outside, its rationale must be appraised within the prison context. We must do this because if not others will do it for us and, as alluded to earlier on, they may set an inappropriate framework against which prison education is evaluated. More importantly, this call for **the adult education idea of** critical reflexivity is **echoed in progressive penal policy, as expressed by Hans Tulkens (1998, p. 8), the former Head of the Prison Service in The Netherlands, who said in relation to the EPR, ‘What comes to the fore in particular is that prisoners should be listened to and their agreement or willingness should be sought in connection with decisions. This means that ...the prisoner should no longer be seen as an object of treatment but as a responsible subject’.** If we consider prisoners to be reflective then prison education must develop and promote reflection among the student body and education staff.

The development of this type of reflection is embedded in **several progressive ideas in the field of adult education, in particular** the ideals of critical education as associated with **such** concepts **as** ‘really useful knowledge’, critical thinking, conscientisation and perspective transformation. For more information on adult learning and ‘really useful knowledge’ the reader should consult Thompson (1997), on critical thinking see Brookfield (2001, 1987), on conscientisation see Freire (1972) and Mayo (1999) and on perspective transformation see Mezirow (2000).

Critical education is not merely concerned with the acquisition of skills and the upgrading of qualifications but with a significant change in understanding **and worldview**. It is based on the ideals of critical theory as associated with the Frankfurt School and interpreted via Habermas (1987). Critical education is

focused on three interrelated processes: the process by which adults question and then replace an assumption that up to then had been uncritically accepted, the process through which adults develop alternative perspectives on previously taken for granted ideas and beliefs, and the process by which adults come to recognise and reframe their culturally induced dependency roles and relationships. In short, it is the process of assessing our assumptions and presuppositions and understanding their development. As a result it is concerned with making things happen rather than learners believing that things happen to them. In this way it challenges the prisoners' preconceptions, prejudices, indoctrinations and fatalism. Because of this deep potential it may facilitate a far greater degree of change in people and their lives than offence-focused work.

In concluding this part of the paper it is essential to remember that in one very important aspect prison education is not like adult education on the outside. It lacks that independence. It operates within the shadow of a penal system directed by the whims and caprices of a fickle society and governed by politically decided mandates. It is vulnerable to populist shifts in ideologies, more so than any other adult learning opportunity. If it were decided to cut mainstream adult education provision public outcry would *most likely* ensue, but cuts to prison education would generate little more than a few concerned letters to the editors of the national press. This is why prison educators must be very aware of what it is we are doing, why we are doing it and how best to do it. We must also know who and where to turn during vulnerable times and this is where the Council of Europe comes into the picture.

### PENAL POLICY

The Council of Europe is hardly fashionable at present, at least not in Western Europe, where it suffers from frequent confusion with the European Union or at least is overshadowed by it. Yet, it is a far older, larger and, one might argue, wiser institution than the EU, having underpinned human rights and

democracy in Europe since the Second World War. **It now has 48 members, involving nearly all European countries, and has significant influence over European prison systems through the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, the EPR and other recommendations and via an inspection body known as the CPT – the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhumane and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.** A firm belief in human rights lies behind *Education in Prison* (1990) – people held in prison are citizens, citizens are entitled to lifelong education to ensure their full development, therefore prisoners should be offered meaningful education. Likewise, seeing the prisoner as a citizen is at the heart of the *European Prison Rules* [EPR] (1987), as is some hard-headed realism about the nature of prisons and prisoners.

