

4 International trends in education and training provision in correctional settings

This section outlines the key trends and directions in education and training provision in corrections internationally. Literature was reviewed from the United States (US), New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK). No literature in foreign languages has been scrutinised. Specific attention has been given to the work underway in the UK due to the relevancy of its focus and similarity with the issues being considered within the Victorian context as part of the CLTMS.

4.1 Underpinning propositions

The core propositions that commonly underpin the relationship between education and training provision and re-offending rates of prisoners identified in the literature are:

- That individual decisions or impetus to re-offending are governed by a web of factors which includes, but is not exclusively confined to, educational experience and opportunity;
- This web of factors includes employment opportunities, domestic circumstances, social and familial relationships, all of which vary widely between prisoners, but which increased opportunity for educational progress may affect positively; some references extend the argument to include development of sound citizenship values;
- Many prisoners may be trapped into re-offending by perceptions (by self or others) that past educational failure is an irreversible element of the web, and that it is pointless to seek improvement;
- Educational failure generally may be largely or importantly governed by specific gaps in a prisoner's learning, particularly of language skills (whether first or second language, or perhaps both);
- Where such language skill gaps are apparent, priority should be given to remediation of that situation before other provision;
- That, regardless of the length of a prisoner's sentence, opportunity to undertake further education should be offered, either during sentence or arranged for immediate post-release, thus highlighting its importance;
- That delivery or pedagogy should be appropriately designed on principles commonly accepted as superior means of teaching adults, even for relatively juvenile offenders.

Finding: There is general recognition across the literature that there is benefit for prisoners in participating in education and training activities to assist in their reintegration into the community and to reduce the likelihood of re-offending - especially when it is linked to employment opportunities.

4.1.1 Evidence on reducing recidivism

Research evidence to date, as to the link between education provision and programming in reducing re-offending, tends to be program or project specific. Drawing on the literature reviewed, the arguments in favour of prisoners' access to education and training are generally two-fold - personal and economic.

The personal aspect sees education and training as beneficial in assisting prisoners to acquire and maintain employment and in assisting prisoners to establish a stable, non-criminal lifestyle. The financial benefits are seen to improve the economic circumstances of the individual on release; lessen the costs of crimes to the society in which they occur; reduce the spending costs incurred by corrections services and contribute to a national economy by increasing productivity by ex-prisoners on release.

The following findings³⁹, covering a range of studies conducted in the US and Canada, provide some insight into these benefits:

- All correctional education programs (literacy, adult basic education, General Education Diploma [GED] vocational, and post-secondary) reduce recidivism rates. Quality education programs have consistently reduced recidivism by 16-62%;
- The more education offenders receive results in lower recidivism rates;
- In Arizona, even probationers with no more than a GED education (a post-compulsory educational opportunity for low achievers) had a re-arrest rate of 24 per cent compared to a control group rate of 46%;
- In Texas, the recidivism rate for those without college degrees was 60%. The overall recidivism rate for degree holders was a low 12%, and inversely differentiated by type of degree: Associate 13.7%; Bachelors 5.6%; and Masters 0%;
- In Ohio, while the overall recidivism rate was 40%, college recidivism rates were at 18%. Ohio further calculates that graduating from college programs -

³⁹ CURE, *Correctional Education*, Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.curenational.org/new/Position/curepo5.html>

versus no participation in prison education at all - reduces recidivism by roughly 72%;

- In Canada, prisoners who completed at least two university courses had a 50 per cent lower recidivism rate than the norm; and
- In New York, only 26.4 per cent of the inmates who earned a degree returned to prison, compared to 44.6 per cent of those who participated in the college program but did not complete a degree.

In the UK, recent estimates of benefit-against-cost ratios in UK prisons suggest 11:1 for drugs treatment, almost 7:1 for basic literacy and numeracy, and 3:1 for medium intensity treatments centred on relevant offending behaviours⁴⁰.

Similar trends are also noted in a report produced for the Victorian Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner by Dunne titled '*A framework for reducing re-offending: Differentiated Case Management in Victorian Corrections*'. This report draws on a US Congressional Report, by Sherman *et al.* (1998) titled '*What Works, What Doesn't and What's Promising*'.⁴¹

Key findings identified by Dunne (1998) about the relationship between education and training and reducing recidivism include:

- Rehabilitation programs for adult offenders using treatments appropriate to their risk factors reduce re-offending rates;
- Prison-based vocational education programs for adult inmates can reduce post-release re-offending;
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy, using every-day real life situations, has been found to be essential for effective behaviour change; and
- A *Reasoning and Rehabilitation Program* of Canadian origin (emphasising cognitive skills, especially problem solving) has been widely implemented in Canada, Mexico, the UK, and Europe with some evidence of success (and latterly Western and South Australia).

Ward, in her paper '*Transition from Custody to Community: Pre- and Post-Release Service Development Options*' (October 2000), also highlights the important of pre and post release programs in supporting the successful transition of prisoners back into the community and in reducing re-offending.

⁴⁰ Committee of Public Accounts (2001-2002) Reducing Prisoner Re-offending p.9

⁴¹ Sherman *et al* has become a major source of inspiration for other countries, notably the United Kingdom, in planning educational provision either *per se* or as part of a major review of corrections policy.

Finding: Based on the research evidence identified, it is evident that there is a general impetus across the corrections sector for the provision of education and training in prisons to lessen, as significantly as possible, an individual's chances of re-offending.

