
Is Education in Prisons Fit for Purpose?

Action Research

Sarah Roydes
July 2011

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1. Introduction

Working within a prison there can be many problem areas within an educational department that could potentially be looked as in respect that we don't have as much freedom of teaching or resources available as within a further education department, however as a centre we do have a common goal of

“teaching our learners to a high standard to enable them to gain employment on release”

This is an aim that has been passed down from the government as a goal not just for the prison education department but for

- Work programme providers
- Offender Management Units
- Probation
- Community project
- Department of work and pensions

This is due to 50% of offenders released from prison reoffend within a year* and a sample of offenders sentenced between 1 month and 4 years surveyed revealed that

- 47% said they had no qualifications
- 13% said they never had a paid job

This is the reasons the government and SFA (Skills Funding Agency) have made such an emphasis on

- High quality education within prison
- Education that ensures Numeracy and Literacy education reach level two standard
- Fit for purpose education

I personally think that this is important to reduce the risk of reoffending if the educational needs are structured correctly within prison but am unsure if in reality this is practiced within prison due to various reasons such as funding, with this in mind I am going to research

“Is education in prison fit for the purpose of educating offenders to be ready for employment once released”

This is an important issue for me as the employability tutor as my main role is to ensure that the learners can and do create an action plan for their release in terms of education, further training and gaining employment.

For this I have to assist the learner to build up a picture of what skills and education they had prior to coming in to prison and what the offenders have gained within prison to develop themselves further with a view to increase their chances of gaining employment and then match this to what they will be doing once released.

As I have worked on both sides of the gate in terms of employability I have a good understanding of the importance of training and qualifications in gaining employment

and how but as both have moved on I feel that it would be important for me to understand how the education has been meeting the needs of our learners

- in today's job market
- meeting their aspiration needs and wants
- meeting the needs of the employers

It is very important that the learners have a good understanding of how their education and training relates to gaining employment and in to which fields they can apply their new found skills so they can see how their needs are being met within the prison prior to being released rather than the boot out the gate and see approach when they just see what the employment market is like and then be reactive to the situation instead of proactive.

For this I will be seeking the views of

- offenders within my prison
- Ex-offenders
- Teachers within the prison
- Ex-offender employment advisers

To gain a well rounded personal perspective as well as statistics from

- My prison
- Offender employability programmes
- Government national stats

This will benefit me on two levels

- Centre level
- Teaching level

Centre level

This will benefit our centre as we can see how effective we feel the education we run is/has been to our learners and from a teaching perspective we can see if the level and course we run are gauged to meet the needs of our learners in terms of gaining further employment once released.

This may help us assess the package of qualifications we deliver

- Are we delivering the right qualifications
- Are delivering the right level of qualifications (E3 – L2)
- Is the balance of type of qualification right
- Do they meet the needs of the learners

This will also allow us as a centre to establish in terms of the governments initiatives on how effective we are on a larger scale to assist with reducing reoffending via training and employment.

Teaching level

This will allow me to further develop my programme on a larger scale by understanding how we meet the needs of the learners and how I could further develop the course in terms of

- Level of teaching (L1 only)
- Informational requirements
- Where the learners are lacking in knowledge
- How their courses will assist with gaining employment
- Links in to the community

On the whole all of these areas tie in together to ensure that the learners are receiving the education that they deserve to gain employment and training opportunities when they are released and this is paramount to my role.

I feel action researching the topic of

Is education in prison fit for the purpose of educating offenders to be ready for
employment once released”

is a good fit as action research is “analysing existing practice and identifying elements for change”**

I will be completing an analysis of our existing practices in terms of the education we deliver on

