

**Report on
Irish Prison Service Training and Development
Centre
Proposed course on
Applied Prison Management and leadership**



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The need for such an education program

Management of the prison institutions is very demanding and responsible job, because of the exceptional complexity of such institutions, as well as their specific position in society.

Internal complexity in the first place results from the basic purpose of such institutions and features of the population they are intended for, that is prisoners. This can result with opposing goals of various groups that are situated in the same, more or less narrow, space (for example, between prisoners and staff or even between various groups of staff). Namely, goals of prisoners can considerably differ from the goals of the staff and the system as a whole, so it can cause some problems in functioning of the institution and fulfilling of its tasks.

On the other side, broader society and decision makers often have a poor knowledge and interest about this area, and this causes prison institutions to confront often with a lack of material, financial and human resources. All of that put big demands on the managers of the prison institutions, so to be successful; they need have adequate expertise, skills and personal features. Only with all these features, they can successfully keep balance within institutions and direct it's functioning in the right way – towards re-socialization and social reintegration of the prisoners in the society, whenever it is possible.

In this context, every prison system in the European Union attempts to design or implement a program that aims to improve not only the management of the system, but the management capacity of the staff also. Therefore this course aims to enhance the self-awareness and analytical skills of the students, helping them to generate creative solutions for difficult problems which they confront with and improving their decisional adaptability.

When choosing an educational model it is important to describe the background for the choices. In this model it seems to be a developing ladder from “special territories” and individual level to general levels and superior areas. It is important to argue or describe pedagogically why the model is not the contrary.

Content of the program

Program is composed of four semesters, and within each semester one module is elaborated. These modules are:

1. Prison Policy and Practice
2. Managing and Leading in Prisons
3. Human Rights and Prison Legislation
4. Sociology of Prisons

According to our estimate, content of the program is very well defined and covers number of areas needed for successful performing of this job.

We propose addition of the module 1. Prison Policy and Practice, APML 101 – Penal Policy in Ireland with the theme ‘Relations and cooperation with local community’ as well as

module 2 ‘Managing and Leading in Prisons’, APML 202 – Leadership in a custodial environment with the theme ‘Basics of financial management’.

The program is intended to form next competencies:

- Planning and Coordination
- Decision making
- Information Handling
- Leadership
- Interpersonal Skills
- Staff management
- Assertive approach

We consider these competencies are required and sufficient for good managing of the prison institution.

Especially important is that this program devotes adequate attention to the issue of human rights in prisons (APML 303 – Human Rights in Custodial Management) and ethical component in a work and conduct of prison employees (APML 305 – Ethics for custodial managers). Namely, respect of human rights and ethical treatment of prisoners is one of the most important components of the overall treatment of prisoners in the penal institutions. It refers especially on the vulnerable groups in prisons – women prisoners, young and elderly people in prisons. Respect of human rights is the most important issue exactly in those environments where these rights may be threatened the most easily, and prisons are such an environment. On the other side, without respect to the ethical principles in prison employee's work and conduct, it is difficult to expect successful resocialization of prisoners. Here, the principle ‘I look at what you do, not what you say’ is of crucial importance.

As the influence of prison manager is very important for both abovementioned components, these education program's contents will, via adequate education of future prison managers, substantially contribute to realization of the IPS mission and vision.

Another important point is that this program leaves a lot of place for sociological aspects. The prison is an integral part of the society and its functioning can only be understood in relation with the social context in which it fits. The manager must constantly make the link between the inside and the outside as it is in the everyday management or in the implementation of the rehabilitation process of inmates. It is therefore paramount that the manager has a good understanding not only of the evolution of the meaning of the sentence in his country but also of the social context.

Moreover, this program is in perfect accordance with art. 16 of the council of Europe Recommendation N° R(97) (1997) which said : *“the purpose of initial training should be to adapt the new entrant to the tasks to be performed by imparting professional skills and an understanding of the working environment, in particular a knowledge of the problems concerning criminality and its social contexts.”*

Many prison services around Europe have chosen a communication model for the work with prisoners – Motivational Interviewing. If it is so in Ireland – is this model part of the communication training in this program?

Producing of credits require literature studies. It is therefore necessary to present what kind of literature the students must read. The books and reports must be both based on research and/or practical experience.

Teaching and learning strategies

The course is well structured and offers the basic concepts for a prison manager. It is very important to keep in mind the fact that we are working with adults with different educational and professional backgrounds. So, the pedagogical methods that we choose are very important. This aspect was considered by the course creators and they combine different adult's methods, using blended learning and a mix between theoretical aspects and practical one's.

The benefits of the e-Learning platforms (Moodle, in this case) are recognised: it is a friendly learning environment and you can easily adapt it; it offers you active and interactive information anywhere and anytime, so you have a temporal independence. But, the most important thing is that it is adapted to your personal way of learning. As a trainer, you have the possibility to monitor the learning process, to offer and receive feedback in real time. Moodle offers very divers' assessment tools, easy to use. If you combine e-Learning with the face to face learning process and to the mentoring/monitoring/tutoring on the job, as the IPSDTC propose, the results are guaranteed, because you eliminate the imperfections of each method.

A good program should enable learners not only to learn new skills but also to put them into practice quickly. For this, the personal development plan is a valuable tool, a real thread of the curriculum. It stimulates the learner empowerment, allows him to pay more attention to the skills that should work in priority and allows almost continuous formative assessment.

The content of the program and the duration of two years seems very good and verified. However to get 120 credits in two years, it is important that the students are 100 % occupied in the program, combining theory and practice. The practical part of the program can not be a regular job as a leader, but work combined with study tasks and mentoring.

The teachers in the program must have both practical and academic background. This seems to be taken good care of.. Also the mentors in the prisons must have skills and practical experience on the same level as the trainees. It is also an advantage that the mentors have academic education at the same level as the programs produce. Also the practical periods produce credits.

Mentoring in both practise and theory is of course work with individuals. But in the practical part of the study in the prisons the mentors must have some kind of plan from IPSTDC requiring what the students must do, what the mentors shall do and what they can do. This plan may also describe the content of what is meant by being 'not qualified' or when a student is not suitable for continuing the study.

Assessment

The assessment is covering a wide area, starting with self assessment tests, where the students pass only if they answer correctly over 70% of the questions, and ending with different assessments types provided by Moodle, focused on continuous assessment done by tutors. A

very important skill for the managers – decision-making – is well assessed using tactical decision games.

The exams in the program must be described for securing the quality of the learning process for the students. This is an important part of the evaluation of the program.

Another part is the way the overall quality of the program will be evaluated and how the evaluation results will infect on future programs.

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