4.2 Education and training provision

In the Correctional Service of Canada's Literacy Conference 2002 '*Towards Re-integration*', four key factors for effective learning in prisons are identified. Referred to as 'The Four Cornerstones of Correctional Education', they include:

- *Literacy*: The ability to understand and use printed and numeric information in daily activities at home, at work and in the community to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential. Basic literacy and numeracy education should be mandatory for those who do not have such levels of skill.
- *Special Learning Needs*: A special learning need results from anything that interferes with the offender's learning process. Those with special learning needs include all offenders with a learning disability, as well as those with learning problems and those with English as a second language.
- *Technology and Career Development*: The aim of these programs is to provide marketable work skills to prepare offenders to re-enter the workforce and facilitate their reintegration. This includes vocational education, an employability skill development component that would be applicable to a number of employment fields and the use of computers or any other technology that would help offenders successfully reintegrate the community.
- *Teaching for Independent Learning*: This includes a set of cognitive skills and learning behaviours, which the student can use to make learning more efficient and decision-making and problem-solving more effective. Educators create the climate for learning - the teacher sets the stage for the offender to transfer those skills and behaviours from within the classroom to other aspects of his/her day-to-day life experience.

These 'four cornerstones' are also supported by Knowles (1975) in his assessment of the role and focus of education and training provision in US prisons. Knowles identifies the need for education and training in prisons to focus on developing social, cultural, academic and vocational learning. Specifically, vocational and academic education should be expanded to include skills that will increase employment upon release in keeping with current employment trends. Job-oriented post-secondary education should provide a pathway to economic viability for all prisoners, from literacy education through post secondary education.

In the UK, the Prisoners Learning and Support Unit (PLSU), which is responsible for the planning and integration of education and training in the UK prison system, also have a similar approach to education and training in prisons.

Finding: The literature identifies four key factors that should be taken into account with regards to education and training in a corrections environment:

- ***Literacy and numeracy needs of prisoners;***
- ***Special learning needs of prisoners;***
- ***Development of marketable work and vocational skills; and***
- ***Development of skills to promote independent learning.***

4.2.1 The primacy of basic skills acquisition

The literature is consistent and firm on the point of basic skills acquisition as fundamental to education and training provision. Recent work in the UK undertaken by the PLSU clearly supports this viewpoint.

Literacy and numeracy are seen as the core basic skills that are frequently lacking in the prisoners population.

It is generally recognised in the literature that prison populations tend to have significant literacy needs. These literacy needs have two main dimensions:

- Those prisoners from mainstream society who have failed to develop the literacy skills necessary for simple survival in a highly literate society to which they will one day return; and
- Learners of English as a second language whose skills in that language are likewise deficient.

In the UK, the PLSU clearly indicates that education provision should focus on first addressing basic skills deficits where they occur in a prisoner, but not to the total exclusion of other kinds of learning or skill development being offered to the prison population at large. The PLSU goes on to state that mainstream learning and skills development should be a priority over one-off courses and recreational learning. The PLSU also recognises, consistent with adult learning principles, that there may be need for some prisoners to taste some minor success in learning before starting a basic literacy or numeracy program to keep some categories of weak or unmotivated prisoner students on task and track. To achieve this end, courses need not be self-standing. The mapping of basic and key skills provision to what happens in all areas of prison experience (e.g. prison workshops and industries; catering; physical education) can and should occur. This approach is supported strongly by the PLSU and is seen as an

effective strategy for engaging prisoners in learning and for creating a learning community within the prison.

Finding: Basic skills acquisition, specifically literacy skills, should be at the core of education provision in prisons.

4.2.2 An emerging focus – the use of information technology

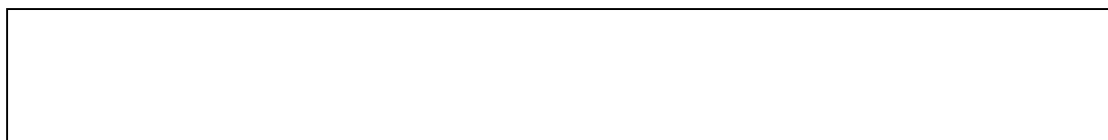
Across the literature, there is increasing interest in the role of information technology in education and training in prison. Information technology can be used both as a means of delivering subject-based learning (including computer skills), as well as providing learning support.

In many countries, installation of an intra-networked computer is already available for prisoners⁴². In the UK, under the auspice of the PLSU, an on line learning initiative - *learndirect*⁴³ - is being piloted to determine the role information technology can play in education and in developing prisoners' computing skills. *learndirect* is currently being evaluated and, as yet, no results have been released on the initiative's outcomes.

Based on a system-wide Intranet, with a firewall between it and the Internet, through the *learndirect* initiative, prisoners have access to on line learning and opportunities for computing skill development. The appointment of a 'download chief' to censor but give access to appropriate internet documents operates as a 'human firewall' for prisoners.

Basic and key skills learning packages, such as *Cybercook* and the *European Computer Driving Licence*, are learned using screened CD ROMS.

There are two aspects to the importance of these initiatives. One is that, given the speed with which information technology is developing as a learning, business and industrial tool, prisoners - in virtually whatever job they might eventually be in - are going to need more than basic skills in computer usage to maintain employment. The second is that it is a practical, hands-on learning experience which, from general community take-up (recreational and educational), is known to be powerfully attractive, with its own built-in rewards in terms of building self-esteem through skill development. The use of information technology in prisons is seen not only to be a major thrust to aid learning development but there will also be benefits in the recreational sphere, even without access to the Internet.



