

The Relationship Between Prison-Based Educational Programs and Recidivism

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore the possible relationship between offender recidivism and in-prison educational programs, and program funding. Three questions were asked in the study: What is the nature of educational programs in Minnesota? Do programs reduce recidivism? At what levels do the programs need to be funded in order to reduce recidivism? A comparative literature review and key informant

recidivism is

reduce recidivism. Today approximately 75% of inmates hold a GED or high school diploma and the rest are mandated to earn one to assist with sustainable employment upon re-entrance into the community. Future research is needed to determine funding of correctional education and how funding affects effectiveness of programs.

Introduction

The research was concerned with the relationship between educational programs and offender recidivism, and funding. This study sought to explore the possible relationship between offender recidivism and in-prison educational programs, and programs and funding levels. What is the nature of educational programs in Minnesota? Do educational programs reduce recidivism? At what levels do the programs need to be funded in order to reduce recidivism? The research utilized key informant interviews as well as a comparative literature review to identify prison based educational programs, and gain knowledge on how the funding and content within the programs affects offender recidivism.

Problem Statement

The problem under study was the impact of educational programs on offender recidivism. What is the nature of educational programs in Minnesota? Do those programs reduce recidivism? An additional question was, “How does funding affect programs’ effectiveness?” Variables related to funding changes included concern for the inmates’ education and futures when returning to society, with a focus on becoming productive members; taxpayers’ concerns regarding the amount of money being distributed to correctional education; and the ability and need for correctional departments to determine funding for correctional educational programs. It is critical to engage in research on correctional educational programs to determine the focus for funding and placement of educational programs in prisons, and how to best serve inmates in those programs.

Background of the Problem

Studies show that there are approximately two million individuals worldwide are incarcerated in prison (Owens, 2009). Inmates account for 5% of the world’s population. The United States alone holds approximately 25% of the world’s incarcerated persons; no other country imprisons inmates at such a high rate (Owens, 2009). It is noted that one in every hundred adults in the United States has been in jail or prison at some point in their life. As of 2009, 9,353 persons were incarcerated within Minnesota for a variety of reasons (Minnesota Department of Statistics, 2010).

Since the 1700’s, institutions have incarcerated people convicted as “criminals”, or who were considered “unworthy” in society. Almshouses, also called “poorhouses”, were places for people of all ages who were poor, medically ill, and/or mentally ill including children. The houses were dirty and full of disease, making poorhouse residents ill. (In the 1800’s children were removed from the poorhouses

and placed in separate institutions.) Individuals residing in the houses had a rigorous schedule consisting of primarily hard labor. “Inmates, as they were being taught jobs, learned the ‘value’ and ‘importance of work’” (Colby & Dziegielewski, 2004).

As society has changed, institutions and prisons have changed. Those in the criminal justice, social work and related fields understand the role of variables on criminality and recidivism. One primary variable is the level of education an individual achieves in their life; higher educational levels can support meaningful work and decrease criminal activities. Correctional education programs are found widely across the United States, and provide a wide variety of content and skills to people who are incarcerated. Correctional education is defined as any program that helps further knowledge or skills for participating inmates. In educational programs, inmates can earn a GED or high school diploma, vocational certificate, or college degree including associates, bachelor’s or master’s degree levels. The degree is to be earned with the help of a qualified educator within the correctional facility during the time of an inmate’s imprisonment. For some inmates this is their chance of educating themselves in order to increase the possibility of success in society when released (Lewis, 2006). Correctional education may help inmates learn a skill in order to gain a job, earn a degree in order to be qualified for a job, or develop a stronger resume that informs employers that they have the ability to succeed (Lewis, 2006).

Although correctional education has been around for three centuries and has come far, there are still questions regarding its effectiveness. Today, correctional education is mandatory for individuals who do not possess a GED or high school diploma. The duration of the prison sentence, as well as transfers to other prison facilities may seem like roadblocks; however, the education department requires the inmate to participate in the program regardless of circumstances. This requirement often forces inmates who would be less likely to participate in the programs to pursue higher education and potentially earn a GED ensuring that inmates coming into prison will not be overlooked for educational opportunities (Harlow, Jenkins & Steurer, 2010).

