

School for Scandal?

Learning and the Penal
Experience in Ireland



Description of Newgate Prison

'Sick and dying prisoners lying on stone stairs 'destitute of every assistance', 'infirm emaciated creatures' dying without anyone's knowledge, a place where morals were totally neglected as the sexes mixed more or less freely. It was filthy beyond description, alcohol was openly sold to prisoners by the gaoler whose father ran a tavern across the road, money was extorted from prisoners by threatening to put them in heavy irons'...(p4, Carey)





- Background and Context
- Link between prison and educational disadvantage
- Adult Education Theories
- Prison Education
- Future Work



- *The number of people in prison or awaiting likely prison sentences is growing, and fast, almost in every country. In America, their total number already exceeds the number of students in all colleges of higher education. The network of prisons enjoys nearly everywhere a building boom.*

Zygmunt Bauman, *British Journal of Criminology* (2000) 40,205-221



- Link between prison and educational disadvantage

Paul O'Mahony's 1997 study revealed that:

- 77% of prisoners had never sat a public exam
- 80% had left school before the age of 16
- 71% currently or had been users of hard drugs
- 81% had never married
- 72% had fathered children



- The international Adult Literacy Survey was conducted in Ireland in 1995
 - It reported that 25% of the population in Ireland had literary levels at the lowest level (Level 1)
 - It noted that the older you were the more likely you were to have lower levels of literacy



Literacy Levels in Irish Prisons

	Males	Females
Pre-Level 1	22.7	16.7
Level 1	30.1	36.7
Level 2	18	16.7
Level 3	14.1	13.3
Level 4 & 5	15.2	16.7

Table 1.1 (The Prison Adult Literacy Survey as cited in Morgan, 2003)



Council of Europe Education in Prison Report

- **Two themes prevail:**

1. Education of prisoners must be as close as possible to philosophy and practice of the best adult education in the society outside.
2. Education should be seeking ways to link prisons with outside world to enable both groups to interact with the other.



Type of Offence	<i>Pre-Level 1</i>	<i>Level 1 & 2</i>	<i>Levels 3,4,5</i>
Violent offences	23.6	50.0	26.4
Property offences	28.3	54.6	17.8
Drug offences	8.1	35.1	56.7
Sexual Offences	14.7	35.3	50.0
Other offences	24.4	51.1	24.4



- European Model v Correctional model
- Challenges of teaching in a prison
- Impact of the environment on education



Future work

- Exploring the challenges of being a student within a prison environment
- Documenting the experiences of students and teachers working within the prison system in Ireland.