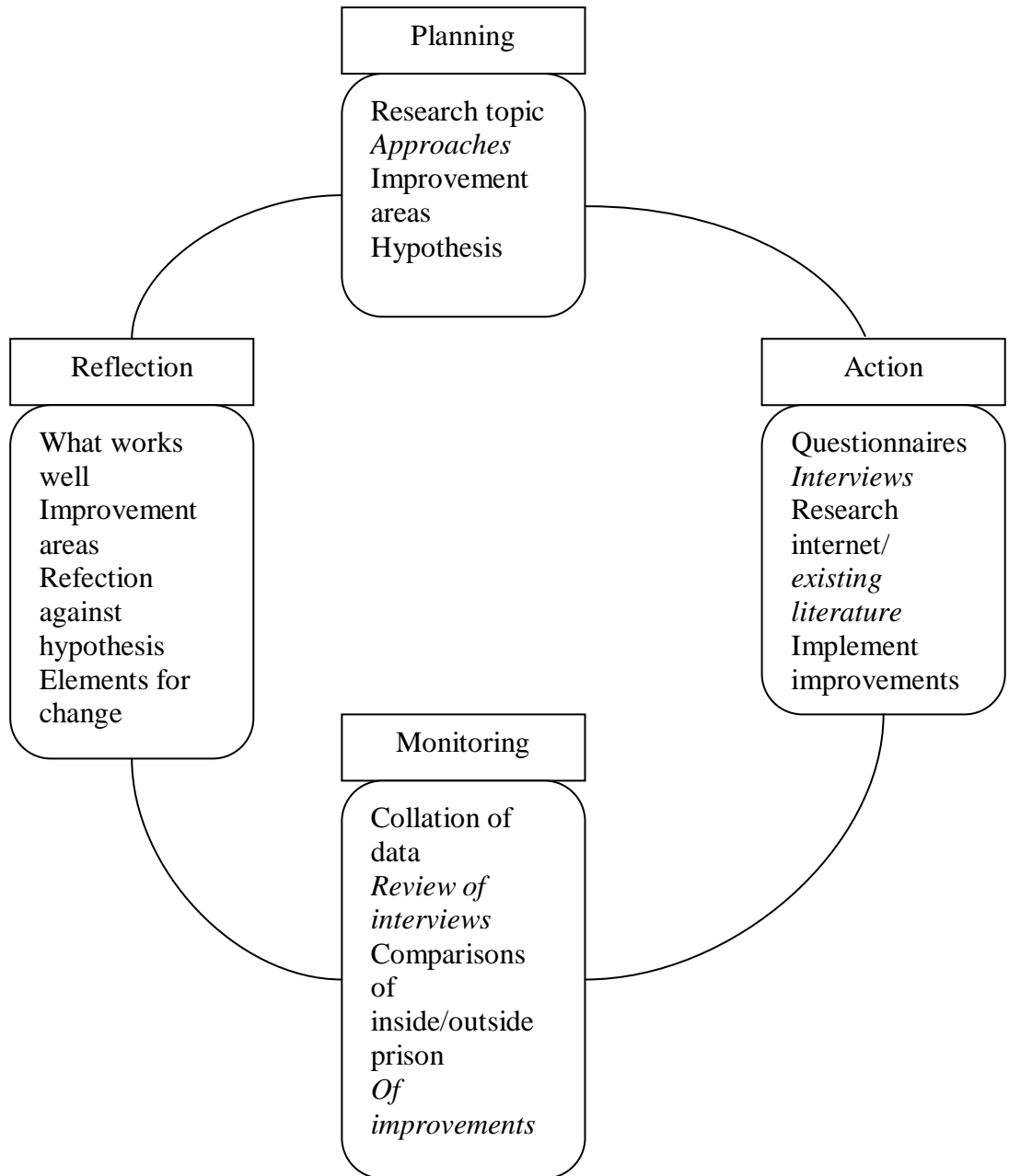
- Curriculum available
- Level of qualifications delivered
- Relevance to employment and further training

Utilising the opinions of

- Our offenders
- Ex-offenders
- Teachers
- Offender employment specialists
- Existing research

This will give me a view of how we run as a whole to meet or fail to meet the needs of our offenders and enable me to identify elements of change from which I will investigate possible improvements to the elements and draw my conclusions.

To enable me to complete this effectively I will utilise the action research cycle



Using this approach I feel that I will be utilising action research effectively in researching

Is education in prison fit for the purpose of educating offenders to be ready for employment once released”

And will be able to see how I can positively impact my own and the centres practiced to ensure that the needs of the learners have been met and myself and others have a clear idea on how we impact the learners in terms of preparation for employment.

- Ministry of justice – Breaking the cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders
- Action research in education Dr Stephen Waters-Adams

2. Literature Review

Education within prison has been a long standing issue of debate in term of the link between offending and educational needs and how this can impact society on a larger scale in 1979 Robert Martinson¹ argued that education, training and treatment programmes added nothing to the standard procedures of conviction that are integral to the justice system, this has been a long standard way of thinking over the years within the prison system who has seen their sole aim as punishment of offenders however this pessimistic view has started to be challenged within and out of prisons that have led to education within prisons being examined in a different contexts.

Within prisons there is a wide range of diverse offenders who are all in need of education to underpin their skills and knowledge, however in many prisons a high presentence of offenders have server learning difficultly, these are usually not identified until the offender has attended education within prison and have not received the basic education as a child to allow them to develop their skills in terms of gaining qualifications and employment, this has shown to have a large impact on offending and unlike Martinson's theory the government are placing an emphasis on education and training within prison and on release to reduce the risk of offending.