The challenges for placing inmates into educational programs are endless. The educational profile of an inmate may include learning disabilities, behavioral disorders, and mental illnesses (DelliCarpini, 2008). These issues occur at a higher rate among inmates in contrast to students in mainstream traditional education, which often causes hardships when establishing correctional programs (Makonos & Travis, 2010). It has been found in previous studies that younger inmates under the age of 24 have generally lower reading levels than older inmates, increasing the need for additional literacy and basic reading programs (Shippen, et al., 2010). All of these challenges possess a different element for educators and staff to overcome in order to bring needed education to inmates within their facility.

Structure of Current Education

Correctional education is different from traditional educational institutions in terms of its organizational structure. The structure has been described as militaristic or authoritarian (DelliCarpini, 2008). Because of this difference correctional students may have a better chance of excelling. In traditional educational institutions students are required to keep pace with other individuals in their class, causing those who are less skilled to fall behind. Inmate students have higher completion rates and achieve higher grades than their community counterparts. Student work is of higher quality and fewer prison students drop out than those in community programs. It is postulated that maturity and fewer distractions may distinguish inmate students from community counterparts. Additionally, motivation of prison students was seen as a factor in explaining the different outcomes for students of similar abilities (Harlow, 2010).

Due to the differences between a traditional educational institution and correctional education, it is often hard to find educators to administer education effectively to incarcerated individuals. Training is not readily available for teachers who want to work in the prison system. Preparations for educators in the correctional setting include standards that were developed and adopted in 1988 by the federal educational programs, with the most recent revision in 2004 (DelliCarpini, 2008). These standards included 40 hours of pre-service staff development issues, procedures, info on field corrections, basic security training, emergency plans, and procedures and issues related to teaching correctional students (DelliCarpini, 2008).

In addition to the challenges related to training teachers to work, states have reduced budgets for correctional education. To address student needs while working with a limited budget, prisons may choose to hire tutors who lack the significant skills and knowledge of trained and degreed educators.

Cost of Correctional Education

The average cost of incarcerating an individual for one year is \$23, 257 (Shippen, et. al., 2010). States spend over \$44 billion in corrections per year. The cost of providing educational opportunities within correctional facilities is a fraction of that cost (Shippen, et al., 2010). The money invested in correctional education prevents crimes and it may break even with a 6% reduction in recidivism (Kaiser, 2010). Specific information regarding the costs and funding of correctional education could not be found after an extensive search of the literature and related government documents.

Factors Affecting Recidivism

When re-entering society, people who have been incarcerated face road blocks to success including a lack of resources, lack of education (in cases where the individual has not received a degree while in prison), and a criminal history. If these road blocks are not addressed, individuals face great danger of recidivating (Lewis, 2006). People exiting prison often leave with little or no money, resources or social capital. Because of their felony record they are unable to get housing or employment. Low literacy rates and lack of employment also hinder inmate success (Makorios, Steiner & Travis, 2010). After completing a prison education, earning a high school diploma or higher, inmates may be able to be more competitive within the work field as they are more qualified and desirable to potential employers. With the participation in educational courses during imprisonment, inmates are able to fill in the gaps in their resume with school-related events or a degree, helping the employers see the benefits of hiring them (Owens, 2009). They have may have a greater chance of getting a job and developing financial stability.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was threefold: 1) to explore the effectiveness of educational programs in reducing recidivism; 2) identify to what degree prisons fund educational programs and; 3) determine if funding affects the effectiveness of educational programs, and if so how. The hypothesis was, “If educational programs are funded at appropriate levels, recidivism is reduced.”

Rationale and Research Question:

The rationale of the research was to help gain a better perspective for both the researcher and society as to what correctional education entails. Knowledge was sought to understand what the programs contain as well as what funding was needed in order to keep these programs running at their height of performance.

The objectives of the current research were to identify to what degree prisons fund educational programs; determine the effectiveness of educational programs in reducing recidivism; and determine how, or if, funding affects the effectiveness of educational programs.