4.2.3 Encouraging cognitive and moral development – the prison as a learning community

Learning communities are communities that have at their core opportunities for maximising the potential for skill and knowledge acquisition and development of appropriate attitudes, values, belief and behaviours as part of day-to-day activities. Duguid (1998) in his study explored educational provision through the possible institution of self-contained ‘learning centres’ or ‘academic communities’ (smaller and less formal than Education Centres and largely prisoner-driven). Such centres or communities are accompanied by a strong focus encouraging cognitive and moral development. This emphasis ‘if carried out properly, (*has the potential to*) trigger processes of individual reclamation, reformations and in some cases, transformation’⁴⁴.

Focal points of the study included:

- Value change;
- Moral development;
- Critical thinking and cognitive development; and
- Constructing alternative and academic learning communities.

Similar opportunities are identified in the UK⁴⁵ where the value of programs or experiences in:

- The visual and performing arts;
- Cultural studies;
- Parenting within social and life skills;
- Citizenship and civics;

are seen as beneficial and should be added to the prison curriculum where these are not already occurring.

As Duguid (1998) quotes from McKnight in his report:

“.... Communities work. And working communities both prevent crime and heal criminals.”

In the UK, similar approaches to viewing prisons as communities are outlined in Cottam, H et al *‘Learning Works: The 21st Century Prison’*⁴⁶. In this approach,

⁴⁴ Duguid, S (1998) op cit p.4

⁴⁵ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Prisoners’ Learning and Skills Unit*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning>

prison design is undertaken to support rehabilitation, and there is a strong focus on developing opportunities for a learning community within the prison.

A new architecture makes possible the design of a new prison regime based on learning. Spaces are specifically designed to support a program of rehabilitation....Learning is the organising principle: maximising prisoner development opportunities without compromising security and offering modernised roles for prison officers. Partnership lies at the heart of the new approach: new broader working alliances produce new, workable solutions. Existing resources are redeployed to deliver a very different prison services with the current financial envelope.

Supporting this notion of learning communities is the use of volunteers, both from outside and from the prison population. This is promoted in UK prisons to help prisoners improve their reading or literacy skills.

Finding: Increasingly in the literature, prisons are being seen as 'learning communities' that promote skills and knowledge development and behaviour change in prisoners. Education is no longer confined to the classroom or to prison industries; rather, it is integrated into all aspects of prison management to reduce re-offending and to aid prisoners with their resettlement in the community.

4.2.4 A 'core' curriculum

Despite the fact that prisoners differ so widely in backgrounds and needs, there is still some tendency towards designing or mounting what might, in other spheres, be called a 'core curriculum'. For example, Canadian literature⁴⁷ offers a variation on this concept and gives the example of what is called *Enterprise of Integrated and Seamless Correctional Education* (EISCE). This starts by identifying needs in the areas of:

- Academic skills acquisition;
- Cognitive strategies;
- Values education; and
- Development of an individual education plan.

⁴⁶ These influences have been factored into the development of the new prisons proposed for Victoria.

⁴⁷ Correctional Service Canada, *Enterprise Of Integrated And Seamless Correctional Education*, Correctional Service Canada, [Accessed November 2002], http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/forum/literacy/presentations/inte_edu_e.shtml

Under EISCE protocols, it is the prisoners themselves who make linkages between these areas. The claim is that, if the prisoner plays a primary role in his/her own development, (s)he is:

- Better able to decisively engage in a positive life process;
- More likely to engage in activities which are positive;
- More likely to shed criminal attitudes and behaviours; and
- Less likely to re-offend.

No results from EISCE administration can be found to justify the latter set of claims but, in common sense terms, they accord with what is postulated above as good principles for mounting adult education in prison or out of it.

Another Canadian study (Duguid, 1998) takes the issue of control and commitment more broadly. It points out that prisons differ and have different limitations within their environments, which will affect the possibilities of educational delivery. Hence, such delivery needs to be designed prison by prison and not in some overarching way. Duguid notes that there is a strong case for prison programs that allow for choice, variety and a measure of control on the part of the prisoner participant.

The concept of articulating educational offerings, designed on a 'core curriculum' basis, also occurs in UK prisons. The PLSU indicates that this 'core' includes:

- Initial assessment;
- Basic and core skills;
- English for all speakers of another language;
- Information and Communications technology;
- Accredited courses in social, life and citizenship skills; and
- Courses (generic and specific) angled towards preparation for work post-release⁴⁸.

Literature, on the issue of the need for core programs within prisons, is not definitive. If the 'core' principle were to be espoused, there would need to be considerable discussion and moderation of what elements to include, and at what strengths in terms of the overall contribution of each element to a prisoner's educational program. Access to elements of the core would be unnecessary for certain groups of prisoners - for example, people with degrees and other post-compulsory qualifications are hardly likely to need the basic skills development. It is more the concept of a thoroughly worked-through approach

⁴⁸ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Core curriculum, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002]*,
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiatives.cfm?ID=5>

to covering a wide range of needs which makes this curricular approach attractive.

Finding: The literature recognises that there is a need to develop programs that are targeted at the needs of prisoners whether that be through the establishment of a 'core curriculum' or a seamless curriculum focussed on reducing re-offending.