The EPR is essentially the Council of Europe's 'policy document' on prisons and was formulated and agreed by the member states in 1987, as an adaptation 'to European conditions and aspirations' of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. They are important as 'rules' or standards against which prisons, prison systems and countries can be, and are, judged. But they are perhaps most important for their underpinning philosophy, what they tell us about prisons and prisoners. The EPR concept of what prison regimes should seek to do is probably best encapsulated in Rule 65. We will examine this rule and critique the offence-focused approach against the objectives set out in it. Rule 65 states:

Every effort shall be made to ensure that the regimes of the institutions are designed and managed so as:

- (a) to ensure that the conditions of life are compatible with human dignity and acceptable standards in the community;
- (b) to minimise the detrimental effects of imprisonment and the differences between prison life and life at liberty which tend to diminish the self-respect or sense of personal responsibility of prisoners;

(c) to sustain and strengthen those links with relatives and the outside community that will promote the best interests of prisoners and their families;

(d) to provide opportunities for prisoners to develop skills and aptitudes that will improve their prospects of successful resettlement after release.

In the first objective (a), the sense of the prisoner as citizen, entitled to the human rights and conditions they should have on the outside, is evident. This sees the person in prison, not initially or primarily as an offender, but as a person to whom dignity and respect are due and as a member of the larger society. Quite simply, a key problem of offence-focused work is the focus on the offence. The person tends to be seen one-dimensionally, entirely or mainly as an offender, with the rest of his or her life, personality, talents and problems pushed to one side. This goes against the grain of the EPR.

The second objective (b), challenges the idea that 'prison works' by recognising the 'detrimental effects of imprisonment'. This objective also recognises that the prison itself plays a role in diminishing the sense of personal responsibility of prisoners – a fact *often* conveniently ignored by many of the approaches that are focused on the prisoner 'taking responsibility' and 'making choices'.

The fact is that prisons themselves are 'criminogenic'. They are major contributors to recidivism because they institutionalise people and further inculcate them in a criminal culture. A Rand Corporation study in California for the US Department of Justice showed prison as less effective than probation in a study of matched offenders because of the detrimental effect – an effect that tends to be ignored in the recidivism debates (Irwin and Austin, 1993, **p.119**). Like surgery, prison is a radical intervention into someone's life: it is necessary at times, but its serious negative side effects should be recognised and minimised. Thus, prison should be a last resort. Education and other programmes are only a small part of prison regimes and of the totality of impact of prisons on the people held in custody. While programmes may be beneficial, what else may be going

on that works in the opposite direction such as: Abuse by other prisoners? Humiliation or degradation by staff? Inhumane conditions? Further alienation from society? Barriers to work, housing and other forms of integration, upon release? The 'detrimental effects of imprisonment' are ignored in most offence-focused work in prisons, as well as in most prison strategy statements that prioritise 'rehabilitation.'

The third objective (c) also attempts to counteract a negative side effect of prison – the further alienation of the person in prison from any positive influence of family and the community in general. Might not a supportive family member, or an employer who keeps in contact and a door to work open, or a sports instructor who stays in touch be more crucial to resettlement than a course geared to addressing offender behaviour? Might not the allowing of the vote in elections be an important 'link with the outside community', sometimes as valuable as a session designed to ensure insight?

What is striking about the first three of the four objectives outlined above is that they are all 'defensive', focused, quite properly, on recognising, and attempting to undo or minimise, the negative effects of imprisonments itself. This is a long way from the confidence of much offence-focused work, which asserts it can intervene and improve people while ignoring the counter-influences inherent in the prison system. The fourth objective implies programmes that are not geared narrowly to the offence and 'rehabilitation', but to the much wider goal of 'resettlement' – a term that implies that adjustment may be needed in the world outside, to facilitate and help the ex-prisoner, as well as within the man or woman coming from prison.

Such a wider perspective on penal policy leads to a far wider role for education in prison than is derived from a perspective fixated on addressing offender behaviour. We stated earlier that the logic of adult learning in a prison context is to widen out the curriculum. The policy perspective of the Council of Europe in relation to prisons and prisoners, as conveyed in Rule 65 of the EPR, has similar implications for education provision. Education has crucial roles to play in the lives of prisoners: in supporting the dignity of the person in prison, in

helping that person 'cope' with the sentence ("minimising the detrimental effects of imprisonment"), in strengthening the links with family and community, and in preparing the person for release and resettlement in a variety of ways.