Research Design

Sampling

The researcher chose non-probability sampling, as it was determined that key informants would have meaningful information regarding the research question. These key informants were associated with a correctional educational department in Minnesota. According to Marlow (2005), key informant sampling, “relies on people in the community identified as experts in the field of interest.” The researcher found an initial list of key informants through an extensive internet search of correctional supervisors and educators within the Minnesota correctional education departments. Criteria for key informants consisted of individuals having educational experience within the correctional educational departments in

Minnesota. These key informants could have been educators, supervisors, or directors that play an active role in correctional education and the content inmates will receive while serving their sentence.

Non-probability sampling was used for a comparative literature review. A search of the databases provided a list of articles related to the research focus. Those articles which provided the richest and most detailed information, based on the research questions, were selected for use in the literature analysis.

Research Methodology

The study was explanatory. The researcher decided upon an explanatory study because it would help determine the relationship of educational programs, the independent variable, and the change they cause upon recidivism, the dependent variable. Explanatory research, “aims at providing explanation of events to identify causes rather than simply to describe phenomena. It requires the formulation of a hypothesis” (Marlow, 2005). The hypothesis of the current study is “If educational programs are funded at appropriate levels recidivism is reduced.”

This study utilized qualitative data. The researcher decided to use qualitative data when it was determined that a study was needed which explored the current situation regarding funding of educational programs and the relationship with recidivism. Marlow (2005) states that, “Qualitative information involves the non-numerical examination of phenomena, using words instead of numbers, and focuses on the underlying meaning of patterns of relationship. Also, analysis of qualitative information consists of creating categories after the verbal material has been collected.” The non-numerical data consisted of information from structured interviews with key informants. All key informants were affiliated with a correctional education department in Minnesota. The interviews were structured so that the researcher would receive only information that was desired and pertinent to the study being conducted.

A comparative literature review was done in collaboration with the key informant interviews. Literature and statistics were collected from databases and appropriate websites regarding educational programs in prisons, funding and the relationship to recidivism. The review of the literature served to triangulate the data collected in the interviews.

The research was approved by the University of Wisconsin Superior Institutional Review Board and given the study number of #653. The categories included in the questions for the key informants were clearly linked to the study focus and research questions; correctional education, recidivism, and funding. See Appendix C for the complete list of interview questions. Upon IRB approval, an initial phone call as well as email was sent to identified key informants requesting participation in the study. After initial contact was made and consent was given, a face to face interview or phone interview was conducted between the researcher and key informant. Data was audio-recorded and written during interviews, and later re-examined for the purpose of analysis.

The comparative literature review was facilitated concurrently with the interviews.

Reliability

When conducting this study reliability was threatened in a variety of ways. According to Marlow (2005), “Reliability can be threatened when there are unclear definitions such as a question that might be phrased in such a way that two individuals interpret it differently and provide two different answers.” This may have happened when the researcher conducted the interviews with the key informants. Although the researcher tried to make the questions as clear as possible, individual variables within questions may have been interpreted differently among the different key informants.

“Variation in conditions for collecting data may also have an effect upon the reliability” (Marlow, 2005). The variation of conditions consisted of either a phone interview or a face to face interview. The way information was collected may have changed the responses of participants. The structure of the instrument may have impacted the reliability. This may have happened with responses to questions in the final portion of the interview. These questions were open ended questions that explored the participant’s ideas regarding variables, and may have led to biases unknown to the researcher rather than reliable or factual information.

The subjects may have responded differently because the researcher is a young female student of Caucasian background. Participant bias may occur when a key informant has a view point on either the research or the researcher that affects their answer to the research, thus impacting the outcome of the study. Participant bias can easily go undetected, and reduce the reliability of the study. Due to most interviews being conducted over the phone, and the researcher never meeting the informant, the elements of age and race bias was reduced.

It is difficult to generalize the information collected in the key informant interviews, as the interviews explored ideas regarding variables among a small group of participants. The information only relates to the correctional education departments within the state of Minnesota.

Confidentiality

Marlow (2005) stated that confidentiality is that, “the researcher knows the identity of the respondent and their associated responses but ensures nondisclosure of this information.” The researcher had to take measures in order to keep the identities of the key informants confidential. All the informants were read a consent that informed them of the precautions being made to keep their identity confidential as well as the risk of their identity becoming known.