4.3 The nature of adult learning

No one [should be] allowed to fail ... Reformation, like education, is a journey, not a destination, and requires providing inmates with:

- *goals;*
- *incentives;*
- *information;*
- *supportive atmosphere;*
- *morale boosts;*
- *self-respect; and;*
- *sound reasons for positive attitudinal changes to occur.'*

Towards Reintegration – Literacy Conference 2000
Correctional Service of Canada

In addition to the emphasis on curriculum and consistent with the emphasis on prisons as learning communities, there is also a recognition that there needs to be a commensurate emphasis on the prisoner as a learner.

Several references reviewed not only emphasise the value of education and training in enhancing skills and in assisting prisoners to secure vocational opportunities, they also emphasise the potential of access to education and training in prison to develop an intrinsic motivation to learn within individual prisoners. By engendering such motivation, ex-prisoners can become, what in current educational literature is usually referred to as, 'lifelong learners'.

The last decade has seen an unparalleled increase in the exploration and definition of what are considered 'adult learning styles'. Together with a concurrent development of skill-sets of differing kinds, called variously 'competencies', 'employability skills', 'core' or 'essential' skills, these developments are regularly reported in prison education literature. Such styles and skills-sets are often deemed 'generic', in that they underlie rather than provide the detail of a given course design or educational endeavour.

In practical terms, this means:

- Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction;
- Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance to their job or personal life;
- Adult learning is problem-centred rather than content-oriented;
- There is a need to explain why specific things are being taught (e.g. certain commands, functions, operations, etc);
- Instruction should be task-oriented instead of memorisation - learning activities should be in the context of common tasks to be performed;
- Instruction should take into account the wide range of different backgrounds of learners; learning materials and activities should allow for different levels and types of previous experience with computers; and
- Since adults are self-directed, instruction should allow learners to discover things for themselves, providing guidance and help when mistakes are made⁴⁹.

These characteristics of adult learning have implications for the development and design of education and training programs for prisoners and provide a real means for broadening the concept of education from formal course to one where any form of learning is recognised as educational.

Finding: Defining education and training broadly provides greater scope within the prison setting in aiding prisoners in the enhancement of relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours pivotal to their successful resettlement into the community and in acquiring and maintaining employment.

4.4 Managing education and training – the UK experience

The notion of "integrated and seamless correctional education" appears often in the literature. Though jurisdictions vary in their approach to the management of education and training provision, recent developments in the UK are worthy of note as they provide current insights into the complexity and issues associated with providing education and training within a corrections environment while developing an operational model that attempts to moderate and redress such issues.

⁴⁹ General trends identified by the literature scanned from the UK, Canada and Australia

PUBLIC SERVICES

The Review of Education and
Training Provision in Victorian
Prisons - The Way Forward
31 March 2003



"Focusing on prisoners' learning needs is not a substitute for preventative measures of the kind the Government is putting in place to tackle social exclusion, and to help vulnerable young people and adults gain from education, training and work: it is an essential component of our agenda to build citizenship and employability.

Nor is investment in education and training for prisoners a soft option or a reward for poor behaviour... The new partnership which this statement launches will improve prisoners' learning and skills. We will actively promote the ambitious agenda set out here."

Tessa Blackstone, Minister of State,
Department of Education and Skills and
Paul Boateng, Minister of State, Home Office
United Kingdom

In the UK, the approach to education and training in prisons is based on a clear and active partnership between the prison system and the Department for Education and Skills.

The current policy framework aims to target education and training as a key strategy for reducing re-offending. The primary policy objectives of this strategy are to:

- Build capacity in prisons so that as many as possible of the individuals who enter prison every year have the opportunity to learn, including those who serve short sentences of six months or less;
- Motivate more prisoners to improve their educational attainments and to gain the skills needed for today's workplace and to support their social re-integration;
- Improve the links between prisons, education providers and resettlement agencies, so that prisoners can make an effective transition to resettlement by promptly moving into a job or a suitable programme of education or training on release.

Prison education funding is now administered jointly by the Home Office and Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Core funding this year is £66 million.

Resources are transferred from DfES to the Prison Service via the Home Office and, once transferred, the budget is ringfenced and cannot be spent on other services. The prison education budget funds the purchase of education provision from external contractors, as well as the purchase of educational materials, library provision and central development projects⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Prisoners' Learning Skills Unit: New Initiatives – Resources
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/init_p.cfm?ID=14 (Accessed November 2002)

Established in 2001, the PLSU is responsible for taking forward the Government's Manifesto commitment to improve dramatically the quality and quantity of prison education. The basis of their approach is:

- To increase the opportunities for prisoners to learn - and gain qualifications in - marketable basic and work-related skills;
- To ensure that at all stages of the process, the highest possible standards are being delivered;
- To improve collection of data on achievement and progression; and
- To identify the costs of prisoners' continuing learning when they leave custody. The PLSU and the Prison Service have introduced robust monitoring systems to help support establishments meet their basic skills targets⁵¹.

The PLSU is charged with:

- Promoting more effective and consistent educational and skills assessment, induction and individual learning plans;
- Developing the use in prisons of modern technology to support participation and flexible learning;
- Introducing a new quality improvement strategy; and
- Working with partners to secure links between education and training inside the prison and beyond the gate.⁵²

To achieve this end, education and training is seen as a key input into the re-design of effective individual sentence planning.

As part of the PLSU strategy, there is a general recognition that educational needs assessment must be done early, and individually, as part of the developing of an individual management plan. The UK now tests all incoming prisoners in literacy and numeracy⁵³.