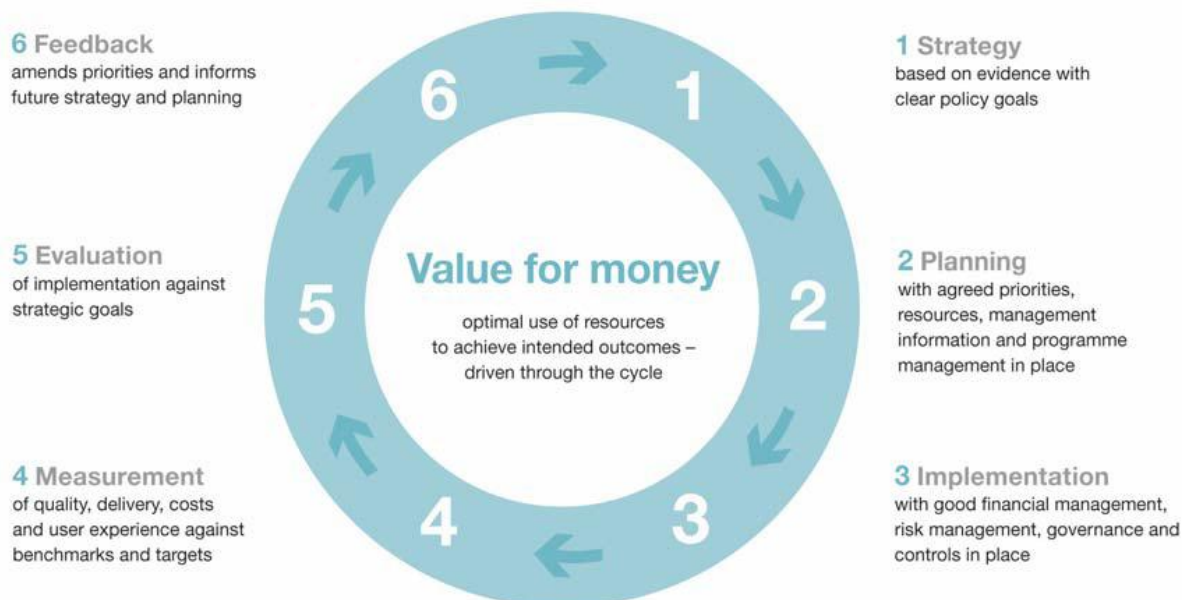
Is prison education serving its intended purpose though?

There are many views on whether or not education in prison serves its purpose set by the OLASS (Offenders Learning and Skills Service) of "The main aim OLASS is to ensure that offenders acquire the underpinning

¹ Robert Martinson What works? Questions and answers about prison reform. The Public interest

education, life and work skills² this has been a long standing issue at which the government has been trying to assess a balance being need and value for money as shown in the Core management cycle³

Core management cycle



This shows that the government are looking at education of offenders as value for money and from this I believe that it shows that they government are trying to ensure that they gain the most for their money which is why they have privatised education within prisons where companies bid for contracts within prisons and they run the centres as independent business that feed back in to the larger business.

² <http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/youth-justice/education-and-employment/custodial-education/offender-learning-and-skills-service-olass.htm>

³ Submission to the review of offender learning. National Audit Office 2010

In this respect Edward Leigh MP Public Account Committee stated within a interview with the BBC⁴ that

“OLASS was set up to overcome long-standing problem in the delivery of skills and learning for offenders. In practice this has failed in almost every respect”

He has spoken about this in term of the funding given to education departments within prisons and that on the larger scale of delivering core educational needs within prisons and companies running the schemes where still gaining funding based on hours taught and not on achievement outcomes of learners gaining the skills and qualifications. This was rebutted by Sion Simon Further Education Minister 2008 who stated that they had seen an increase of offenders attending education within prisons.

“Nearly 40% of inmates has taken part in training courses in 2007/08 compared with less that 30% when the service began before 2006”⁵

Which shows that from the start of the OLASS project they had a rapid increase of learners attending education and in today’s regime the offenders have to attend education and work as part of their “purposeful activities” and timetable where by the offenders have to attend duties to show the offenders have purpose within the day to day working of a prison.