The data, which included audio recordings as well as detailed notes, maintained the confidentiality of participants. The researcher never personally identified any of the key informants within the detailed notes; the data was organized through color coding. The key to the color codes were kept in a separate, locked file (password protected computer file). The information was then stored in a locked password protected computer to ensure that no one was able to gain access to the information. The McNair mentor and the researcher were the only ones that had access to the information as well as the key to the color codes.

Ethical Issues

The values reflected in the NASW Code of Ethics were used to guide the researcher in this study. These values included a focus on confidentiality, privacy, and self-determination.

As stated above this study looked at qualitative data and by doing this the researcher had to be careful that her own bias did not interfere with the accuracy of data collection. Another issue kept in mind was the manner of note taking in the interviews. The researcher needed to be sure that these notes did not mold to fit their own existing or developing hypothesis (Marlow, 2005). This issue was addressed by only writing down the exact words of the interviewees, as well as recording these interviews so that the researcher had the opportunity to go back if there was ever confusion or a misunderstanding as to what the key informant had stated.

People who are incarcerated are considered a vulnerable group. Inmates themselves were not interviewed. The researcher took great care to ensure that this vulnerable population was properly represented. Only individuals affiliated with the correctional educational departments and who were perceived by the researcher to provide an appropriate perspective on the population were interviewed. When the key informants were interviewed the researcher sought to ensure confidentiality to encourage participants to speak freely and honestly without fear of others knowing the source of the information. This helped the researcher to develop better accuracy in data collection (Marlow, 2005).

The study was approved by the University of Wisconsin-Superior Institutional Review Board before data was collected. Informed consent forms were distributed before each key informant interview so that participants were aware of the risks, the purpose of the study, and contact individuals if questions arose or they no longer wished to participate in the study. Consent forms were then gathered with signatures from both the participant as well as the researcher.

When writing and reporting information from the literature, the researcher was careful to accurately give credit to the authors of each study. This honors both the significant work done by others and avoids plagiarism.

Analysis

Organizing the Data

After gathering the data from the extensive literature review as well as the key informant interviews, the researcher began the analysis process.

First, questions that were utilized for the key informant interview as well as the comparative literature review were matched to the primary research questions. These categories were; what is the nature of educational programs, do programs reduce recidivism, and at what levels do these programs need to be funded in order to reduce recidivism. This helped the researcher to pick out the themes from the literature and the key informant interviews (Creswell, 2003; Marlow, 2005)

Information was arranged on an Excel spreadsheet to organize the data from the interviews, and separately the data from the literature review. In the horizontal column, names of the articles or the code names for the interviewees were displayed. This assisted the researcher in gaining quick knowledge as to the source of the material.

In the vertical column, the specific questions used for the literature review were displayed. For the key informant data, similar steps were taken, but the various questions that were asked during the interviews were displayed at the top (see Appendix A for questions).

Analysis Process

Once data was organized into the appropriate table, analysis began. The comparative literature review was completed independently of the analysis of the interview data.

The comparative literature review research used an analysis process discussed by Marlow (2005). This process included first sifting through the pieces of data that were considered relevant to the aims of the study and coding the data into developing themes. Important experiences were identified and ideas from the data were put into “meaning units.” The meaning units were then put into categories and assigned to different category names or groups with similar meanings.

Following completion of each set of data, results were compared. The key informant interviews were analyzed using Tesch’s (2003) eight-step process of analyzing data. The researcher first read each interview carefully, then picked one interview to go through and thought about the underlying meanings. All the topics were put into a list, then topics were abbreviated into codes. The interviews were reevaluated to make sure no codes were missed. The data was then assembled and the preliminary analysis took place; each interview was coded. Information for each code was placed together and reviewed for themes.

Following the analysis of the comparative literature review and interview data, results were compared.

Comparative Literature Review Themes

Research Question 1. What is the nature of educational programs in Minnesota?

Standards of What Educational Systems Must Offer

Education is mandatory for inmates without a GED or diploma (DelliCarpini, 2008; Harlow, Jenkins, Steurer, 2010; Makorios, & Travis, 2010). Mandatory education was adopted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons in 1981, with adoption by 22 states (Harlow, Jenkins, & Steurer, 2010). Those inmates lacking certain skills are required to take certain types of educational programming in order to meet the requirements of the mandatory education laws. This helps to ensure that those individuals with very little education will receive an education and at least develop a few skills for growth and development.