Basic assessments include a sequence of:

- Basic skills screening;

⁵¹Prisoners Learning Skills Unit: About the Unit

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/about_the_unit.cfm (Accessed November 2002)

⁵² Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002) Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners: Report by the Social Exclusion Unit London p 45

⁵³ Committee of Public Accounts (2001-2002) Reducing Prisoner re-offending

- Diagnostic assessments;
- Initial tests⁵⁴.

For prisoners with special needs such as disabilities - intellectual (particularly dyslexia⁵⁵) and physical or from different ethnic backgrounds – the PLSU acknowledges that specific attention needs to be given to assessment, learning approaches and pedagogy that are applied.

Central to education and training is that the assessment and planning associated with the educational needs of prisoners is geared towards re-settlement in the community from the start of the sentence, and the process of assessment and planning is continuous throughout the prisoners' sentence.

The emphasis on skill acquisition is on marketable basic and work-related skills⁵⁶. Vocational education needs are targeted, especially towards the end of a prisoner's sentence: 'those in work are half as likely to re-offend compared with those without a job'.⁵⁷ Work programs provide on-the-job training with achievement certification, which prepare prisoners for jobs with a liveable wage, as directly-related adjuncts to vocational, life-skills and academic education.

To support the education and training process, there is recognition that Education Centre programs need to be integrated (or at least articulated rationally) with other rehabilitation programs and that the separate planning and delivery of education and training in any institution is to be avoided. Strategies are in place to reduce the wide differences between prisons in the number of hours of purposeful activity for prisoners⁵⁸ with prisons increasingly providing similar levels of activities across the prison system. Based on the PLSU's experiences, there are signs that setting targets for successful completion of basic skills courses are a useful aid to promoting improvement⁵⁹.

For prisoners on very short sentences (say, less than 12 months), the PLSU recognises that there is still need to have their educational needs attended to in

⁵⁴ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Core curriculum*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiatives.cfm?ID=5>

⁵⁵ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Inclusiveness*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002] <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiatives.cfm?ID=10>

⁵⁶ Department for Education and Skills UK, *About the Unit*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/about_the_unit.cfm

⁵⁷ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Resettlement*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiatives.cfm?ID=17>

⁵⁸ Committee of Public Accounts (2001-2002) Reducing Prisoner Re-offending p 10

⁵⁹ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Resettlement*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiatives.cfm?ID=17>

PUBLIC SERVICES

The Review of Education and
Training Provision in Victorian
Prisons - The Way Forward
31 March 2003



a manner appropriate to their needs and sentence length. This may mean that rather than extensive engagement in educational programs guidance and counselling about opportunities outside the prison post-release are more realistic and preferable. Even one semester of learning, such as through enrolment in a post-secondary course as occurs in Canada, may be beneficial⁶⁰ for some prisoners.

For prisoners from different ethnic backgrounds, the PLSU recognises that there is need to create an inclusive environment to promote learning. Many prisoners from different ethnic backgrounds feel alienated from the society in which they have lived and offended, and cultural inclusiveness, together with culturally sensitive (and sensitising) courses, should be aimed at all times⁶¹.

All facilities within the prison should be considered as having the potential to aid education and learning. For example, building on the notion of prisons as learning institutions, the role of prison libraries is being re-thought, with a view to their becoming centres of direct learning support as well as a resource for recreational reading⁶². Similarly, the use of information technology, not only as a means of learning but as a tool for learning support, is being explored.

The possible role for peer prisoner educators in various types of learning and training is being investigated thoroughly. It is planned that qualified prisoners will be used in non-supervisory, non-disciplinary positions for the education of other prisoners and be paid wages comparable to those of the prisoner work force.⁶³ For example:

Several establishments are supporting basic skills provision through highly successful peer partnership projects whereby study volunteer prisoners offer reading support to other prisoners. And family learning projects in operation across the estate are designed to encourage parents and other family members in prison to support their children's reading development as well as improve their own skills⁶⁴.

⁶⁰ Duguid, S op cit

⁶¹ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Progression to further and higher education*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002]

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiaitives.cfm?ID=8> and Correctional Service Canada, *Enterprise Of Integrated And Seamless Correctional Education*, Correctional Service Canada, [Accessed November 2002], http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/forum/literacy/presentation/inte_edu_e.htm

⁶² Department for Education and Skills UK, *Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/>

⁶³ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Basic skills*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiaitives.cfm?ID=13>

⁶⁴ Prisoners Learning Skills Unit: Basic Skills
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/init_p.cfm?ID=13 (Accessed November 2002)

To facilitate the prison as a learning community, the PLSU is also exploring opportunities to enhance the quality of prison officer staff development by the inclusion of some educational training.

Provider reviews, course re-accreditations and inter-Centre in-service education programs present an opportunity for identifying, sharing and transmitting good practice between Education Centres⁶⁵. In terms of planning change and improvement, this is recognised as being best done by partnerships with other specialist organisations devoted to learning and skills development within and outside government⁶⁶.

To measure the success of these initiatives, a comprehensive evaluation framework has been developed. Central to this is the design of performance targets against which education provision is measured. New national targets in basic skills have been established, and these are disaggregated between individual establishments and performance against them is monitored on a monthly basis by the Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit.

By the end of July 2002, prisons had achieved 36% of the overall basic skills target, which suggests the full target will be met in full by end of the year⁶⁷.