However this has then been shown that they prison system see education as a way to keep offenders busy rather than a tool that they need to develop their skills and education

“Prisons saw offender leaning primarily as a mean of occupying prisoners

⁴ Prison Education Scheme failed <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7698457.stm>

⁵ Submission to the review of offender learning. National Audit Office 2010

rather than improving their skills level”⁶

This view can be counterproductive for the offenders attending education and the personnel delivering the courses as this then enforces the view within prisons that education doesn't matter or count for anything when the learners need the education and are trying to overcome stigma to attending education and their own bad experiences within education on both sides of the gate, it has been shown that 40% of offenders have a reading age below that expected of an 11 year old⁷ showing that there should be a high priority shown to education within prisons however within the prison the emphasis is usually placed on essential job that need completing within the prison prior to education and that wing staff usually don't understand the importance of education has for the offender in the long run their main concern is their safety within the prison environment.

“Offenders on education were paid less than offender doing work, therefore creating a de facto disincentive for them to improve their skills”⁸

This is a stigma that is slowly but surely being overcome as more emphasis from the government is being placed on offenders gaining education to reduce the risk of reoffending due to the £11bn⁹ annual price tag being passed on to the tax payer and the proven links that employment can help reduce the risk of reoffending.

⁶ Submission to the review of offender learning. National Audit Office 2010

⁷ Submission to the review of offender learning. National Audit Office 2010

⁸ Submission to the review of offender learning. National Audit Office 2010

⁹ Impact of IMPACT – Overcoming barriers to employment for ex-offenders 2008

With over 40% of the male population in Britain having convictions¹⁰ it is essential that training is taken place to ensure that employers are willing to take on ex-offenders, a recent poll taken by IMPACT suggested that 75% of employers would consider taking on an ex-offender if they had the skills for the job however from this group the vast majority said that they believed that offenders wouldn't have the necessary skills for the job they required and therefore would look more favourably to people without convictions.

With these perceptions become the difficulties for offenders to gain employment and show the importance of giving the offenders a good standard of education within prison that meets their needs.

However how has OLASS set their aim of the offenders receiving adequate education and does this mean that offenders are only entitled to the basic educational needs or learning levels? Or do providers have the responsibilities to assess the needs of the individual and provide the education needed for the individual to gain employments in the field and at the level they wish to?

I have spoken to the managers within my centre over this issue many times and have been informed that we are only funded for learning progressions from Entry three up to Level two qualifications and this level is seen as a adequate level of learning to gain employment and that there is very little flexibility to this without discussion, I have found no literature with backs this theory or dispels this theory.

But the National Audit Office has identified that

¹⁰ Home Office 2002

“apart from basic skills education there was little evidence about what specific kinds of offender learning had the greatest impact on improving employability and reducing re-offending”

I feel that this shows that there is a large gap in knowledge of what impact higher level and specific courses could engage the offenders in to learning and future employment, this could be due to the fact that each offender has their own individual needs and wants but also the fact that they see the education provide as basic education that doesn't assist them with the higher level of learning that they may wish to gain for future employment that may be difficult to access once released.

This go's against what the government are trying to achieve, they would like education to have direct links to being able to provide learners the necessary skills and knowledge to gain employment in various industries and become a productive member of society

“Education will be geared primarily to providing skills to perform work effectively and as far as possible giving prisoners skills which increase their ability to get a job on release”¹¹

I think that without the SFA (Skills Funding Agency) or the ESF (European Social Fund) being clear on what level of learning is classed as “effective” education for engaging in work or learning I feel that the private providers will always provide the basic education that they can keep class numbers high in. The National Audit office also identified that as different prisons had different private providers delivering education within prisoners if a prisoner was transferred to a different establishment this meant that the offender would lose

¹¹ Home Office 2002

all their hard work in gaining a qualification as this would not be transferred to their next educational centre

“In about half of courses the prisoner could not complete the course because he or she was moved to another establishment and records did not transfer or there was no way of dovetailing what was being provided at different institutions”¹²

This is costing as much as £30m per year in uncompleted courses but no move has yet been made to provide prison education providers the incentive to work together to ensure teaching has not been wasted and that the offenders feel that attending education will be worthwhile as their learning will follow them though out their prison sentence to develop a well rounded educational and skills base. I very much doubt that this will be developed on further as private providers in the long run will want to ensure that they gain the credit for achievement ensuring funding and possible contracts and will not wish to work together to meet a learners need due to the political nature of funding and contract allocation.

Even with all these issues in relation to education within prisons we do have an important role to developing the offenders both though educational development but also personal development in preparing them for release, however James McGuire 2000¹³ would argue that the type of education and training needed for the offender to gain employment once released are better serviced to be delivered within the community, this is due to the fact the

¹² Ministry of justice – Breaking the cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders

¹³ James McGuire 2000 What works in reducing criminality

offender will not be placed in a forced learning environment but also it will be easier for the offender to see the relevance of the learning in real terms and not just the idea that it should help.