Educational Backgrounds of Inmates

Upon entering prison an inmate’s educational background may range from college graduates to individuals who are unable to read or write (DelliCarpini, 2008; Shippen et al., 2010). A significant number of inmates enter prison with a poor school history as well as various learning disabilities which can affect learning (DelliCarpini, 2008).

Demographics, home history, and minority status are among many of the additional variables that affect learning in correctional education (Harlow, Jenkins, & Steurer, 2010; Gee, 2006; Kaiser, 2010; Owens, 2009; Shippen et al., 2010). The education of people previous to incarceration can consist of poor reading and math development, leaving them with minimal or lower skill levels. Compared to the general public, inmates' learning history is less promising consisting of high dropout levels and poor comprehension of the material. "The population is largely male, poor, undereducated, and members of racial minorities, the median age of prisoners is 34, and the median educational attainment is only equivalent to an 11th grade education" (Owens, 2009).

Content Within The Programs

Goals in correctional education are similar to that of mainstream educational institutions, content within the educational programs in the prison can differ greatly from the general population's education (Costelle, 2007; DelliCarpini, 2008; Gee, 2006; Harlow, Jenkins, & Steurer, 2010; Lewis, 2006; Makorios & Travis, 2010; Owens, 2009; Shippen et al., 2010; Swanson, 2009; Wilson et al., 2010). The main goals when educating inmates is to help them develop the skills to succeed in the workforce which include the ability to read, write, do math, access technology, and solve problems (Shippen et al., 2010). Some of the main classes offered are; adult basic education, adult secondary education, post-secondary education, special education, vocational education, and life skill education (Makorios & Travis, 2010).

A focus of correctional education is on programs focused to help inmates seek and obtain employment in order to care for themselves and their family. Less common programs range from religious education to parenting education that teach parents general practices to be sufficient caregivers, and help their children succeed in the future (Wilson et al., 2010).

Benefits and Drawbacks of Providing Education Within the Prison System

Benefits to education within the prison systems consist of the development of life skills inmates need in order to be productive and responsible community members according to society (Harlow, Jenkins, & Steurer, 2010; Kaiser, 2010; Lahm, 2009; Makorios & Travis, 2010; Owens, 2009; Shippen et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2010). With these skills inmates are able to pursue a job that will help them pay bills and take care of their family. Participants in correctional education are busy. Therefore, they have less time for misconduct that often occurs in prisons (Lahm, 2009); with fewer distractions available inmates are able to focus on their studies and achieve higher education with a greater success rate. Incentives such as reduced prison time for participating in correctional education, and the opportunity to fill the gaps in a resume help encourage participation. The literature noted that at times the education provided to inmates in the correctional setting is of poor quality (Lewis, 2006; Makorios, Steiner, & Travis, 2010; Swanson, 2009). Because this education is poor inmates are not getting the benefits that are needed in order to succeed within the program as well as the future when these skills are to be put to use.

The Challenges in Providing Education

When looking at the challenges of providing education in the correctional settings two issues became apparent which are closely connected: proper funding of programs, and the ability and skills of the educators (Costelloe, 2007; DelliCarpini, 2008; Gee, 2006; Hall & Killacky, 2008; Lewis, 2006; Makorios & Travis, 2010; Shippen et al., 2010). With a lack of funding, materials and space needed for programs are reduced or eliminated (Makorios & Travis, 2010). With little funding prisons are forced to hire educators with fewer skills and experience, in order to save money. These educators are underprepared to teach inmates in the prison settings as well as provide the levels of attention that these inmates require in order to learn the material presented. There are very little programs available that teach educators how to present the material to the prison population, therefore educators struggle with finding techniques that will benefit their students. When budget cuts come and prisons are trying to find a way to cut costs they often go to the education department. Prisons may hire tutors or use volunteers to help educate their inmates, and reduce the number of licensed educators, thereby cutting costs (Lewis, 2006).

Research Question 2. Do Programs Reduce Recidivism?

