

Time to Think

Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Joy Clark**
Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**
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Important

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Clip title	The Open University was just an answer
Duration:	00:02:37
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Clip end point in full interview:	00:51:59
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Description:

Joy Clark, Education Officer in Armagh Gaol and then Chief Education Officer of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, reflects on the long term value of prison education and describes the significant contribution and legacy of Open University study in the Maze (The Maze and Long Kesh Prison) and Armagh Gaol.

Transcript:

Joy, looking back, you were Chief Education Officer- what do you think was the value of OU study in Armagh and especially in the Maze?

I would say there were two outcomes of people getting engaged in Open University. First of all, on a personal level for the prisoners, it allowed them to develop and not to stagnate because that is what happens in prison- people stagnate if they are not stimulated, or if they are bored- and for people who were capable, and there were so many capable, clever people in the Maze and in Armagh, it gave them a reason to keep on. That's why you get suicides in prison and dreadful things happening and that's why you get riots in prisons. Education will probably never be thanked or appreciated. I am not talking about people, I am talking about education. Open University will never really be totally appreciated by anybody, I think. They don't realise what it did for the people, and it was a godsend because the prison education in itself could not provide third level education and The Open University was just an answer, because we knew we had this level of ability and interest in the prisons and what were they going to do, make another artefact to send out on their visits? It speaks for itself and I think any of us who've worked in education would acknowledge the huge contribution Open University made to maintaining order in the prisons. I would go as far as saying that.

Would you?

I would. The whole principle of giving people something worthwhile to do, and in that Open University played its full part.