It has been shown that offenders who have been given a Community Order over a Custodial Sentence have a 8% less chance of reoffending, in McGuire's theory putting the offender in the community where they are given the chance to learn and develop their skills with purpose in the real world, he believed that this was due to badly designed and poorly implemented services and better designed services are of benefit provided in a non-custodial setting.

I feel that both prison educational centres and community offender providers need to work together for the offenders to gain maximum benefit of the education and training that could be provided and have continues joined up support throughout their rehabilitation period to ensure they are working on and working with organisations to reduce their risk of re-offending.

In conclusion I feel that education within prison does provide a vital role for the offenders developing their skills and knowledge for gaining future employment however there are still gaps in knowledge and issues that need to be assessed and developed to ensure that the government gain their value for money without this impacting on quality education, these issues are

- Lack of central aims consistent with all education providers
- Funding can deter centres for providing more bespoke training
- There is a lack of information sharing between organisations

- Potentially education is not fit for purpose for learners other than basic skills development.

From this I have formulated the hypothesis that education within prison is only of real benefit to lower level learners who need to develop their basic skills and not for the learners who need access to education and development of a higher level to meet their educational and employment aspirations.

3. Methodology

Within the Action research the researcher is able to choose a range of methodologies they wish to use along as the researcher feels that the information that they could gather will give them purposeful related information needed as part of the project.

Most of these methodologies will fall under either quantitative or qualitative data:-

Quantitative data is statistical data that has a math mathematical basis where you can get solid information from and measure such as

- Statistics
- Questionnaires (where a scale is used)
- Graphs
- Bar charts

Qualitative data is data that is opinion bases and led where you are gathering information from others and your opinion

- Shadowing
- Observations
- Questionnaires (where opinions are sort)
- Interviews

Methodologies

As part of my Action Research I will be using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data to work towards my hypothesis of “education within prison is only of real benefit to lower level learners who need to develop their basic skills and not for the learners who need access to education and development of a higher level to meet their educational and employment aspirations” for this purpose I shall be using

Quantitative	Qualitative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gathering prison statistics ○ Gathering offender employment Centre statistics ○ Gathering achievement statistics from centre ○ Questionnaires for offenders in prison ○ Questionnaires for ex-offenders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Semi-structured Interview offenders ○ Semi-structured Interview staff in prison ○ Semi-structured Interview ex-offenders ○ Semi-structured Interview staff in ex-offender employment centre ○ Questionnaires for offenders in

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questionnaire for prison staff 	<p>prison</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questionnaire for offender employment centre staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Questionnaires for ex-offenders ○ Questionnaire for prison staff ○ Questionnaire for offender employment centre staff

I feel that by using both data types I will be collecting a wide range and well rounded information that will give me a good basis to formulate and conclusion regarding my hypothesis.

Statistical Data

- Gathering prison statistics
- Gathering offender employment Centre statistics
- Gathering achievement statistics from centre

I will be collecting states from both the prison and an outside ex-offender employment centre regarding the successes or failures the offenders gaining employment, this will show me picture of the actual data for offenders gaining employment upon release from prison, I will look at this objectively as statistics of the norm. Using these will provide me with just **Quantitative data** that issues mathematical relevance and not personal opinion within this I will be looking for data that suggests

- Employment rates after leaving prison
- Achievement rates of qualifications gained

Questionnaire Data

- Questionnaires for offenders in prison
- Questionnaires for ex-offenders
- Questionnaire for prison staff
- Questionnaire for offender employment centre staff

The questionnaires will be gathering both **Quantitative data** and **Qualitative data** I have chosen the questionnaires to provide both to ensure that I can collect a balance of data from the persons taking part the questionnaires will be in two parts

Quantitative Data – Will have questions where the individual will be asked to rate the answer to a question on a scale that will give them the opportunity to rate the effectiveness/relevance to a particular area these will then be used to see the differences of opinion between the different roles

- Offender
- Ex-offender
- Prison teacher
- Offender employment support staff

In a statistical manner on the issue as I will be able to measure the responses against each other on the issues relating to prison education.

Qualitative data – The second part of the questionnaire will ask them questions regarding their personal opinion about education within prison from their personal experience, I will be using this to gage if there is a difference of opinion or agreement on issues relating to prison education within the four groups of people included.