As suggested earlier, education's greatest contribution to combating crime may well be significant, but indirect, getting people 'interested in other things'. That would seem to be the thinking also of Austin MacCormick, one of the pioneers of prison education in the US, who wrote in 1931,

Education of prisoners is fundamentally a problem of adult education, taking the term in its European sense... Its philosophy is to consider the prisoner as primarily an adult in need of education and only secondarily as a criminal in need of reform. Its aim is to extend to prisoners as individuals every type of educational opportunity that experience or sound reasoning shows may be of benefit or of interest to them **(pp. 9-12)**.

It is ironic then that, more than seventy years later, that huge openness to possibilities from multiple directions should be so severely narrowed in the current outlook and practice of prison education in North America. Similar restriction is now evident in parts of Europe. Yet, some of the clearest voices countering that narrowing come from North America, in particular Stephen Duguid in Vancouver, Canada.

A recent book by Duguid (2000) supports much of the argument of this paper. *Can Prison Work: The Prisoner as Object and Subject in Modern Corrections* is, among many other things, a powerful argument for the provision of education in prisons along adult education lines or, in Duguid's terms, for the teaching of 'Humanities' in prison. He details research on twenty years of college courses in British Columbia prisons that indicate how they were influential in decreasing recidivism, effectively beating the offence-focused work at its own game. He is devastatingly critical also of the massive shifting of resources within Canadian prisons to 'cognitive skills' and other courses that target 'criminogenic needs'. He notes "education programs were neutralized, eliminated or transformed into

service programs for cognitive skills". Proof perhaps that the warnings outlined in our introduction should not be dismissed.

**Duguid reports how** Robert Ross, the key originator of cognitive skills, insisted that it was not a panacea; its real strength lay in preventing delinquency rather than rehabilitation. Yet it holds out great attractions to the prison system, being taught by prison staff after only brief training and built via 'packages'. (Perhaps also this kind of 'deficit' model averts the need to look beyond the faults in the prisoner to those in the prison and in the wider society). Duguid argues that, though claiming to offer the prisoner self-understanding, the real aim is to have the prisoner "adopt the understanding of self that has been prescribed by the examiner." **Clearly, the self thus projected by officialdom over-concentrates on criminality and neglects larger, and possibly more positive, aspects of the 'whole person'.** Duguid claims "the deception is both transparent and despised. Only the weakest willed take on the self suggested by the state, the clever wear it only as a veil, and the stubborn resist it as best they can." (This brings to mind the running joke among British prisoners who frequently refer to their enhanced thinking skills programmes as entranced thinking skills.)

There are two other ways in which the offence focused approach and the narrow rehabilitative discourse is being oversold. Firstly, they tend to be highly selective in *terms of* the number of prisoners who are, in the end, 'addressed'; and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the claims that they present 'choices' to prisoners tend to be hugely exaggerated. In relation to selectivity, *authorities often target only very limited categories of prisoners and, in addition, prisoners themselves opt out of these programmes in great numbers* – points emphasised by Duguid in relation to Canada. Giving offence focused work a central part in policy or strategy should at least imply some universality in application: All prisoners should be envisaged and offered at least some of the programmes in question, but this seldom seems to be the case.

The second overselling lies in maintaining that such programmes offer real choice to prisoners, enabling them to choose paths away from crime. While it is always possible in a theoretical way to assert that choice is available, in practice the options facing ex-prisoners are enormously grim. Aside from prisoners' own personal pressures and problems, society as a whole places a multitude of barriers and obstacles in their paths. Problems around income, housing, employment, acceptance by the larger community and adaptation to a changed world can be overwhelming. A discourse that takes so little cognisance of the impact and restrictions that social environments and economic realities place on the choices open to individuals is unlikely to succeed. It would seem that the underlying presupposition of many of these courses is that prisoners frequently make bad choices or the wrong choice due to an underdevelopment of certain cognitive and moral abilities. The solution offered is to dwell on the undeveloped cognitive ability that is presumed to distort the thinking in the first place. Yet this seems rather simplistic, particularly if one is of the view that choice is not freely available to all. After all, few prisoners can access the vast range of socio-economic, political and cultural choices freely available to 'ordinary citizens'.