Finding: The PLSU in the UK offers a valuable model to guide education and training provision in a corrections setting. Many of the policy and operational issues experienced in providing education and training in a corrections environment are being addressed by the PLSU, and valuable lessons will be able to be learnt as the program of reform is undertaken.

4.5 Conclusion

The findings from the literature review show a number of systems and institutions foregrounding education, often in ways that are innovatory for their constituencies. Such approaches are based on the assumption of the value of education and training for prisoners per se, and as a tool in reducing recidivism.

⁶⁵ Department for Education and Skills UK, *Initiatives: Quality improvement*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002],

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/initiatives.cfm?ID=12>

⁶⁶ Department for Education and Skills UK, *About the Unit*, Department for Education and Skills, [Accessed November 2002], http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/about_the_unit.cfm

⁶⁷ Prisoners' Learning and Support Unit: New Initiatives - Targets

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/prisonerlearning/init_p.cfm?ID=9 (Accessed November 2002)

PUBLIC SERVICES

The Review of Education and
Training Provision in Victorian
Prisons - The Way Forward

31 March 2003



Integration of educational concerns within a case-management framework, which places high priority on the enhancement and development of knowledge and skills at all stages of a prisoner's experience (from induction to post-release), is fundamental to most approaches.

Early identification and correction of basic skill deficiencies are crucial to any later development and to successful reintegration. Linkages between education and vocational skills development cannot be underestimated, especially in providing prisoners with the prerequisite skills to assist them in securing employment.

Since prisoners being individually screened and case-managed will naturally enough manifest a wide range of interests and preferences in learning, a multi-facetted approach needs to be considered as a basis of overall provision and ongoing planning for education and training within a prison setting. Priorities need to focus on basic skills acquisition before moving to other areas of focus.

The importance of information technology and computing skills needs to be recognised as a more recent contribution to the diversity of programs and program styles.

5 The educational and training needs of Victorian prisoners

This section details the key findings from the data analysis of the educational and training needs survey undertaken across Victorian prisons during October and November 2002. Key trends are identified in terms of prisoner needs.

5.1 The prisoner population

'The majority of men and women in custody have major needs in terms of the essential skills required for effective social and economic participation including basic literacy and numeracy. The majority of men and women are unemployed at the time of entry into the prison system. A significant number of prisoners have drug or alcohol problems with backgrounds of social disadvantage, significant health issues and poor family and social links.'

Dunne, F *Framework for Reducing Re-offending: Differentiated Case Management (DCM) in Victorian Corrections*, September 2000

5.2 Access and demand

5.2.1 Demand for education

'Education and training needs enhancement to enable the attraction of prisoners who see themselves as not capable enough to engage in the current education and training on offer.'

Submission to the Review of Education and Training
Provision in Victorian Prisons
The Brosnan Centre, Jesuit Social Services

As discussed previously, the demand for education programs is determined by a range of factors; the results of assessments undertaken at the time of reception, the goals outlined in the prisoner's IMP, awareness by prisoners of programs, the degree of interest expressed by an individual prisoner in participating in such programs and the availability of programs.

Prisoner attitudes to education are a major influence on demand and successful participation. Adult learners, generally with poor previous experiences in education, are likely to be resistant to further formal learning. This tendency increases with age and with perceptions about the value of further learning and

labour market participation. Most prison education centres seek to use broader adult learning principles of self-directed and learner-centred approaches to learning to instil an appreciation of the benefits of learning and to build learners' confidence and to assist prisoners' engagement in education.

Prisoner attitudes to education were evident during the consultation process, with older prisoners in the peer support network seeing education and training as being of great value for younger prisoners but 'not for them'. Other prisoners were passionate about the importance of learning for their future and expressed considerable frustration at the barriers they felt were denying their 'right' to education.

Issue: The attitude of prisoners to education is a key factor influencing prisoner involvement in education. There is a need to create an environment for prisoners built on adult learning principles attempts to address negative perception and redress past experiences of 'failure' in learning.

5.3 The survey

A questionnaire survey instrument was developed as part of the methodology for this study and administered in all prisons during the second semester of 2002. The purpose of the prisoner survey was to identify the extent of education and training undertaken by prisoners prior to their incarceration and to identify their current educational and training needs. Areas covered by the survey instrument include basic demographic background, education background, preferred learning styles, literacy and numeracy levels, experience of education and training in prison, assessment of learning while in prison, vocational background, other training undertaken and future plans.

Completion of the survey by prisoners was not compulsory, and response rates varied widely between the prisons (Figure 13). A detailed supplementary technical report covers all the data gathered via the survey, is an addendum to this report.

Figure 13: Response rates for individual prisons

Prison	Sample	Percentage of population at that prison
Ararat	95	24.6
Barwon	152	39.6
Beechworth	50	38.7
Bendigo	62	78.4
Dhurringile	13	8.2
Fulham Correctional Centre	130	17.8
Langi Kal Kal	59	57.2
Loddon	64	19.9
Melbourne Assessment	200	54.8
Dame Phyllis Frost	72	47.7
Port Philip	85	13.5
Tarrengower	28	53.8
Won Wron	37	31.8
Unknown	2	
Total	1049	

The instrument included the collection of basic demographic data about respondents, together with questions specifically designed to elicit information on prisoner background, prison experience and personal aspirations (targeting responses relevant to their lives before, during and after sentence). Matters such as educational history, educational aspirations, and training undertaken and desired were canvassed. In particular, prisoners were asked to record self-perceptions of skill levels in the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy, since the literature on prisons (both local and international) suggests that attainments in these areas is crucial. These deserve to be a major focal point for the design of educational programming delivered in the hope of reducing recidivism. Figure 14 provides a comparison of the demographic data for the respondents to the survey compared to that for the entire prison population.