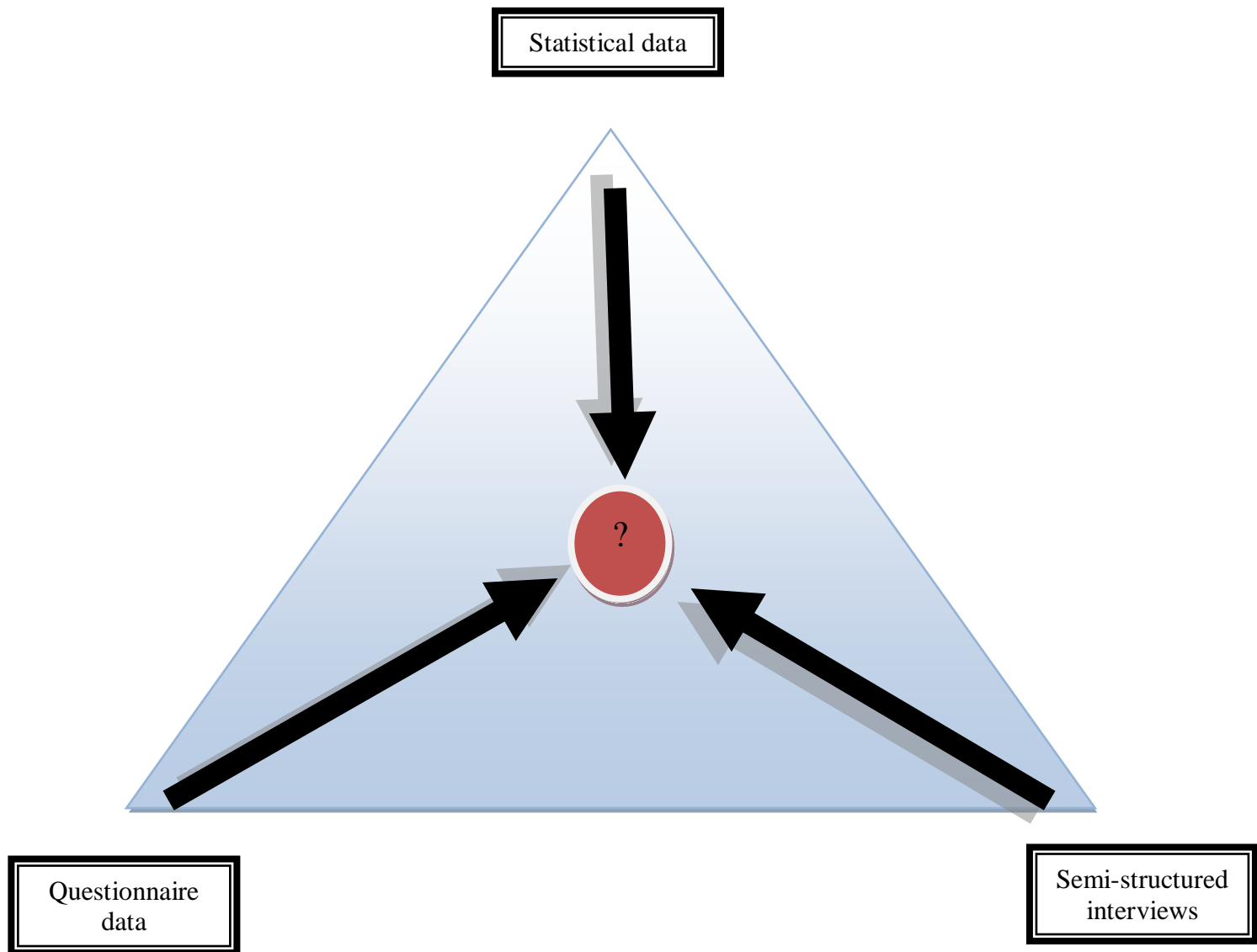
Semi-structured interviews

- Semi-structured Interview offenders
- Semi-structured Interview staff in prison
- Semi-structured Interview ex-offenders
- Semi-structured Interview staff in ex-offender employment centre

This data will be purely **Qualitative data** as I will be gathering peoples personal opinions and experiences within a semi-structured interview where I will be identifying and recording key points made during the interviews, to keep this the same throughout I will be recording data though hand written notes, this is due to the lack of IT resource available within the prison and to ensure impartiality I will use the same method though out the data collection process.