Relationship Between Educational Programs and Recidivism

There is a positive relationship between educational programs and recidivism (Harlow, Jenkins, Steurer, 2010; Lahm, 2009; Lewis, 2006; Makorios, & Travis, 2010; Owens, 2009; Wilson et al. 2010). By participating in the educational programs, inmates stay out of trouble and progress toward positive change, increasing motivation, and developing positive relationship skills in society that help them succeed. However, “It is thought that education may reflect their unusually high levels of motivation to stay out of prison, more than the effects of educational credentials or skill development” (Owens, 2009).

Effectiveness of Educational Programs in Reducing Recidivism

Owens (2009) state that, the “ Greater educational attainment allows for a reduction in recidivism by granting ex-offenders increased levels of human capital and greater access to legitimate employment opportunities to turn their life around” (Harlow, Jenkins, & Steurer, 2010; Kaiser, 2010; Lahm, 2009; Lewis, 2006; Makorios, & Travis, 2010; Owens, 2009; Shippen et al., 2010). Educational programs not only help inmates be less likely to commit crimes within prison but help them continue to stay out of trouble when they enter back into society.

Research Question 3. At What Levels do These Programs Need to be Funded?

No common theme was determined. Extensive searches by the researcher and library staff were facilitated with no data uncovered. It is unclear as to the nature and extent of data collected in relation to funding levels of state and federal correctional education.

Themes Found in Interviews

About the Interviews

Three interviews were conducted for this research. Two of these interviews were conducted over the phone. One interview was conducted face to face. The duration of time set aside for the interviews was an hour, but interviews varied in length. Additional individuals were invited to participate in the research, but did not respond or declined. The State of Minnesota was preparing for, than experienced, a state wide shut down at the time the data was being collected which may have affected participation in the research.

Research Question 1. What is the Nature of Educational Programs in Minnesota?

Educational Background of Inmates When Entering Prison

Educators within the Minnesota correctional education departments deal with a very diverse educational level from their inmates. Offenders coming into prison may hold a Master’s degree, but more commonly lack a high school diploma or GED. Inmate population includes those who are functionally illiterate or speak little or no English (primary those from immigrant groups). Approximately 75% of inmates hold a GED or higher. Many individuals have stated to informants that they are first generation achievers. This may mean that they are the first in their family to receive a diploma or GED, or are the first to do post-secondary education of any kind.

Seeking Education Paid for by the Prison

For inmates seeking higher education, they must meet the requirements of the correctional institution in order to qualify for participation. Individuals must meet the standards set by the prison educational board in order to be eligible to participate in the programs offered in the prison. Inmates must be 35 years old or younger with 7 or less years to serve and cannot be convicted of murder or sex offenses. If an inmate meets these qualifications they may have an opportunity to participate in the programs within the institution. These programs vary from prison to prison. For vocational programs inmates are often allowed to participate when they are within 5 years of release. Although these requirements are set, the institution will help the inmate earn their GED or high school diploma regardless

of status. Once the GED or high school diploma is earned, inmates must meet the entrance requirements for the higher education college or university.

Basic Class Information

Classes with the correctional education department run Monday thru Friday, five days a week. Inmates can either participate in morning classes or afternoon classes depending upon their schedule. The length of the classes usually run around 3 hours a day, therefore they are in class about 15 hours a week. School is considered a job, and students participate fully in order to qualify for a job placement. While attending school as a job inmates get paid 50 cents an hour. Vocational and art students often go to school all day which usually is about 6 hours.

Mandatory Education

Minnesota is one of the 22 states that adopted mandatory education within their prisons. When entering the prison inmates are required to take an Acuplacer test in order for educators to determine their current education level. If they are not at the 11th or 12th grade level of reading and math, they are required to take classes to help them develop and achieve a high school diploma or GED. Jobs are important to inmates; however, they are not allowed to get one until they have received their GED. School attendance is considered a job so they do get paid while they are attending classes. Inmates are not allowed to drop-out of classes so therefore the drop-out rate is very low; however, sometime sentences are up or inmates are moved to a different facility before the GED is earned. If this happens educators try to help find outside resources to help inmates continue their education.

that qualifies them for employment that will help them provide for their family, as well as give inmates the confidence they need to succeed in a working environment.