It can be seen from this figure that females are slightly over-represented in the sample; however, it is unlikely that this would greatly effect the interpretation of the survey results. The proportion of very young offenders (those under 25 years of age) is virtually identical to that in the population, and there is a reasonable match for other groups in the age distribution (i.e. the differences in distribution are not significantly different). On the other demographic indicators, the sample provides similar proportions of those born outside Australia and those of indigenous background to those in the general prison population. Accordingly, the sample, although self-selected, are representative of the prison population, meaning that inferences about the population can be reliably drawn from these data.

Figure 14: Comparison of sample characteristics to those of the prison population

	Percentage of sample	Percentage of prison population 2002
Sex		
Male	90.5	92.3
Female	9.5	7.7
Age		
19 or under	3.0	
20-24	17.6	
<i>Subtotal under 25</i>	<i>20.6</i>	<i>19.6</i>
25-29	22.5	20.4
30-34	17.6	18.7
35-39	12.1	13.6
40-44	9.5	10.1
45-49	8.0	7.1
50-54	4.4	3.9
55-59	3.3	2.9
60-64	1.2	1.5
65 or over	1.0	1.7
Birthplace		
Australia	78.2	75.8
Elsewhere	21.8	24.2
Indigenous status		
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	4.8	4.6

5.3.1 Non-literate respondents

Due to concerns about potential bias in the use of pen and paper survey tool, focus groups were undertaken at Port Phillip, Melbourne Assessment Prison and Dame Phyllis Frost prisons, with 27 prisoners identified as having low literacy and having not completed the original survey.

The focus groups were voluntary and conducted in January 2003. The purpose of the focus groups was to conduct the survey utilising a means that was not dependent on an individual's literacy skills.

With the exception of gender balance (the total of 27 included many more women (one-third) than the total female proportion of the prison population indicates - about one tenth), the group parallels the full prison population demographic profile reasonably well.

Almost all (23) were born in Australia, one is an Aboriginal person, and 23 spoke or signed English as their first language as a child. Of those who did not, two

spoke Italian, one Greek and one Vietnamese. The age range mirrors the full survey population quite well:

- 3 are 19 or under;
- 9 are between 20 and 24;
- 9 between 25 and 29;
- 3 between 30 and 39, and
- 3 are 40 or older.

All but one had lived in Australia all their lives or for more than 20 years. Six male prisoners were currently on remand, but their questionnaire responses indicated that they had all had previous experience of prison education during earlier sentencing.

The results gained from individuals participating in the focus groups reflected that same pattern of responses provided from the original sample. There were no identifiable trends in the responses from those in the focus group that were divergent to those provided by the original population of respondents.

For the purposes of this report, the data gathered from the focus groups has been incorporated into the overall analysis.

For further information on the results of the focus groups refer to Appendix C.

Finding: The population of survey respondents is generally representative of the prisoner population in terms of key demographic characteristics. Consequently, it is possible to generalise the findings from the survey to the wider prisoner population.

5.4 General trends

Figure 15 shows the last full year at school for the prisoners who responded to this question. Almost 60 per cent of prisoners completed Year 10 or higher, with around one in five completing a Year 12 qualification. It would be expected that the older a prisoner is, the less likely he or she is to have completed secondary education, however, this is not the case. Based on the analysis (and other than the 65 and over age group), the under-25 year old group is the least well educated. In this group, only just over one-half (51%) completed Year 12, compared to more than 60 per cent of those in the over 40 age group.

For those individual prisoners that participated in the focus groups, about half had left school before or at the end of Year 9, with two men and two women having left without secondary school experience. Four of the 27 (all men)

claimed education in post-compulsory years, but the language ability of two of them places some doubt on that.

Figure 15: Last full year at school

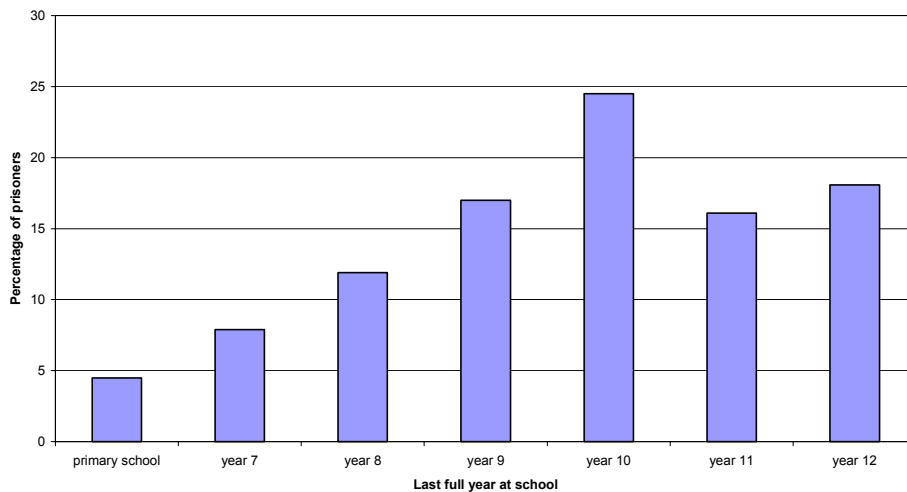
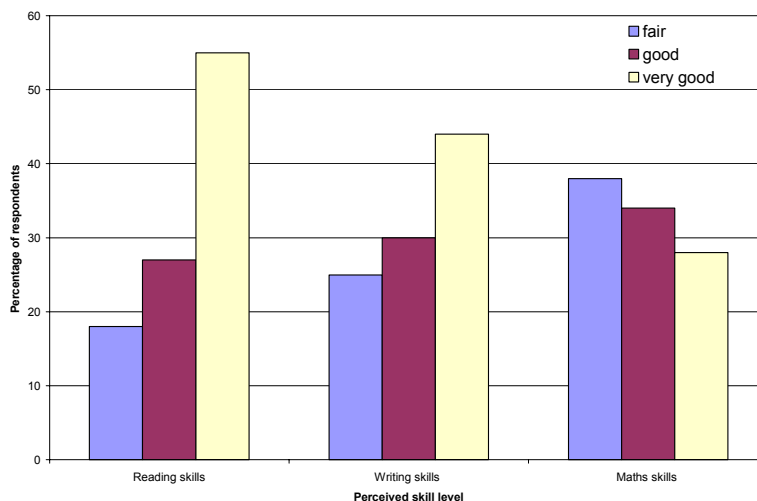