## CONCLUSION

Again we must stress that we do not question in any way the seriousness of crime – for the victim, for society, for the perpetrator. Nor are we innately critical of attempts to address offending behaviour and the reflection of these attempts in policy statements and targets. We accept that courses and activities that directly target 'criminogenic' factors can be appropriate at times as part of a wider project. For example such offence focused work may be particularly relevant where 'denial' is likely to be involved as is often the case in relation to sex offences. Our concern is that the overriding emphasis on addressing offender behaviour represents too narrow an approach. Furthermore we are concerned that the unchecked rise of the new discourse and its insidious inculcation of 'medical model' language may depict all prisoners as being in need

of treatment. Language is never neutral or value-free, it has the power to establish a new ideology and rationalise its primacy on the grounds of common sense. This is why we have attempted to generate debate on the changing language of regime management and critique the new discourse dominant in many prison systems.

Our intention has been to point out that the new limiting discourse represents a loss of possibilities and a loss of direction. As we have seen the great potential of adult learning coupled with a realistic awareness of the nature of prisons and prisoners is in danger of being superseded by the emergent discourse. Accordingly, alternative and critical perspectives need to be maintained – though it seems a little strange to us that what European countries in their better moments had agreed to in the European Prison Rules, should now have the badge of an ‘alternative’ outlook.

Finally, one essential element is missing from this paper, that of the voice of the prison student. All too often those who decide what is best for the prisoner ignore their views and experiences. It is perhaps appropriate then to leave the last word to a prisoner. In response to the question, why are you undertaking a higher education course while in prison, this student succulently and eloquently encapsulated the reality of prison life and the typical reasons why anyone might avail of education while in custody.

My reasons for studying in prison are many; the combination of boredom, wanting to please others and restore some of their pride in you, an awareness that your offspring may someday look to you for assistance with their studies, being conscious of your own ignorance and lack of knowledge, a stubborn streak which keeps you going in the face of adversity or when told you're not capable or good enough, wanting to keep your head down and get on with things quietly, as a means of escape, anything to keep your mind focused and as far removed from reality as possible, to promote a sense of self-confidence, to experience the pleasure of learning and gaining knowledge simply for its own sake, not to mention costing the authorities money!

We wonder what his response would be if asked, why are you undertaking a course addressing your offending behaviour?

### References

Brookfield, S. (2001) Repositioning ideology critique in critical theory of adult learning, *Adult Education Quarterly*, vol.52, no. 1, pp 7 - 22.

Brookfield, S. (1987) *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of Thinking and Acting*. Buckingham. The Open University Press.

Caffarella, R., and Merriam, S. (1999) Perspectives on adult learning: Framing our research. In Rose, A (ed) *Proceedings of 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Adult Education Research Conference*. DeKalb. LEPS Press.

Council of Europe, (1990). *Education in prison*. Strasbourg. Council of Europe.

Council of Europe, (1987). *European prison rules*. Strasbourg. Council of Europe.

Duguid, S. (2000). *Can prisons work? The prisoner as object and subject in modern corrections*. Toronto. University of Toronto Press.

Foucault, M., (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. New York. Pantheon.

Freire, P., (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Educational.

Habermas, J., (1987). *The theory of communicative action: Volume Two, lifeworld and system – a critique of functionalist reason*. Boston. Beacon.

Irwin, J., and Austin, J., (1993). *It's about time: America's imprisonment binge*. Belmont, CA. Wadsworth Publishing Company.