By utilising the three areas of gathering relevant data I feel that I am using the principle of triangulation

Statistical Data



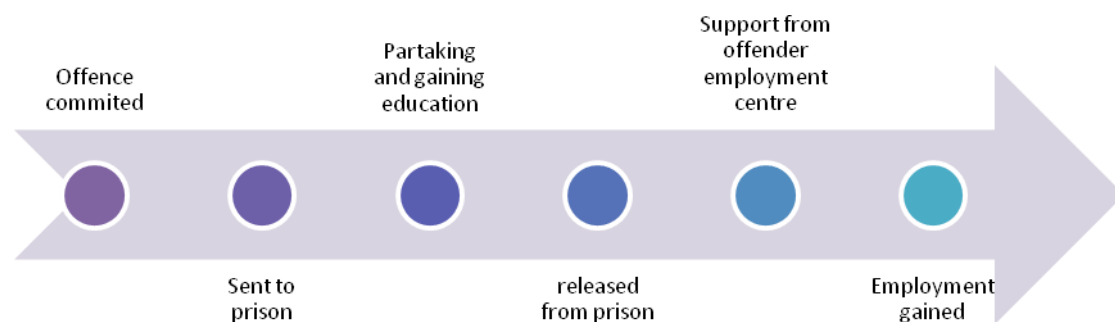
By utilising this method I am looking at the larger picture by choosing different methods to highlight particular area of the research, where they would not show me the full picture individually but once this are combined this should give me more accuracy of information over and above utilising only one methodology which would only give me a narrow view point.

People involved

I have chosen for the four groups of people

- Offender
- Ex-offender
- Prison teacher
- Offender employment support staff

To be included in the gathering of data is because each person has a separate role in ensuring the offender whether it be themselves or others has had an input in their own way to ensure the offender whether it is themselves or not would and will have a input in assisting the offender gain employment and will have their own experiences of offenders gaining employment through their journey



By including everyone in the journey and at different stages of the journey I will gain a well rounded view and data relating to my hypothesis.

All of the persons involved with any of the data research will be willing participants; they will volunteer their time to complete the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews but must fit in to the categories stated to ensure an even response to the data.

Data Collection

Even though my research in an individual project I have utilised a collaborative approach to collate my data for the action research to ensure that all of my data is collected to timescale and is the most up to date and accurate data, the danger of using this approach is that the people I am relying on may let me down on the timescale or providing the information at all as this is not their research it will most properly not be of high importance to them as it is to me.

The people I have ask for assistance collecting the data are

Statistical Senior Officer – this person has the most up to date and relevant data regarding prison education and employment gained after release from prison, it is his job to collect the data for our prison and input this in to the national statistics.

Deadline given 15.07.11

Employment Manager ex-offender employment centre – I have asked for his assistance in asking his clients to complete the ex-offender questionnaires and collect them once completed, the reason I have asked him to complete this is because he has access to ex-offenders and has built up a relationship with them to be able to ask for feedback in the form of the questionnaires, I have also asked if he could asks his staff members to complete the staff questionnaires to.

I have also asked him to identify and gain permission from five of his clients to partake in the semi-structured interview within their offices; again this is because he has a relationship with the clients and will know who will be willing to partake.

The main reason I have asked for assistance in this side of the data collection is the privacy of their client as all ex-offenders have the right to privacy and be able to choose who knows about their offence outside of disclosure laws. Deadline given 15.07.11

Teachers within my centre – I have asked them to hand out a selection of questionnaires to their learners in class and pass these back to me, this has ensured confidentiality of the questionnaires and learners views without the perceived risk of repercussions this has already been completed.

They have also been given the teacher questionnaire to complete and place back in my box by 15.07.11

Research ethics

As a researcher you have ensure that the collation of data and the use of data is done so in a respectful and ethical way to ensure the data is used in the way intended there are different aspects to this

Confidentiality

With any type of data you are collecting from people you have to ensure that they are respected, within collecting data with the purpose of action research you have to ensure confidentiality to ensure that they persons identity is not used so they will not have repercussions after giving information related to the research and to enable the participants to feel that can give relevant and accurate feedback without pressure to answer a certain way.

Willing participation

All of the participant will/have been asked to participate in the research, there have been not negative or positive reflection on the participants regardless if they have taken part or not. I feel that this is important to ensure that all participants are will to take part and give accurate relevant data they wish to share as part of the study.

Bias

Bias within action research should be eliminated where possible, in the case of my research the study is bias as I am only looking at offenders and people who work with offenders for input in to the study, however I could not eliminate the bias in this respect as the research is based on offender learning in relation to employability, but within these groups of people I will not be asking for data the could further identify them such as age, race, religion etc.

This also related to the sample of people used to ensure that I have enough of a wide base of people participating with different view points but not flooding myself with extra unnecessary data, for this purpose my sample group will be 25% for each of the following groups

- offenders in prison
- ex-offenders
- prison staff
- offender employment centre staff

This ensures a wide net of people participating with different views that are relevant to t he research.