Society Needs to Know

When asked what society needs to know about educating inmates, informants did not hesitate to state that although society may not like it, approximately 90% of these offenders will re-enter their communities. People convicted of an offense will be a part of the work force therefore it would be better if they learned a skill. Some people may not care that education reduces recidivism but they should also be aware that by reducing recidivism money is also saved for the state of Minnesota.

Research Question 3. At What Levels do These Programs Need to be Funded?

Distribution of the Money

Funding is a very important part of correctional education. Without proper funding educational programs within corrections would not be offered, materials would not be available, and qualified educators would not work within the field. Money that helps fund correctional education comes from many sources. Federal money helps fund college programs, but often in small amounts that may not go far. The Minnesota Department of Education invests a great deal of money in correctional education with a focus on literacy programs. The Department of Corrections portions out the money it receives and the educational programs receive a share. Other outside sources such as grants from the Department of Labor, federal grants, state grants, and just regular state money take a part in funding educational programs.

Although all of the informants agree that by just putting money into programs and services will not make it better,

who fit into the correctional setting. Once these qualified educators are hired, they are considered full time teachers and employers of the state of Minnesota. Some educators enjoy working within the prison and all the benefits that come with working with the inmate population; however, others find it difficult to work with the prison population due to the challenges of working in a restricted environment.

Application of Findings

This study may help educate individuals on the return to public investments in correctional education. By investing in correctional education states such as Minnesota can save money in the future by encouraging inmates to develop skills that gain sustainable employment. These individuals once released from prison can become tax payers and contributors. Correctional education can lower recidivism rates.

The study provides an understanding of the benefits to providing education within the correctional setting. By providing education, inmates are able to earn their GED or diploma and later further their education with a vocational or bachelor's degree. By gaining this knowledge inmates are able to produce a quality resume and a skill that will help them positively market themselves for a future job when re-entering society. It is important to further research to the benefits of correctional education to help determine the impact of education, particularly in the area of recidivism.

With the information gathered from this study, a practicing social worker will be able to better advocate for their clients who are currently or previously inmates, as well teach the community the benefits of educating inmates within prison. According to the ethical standards in the social work Code of Ethics (2008), "Social workers are to respect and promote the right of clients to self-determination and assist clients to identify and clarify their goals." By doing this social workers are helping their clients who have a prison record by supporting their right to education and encouraging them to work to the best of their ability.

Knowledge that is gained will help a social worker advocate for the value of programming and begin to educate the community on behalf of the access to programming within the correctional institutions. Social workers will be better equipped with the resources available in the correctional institution to provide educational programs for effective re-entry into society. With this knowledge social workers will be able to keep their commitment to clients which is upheld by the Code of Ethics (2008) which states, "a social worker's primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients".

Social workers should advocate for the value of proper policy, which is an important part of the social workers Code of Ethics (2008). Social workers should be able to explain the importance of funding to the educational department in correctional facilities. They will be able to teach both legislature and tax payers the benefits of funding correctional education and teach them about recidivism rates and cost effective things. There will also be a need to communicate about the high need clients and their educational needs. Social workers will also be able to provide case management, support and necessary referrals for clients preparing for release.

Conclusion

The researchers concluded from this study that the hypothesis, "If educational program are funded at appropriate levels recidivism is reduced," is inconclusive. Due to the lack of information found by an extensive search by both the researcher and library staff no data was uncovered to determine the levels of correctional education funding. However, findings do suggest that correctional education does reduce recidivism.

Ideas for Future Research

While conducting this research, it was difficult to find data related to the third research question, "At what levels do the programs need to be funded in order to reduce recidivism?" The researcher believes that it would be appropriate to conduct future research on this particular question. By interviewing appropriate people and finding more suitable resources this question could be uncovered in a more adequate manner.

The researcher would also like to gather better insight as to how many inmates get jobs after re-entering society. Variables to include would be the achievement of specific degrees while incarcerated: a GED or high school diploma, a vocational degree, or a bachelors degree. The research could examine if the people who have been incarcerated had sustainable employment relevant to the degree earned in correctional education and whether this employment was something the inmate desired. The researcher would also like to explore the number of inmates who finish these programs yet are unable to gain employment within society and whether there were similar characteristics among these individuals.