MacCormick, A., (1931). *The education of adult prisoners*. New York. The National Society of Penal Information.

Mayo, P., (1999). *Gramsci, Freire and adult education: Possibilities for transformative action*. London. Zed Books.

Mezirow, J. (ed)., (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco. Jossey-Bass.

Morin, L. (ed.), (1981). *On prison education*. Ottawa. Canadian Government Publishing Centre.

**NALA (National Adult Literacy Agency). 2005. *Guidelines for Good Adult Literacy Work*. Dublin:NALA. Download from [www.nala.ie](http://www.nala.ie)**

**Nordic Council of Ministers. 2005. *Nordic Prison Education: A Lifelong Education Approach*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.**

**Prison Education Service. 2002. *Guidelines for Quality Literacy Work in Prisons*. Dublin: PES. Download from [www.pesireland.org](http://www.pesireland.org)**

**Prison Education Service. 2003. *Strategy Statement, 2003-2007*. Dublin: PES. Download from [www.pesireland.org](http://www.pesireland.org)**

**Prison Education Service. 2004. *Prison Education in Ireland: A review of the curriculum*. Dublin: PES. Download from [www.pesireland.org](http://www.pesireland.org)**

Thompson, J, (1997) Really useful knowledge: Linking theory and practice. In Fleming, T. (ed.), *Radical learning for liberation*. Maynooth Adult and Community Education Occasional Series No. 1.

**Tulkens, H. 1988. The concept of treatment in the European Prison Rules. In *Prison Information Bulletin*, No. 11, June 1988. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.**

Warner, K., (2002). Widening and deepening the education we offer those in prison: Reflections from Irish and European experience. *Journal of correctional education*, vol. 53, issue 1, pp 32-37.

**Dr Anne Costelloe is Assistant Head Teacher at Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, and can be contacted at [mjoyed@eircom.net](mailto:mjoyed@eircom.net) or at Education Centre, Mountjoy Prison, North Circular Road, Dublin 7, Ireland. Kevin Warner co-ordinates prison education in Ireland, and can be contacted at [kmwarner@irishprisons.ie](mailto:kmwarner@irishprisons.ie) or at Prison Education Service, Block 5, Belfield Office Park, Beaver Row, Dublin 4, Ireland.**

1 Defining adult education and training The field of adult education and training is a broad one, and it is talked about in a number of different ways. From this perspective, the very idea of applying a cost-benefit analysis to education is itself a capitulation to a narrow and utilitarian view of what learning is about. The second problem is less concerned with the principle of human capital thinking than its measurement. Nevertheless, recent research on the wider, non-economic benefits of adult learning – influenced in part by human capital thinking – has helped to provide a firm and robust evidence base on how adult education and training can help change people's lives (Schuller 2000). How helpful is human capital thinking when it comes to adult learning? Prison education; correctional educational; transformative learning; adult education. Introduction. The provision of some form of education for those held in prison has been a common feature of the modern penitentiary since its inception. This wide view of the role of adult education is emphasized also in the most recent European Union Council policy statement on lifelong learning. While such policy on prison education is clear, provision (and the philosophy behind that provision) varies considerably across countries. In places, comprehensive programmes of education that are well-resourced and based on Council of Europe principles are offered to all in prison, while elsewhere there are only patchy offerings of weak and narrow forms of learning. Legal instruments have been adopted including the European Prison Rules and recommendations on education in prison, prison staff, health care in prison and prison overcrowding. European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measures. Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measures. To rehabilitate more offenders it is necessary to improve prison education. Understanding the special situations of prisoners and prison officers are some of the core competencies that prison teachers need according to the partners of project European Induction Support for Adult Learning Professionals. It is widely acknowledged that learning is now a continuous process that goes far beyond the formal boundaries of traditional education. EIS-ALP (European Induction Support for Adult Learning Professionals) is a dynamic and innovative partnership funded by the European Union under its Grundtvig Lifelong Learning programme.