Figure 16 shows the perceptions of prisoners about their basic levels of literacy in reading, writing and mathematics, while Figure 17 shows the perception for computer skills.

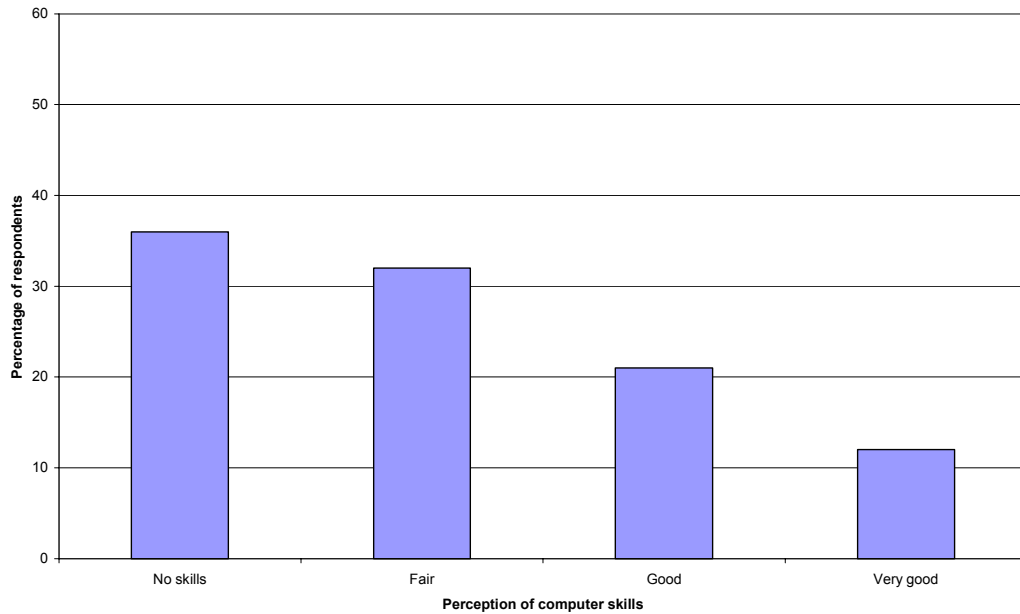
Figure 16: Perception of basic literacy and numeracy skills by prisoners



While it appears from Figure 16 that just over half (around 54%) of the prisoners appear to rate their reading skills as very good, less than one-half (43%) rate their writing skills at this level, and less than 30 per cent rate their mathematics skills at this level. The vast majority (a little over two-thirds) of prisoners rate their computer skills as non-existent or fair. Sixty per cent of respondents wish

to improve their reading skills, 67 per cent their writing skills, 70 per cent their maths skills and 66 per cent would definitely want computer training.

Figure 17: Perception of computing skills by prisoners



5.4.1 Focus group respondents

The reports offered by prisoners of their skill levels adequately mirrors the findings of the main survey population. The most important finding in both strands is that, even when self-assessment of skill levels is high, the desire for improvement of current levels is extremely strong.

Figure 18: Prisoner perception of basic skills

	Reading	Writing	Maths
Fair	13	10*	17
Good	5	9	7
Very good	9	7	3
Want to improve skills	23	23	22
Do not want to improve	4	4	5

**One prisoner, a male, wrote "Poor" alongside his response. This same person reported having left school by running away from home while in Grade 4, and having had two weeks of secondary education before being expelled.*

In questions relating to self-report of levels of other skills, responses may be sorted as below:

Figure 19: Prisoner perception of other skill areas

	Using computers	Working and talking in a group with others	Talking to and getting on with others in a work group
None	7		
Fair	14	14*	7*
Good	3	8	12
Very good	3	5	8
Definitely want training to improve skills	21		
Maybe want training to improve skills	3		
Do not want training	3		

**One prisoner, a male, wrote "Poor" alongside his responses for these two columns. This was the same person reported above as having had minimal school experience.*

As with the main sample, this sub-group show a similarly strong desire for upgrading of computer skills. Only two have a computer in their cell, neither wanting further training.