Finally, the researcher would like to explore one factor to determine if people who had been incarcerated feel it has helped change their life around and help them to not recidivate, and determine if this factor is related correctional education. Why they feel other ex-inmates have recidivated? Do they believe the recidivism rate is related to sustainable employment?

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Appendix A: Questions for Key Informants

The relationship between prison-based educational programs and recidivism

McNair Research, 2011

Questions for key informants

Study conducted by Angela Shermer

These are the possible questions that may be asked of key informants. Not all questions will be included in the interviews. The number of questions will be reduced based on the findings from a literature review and statistical review of prison data. We are requesting approval for all questions in order to have a question list to draw from.

EDUCATION

1. What is the educational background of inmates when entering prisons?
2. What are inmates' criminal histories when entering the educational programs within the prison system?
3. What is the highest education of inmates seeking further education? Lowest?
4. For inmates seeking education, how long will they or have they served?
5. Do you believe that education within the prison system benefits inmates when released? If so how?
6. What kind of education is offered to help inmates to help them get good employment?
7. What are your thoughts regarding demographic characteristics and their impact on inmates' educational level at the time they begin their sentence?
8. What are your thoughts regarding demographic characteristics and their impact on inmates' choice to further their education?
9. Is education mandatory?
10. Are there certain offenders that are denied education?
11. What is the structure of inmates' educational experience? Courses offered? Class time per credit hour?
12. Do offenders in the educational programs within prison have different behavior than offenders not in the program?
13. Is it difficult to find educators to come into the prisons with qualifications to teach inmates?

14. How much money is spent on prison education per year? Per inmate? And where does this money come from?
15. Is there any risks when it comes to educating inmates, such as to educators or guards?
16. During education are inmates able to utilize the internet for resources?
17. Does an inmate's age impact the motivation of the prison to provide an education?
18. What are inmates' perspective on education in prison?
19. Would you encourage inmates to engage in higher education in prison?
20. Do you believe that education should be required of prisoners while they are serving their sentence?
21. What is the extent of education received by prisoners?

What is the success rate for education programs? What is the drop-out rate?

22. Do you feel that education improves the quality of life of inmates?
23. Do inmates continue their education after re-entering society?
24. Do you believe that education better prepares inmates for entrance back into society?
25. What advantages do you believe education has given inmates outside the classroom that one can apply when they are a member of a community?

RECIDIVISM

26. Does your institution help with job placement after release?
27. Do you believe that the education that inmates receive while serving their sentence will make a difference in whether or not one will return to prison?

EFFECTS/OPINIONS

28. Do you believe that funding affects the effectiveness of educational programs?
29. How do you think prisons could improve educational programs?
30. What are challenges in providing education?
31. What do you believe is the primary focus for prison-based educational programs and related funding?

32. What do you think that society needs to know about the benefits of education prisoners?
33. Do you feel that education should be a standard within the prison system?
34. Should funding for education be a standard in corrections?
35. What is more important, rehabilitation or punishment? Is there a happy medium and have we reached that?
36. Is there a minimum or maximum education requirement for inmates who are interested in participating in the educational program? For example, do they have to have at least an 8th grade education?

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Appendix B: Questions for Literature/Statistic Review

1. Is there a relationship between educational programs and recidivism?
2. How effective are educational programs in reducing recidivism?
3. Is there a state standard as to what the educational systems within the prison systems must offer? A national standard?
4. Is there a minimum or maximum requirement of inmates required to participate within the educational programs?
5. What percentages of inmates that participate in educational programs within the prison are not re-enter prison? What percentages do?
6. If an inmate does re-enter prison what is the time frame in which they do this?
7. What are some of the main reasons prisoners are recidivating? Is it for the same crime?
8. How much money is spent on prison education per year? Per inmate? And where does this money come from?
9. Do you believe that funding affects the effectiveness of educational programs?
10. What is the educational background of inmates when entering prisons?
11. Who are the individuals (inmates) that are unable to receive education within the prison systems?
12. What does the content within the programs contain?
13. What are the benefit as well as drawbacks of providing education within the prison systems?
14. What are the funding levels as well as whether all this money is needed or if more money is needed?
15. What are the challenges in providing education?