Integrity of information

It is very important that the integrity of data collected is at the highest possible standard and reliable in the fact that the information collected must come from sources where they are trusted to collect accurate and reliable data that is factual and not influenced in any way.

I will achieve this by asking people who will be collecting questionnaires and giving me statistics are trustworthy and able to explain to me where and how they got the data I have asked for.

Recording and monitoring data

I will organise the collected data in various ways to ensure these are recorded and monitored to the highest standard, due to restrictions of IT use within the prison I have decided that all questionnaires and interviews will be hand written and paper based for all groups partaking to ensure fairness and confidentiality within their group, however the statistical data will be provided in an IT format.

Statistical Data

Will be receiving the statistical data via e-mail or paper version I will then create and master folder where the hard copies will be held and save a password encrypted file to save the data on my computer for ease of access.

Questionnaire Data

For the questionnaire data I will be creating a database for each person type

- offenders in prison
- ex-offenders
- prison staff
- offender employment centre staff

this will be for the Quantitative data only as this will allow me to easily assess the data given in terms of percentages and easily compare the different groups against each other.

For the qualitative data I will be recording these on a word document and keeping the paper files secure with the original responses on for reference, using these methods will allow me ease of access and enable me to assess these easily.

Semi-structured Interviews

I will be handwriting notes though out the semi-structured interview to ensure that the notes I am completing are accurate, these will also be approved by the interviewee to ensure that I have collected to main points they wished to put across. The main reason for the handwritten notes is due to IT access restrictions within the prison but I have chosen to complete all of the interviews this way to ensure there is not unfair bias.

Overall I feel that I have planned my approaches to my action research project well and with purpose to ensure that I have covered all aspects of the action research process to ensure that my research project has purpose and will have an impartial reflection to my project.

4. Results

I chose to collect my data in three ways to utilise the principle of triangulation

- Statistical data
- Questionnaire data
- Semi-structured interviews

I chose these to ensure that I captured enough information to ensure that I

can draw conclusions to my hypothesis of

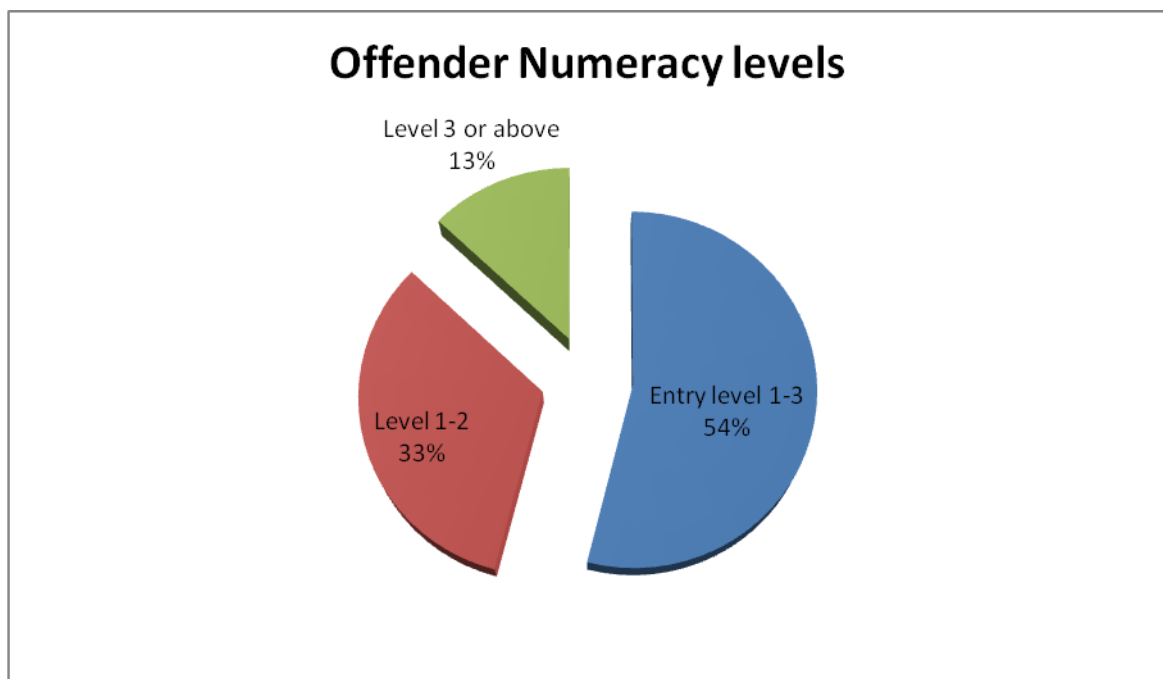
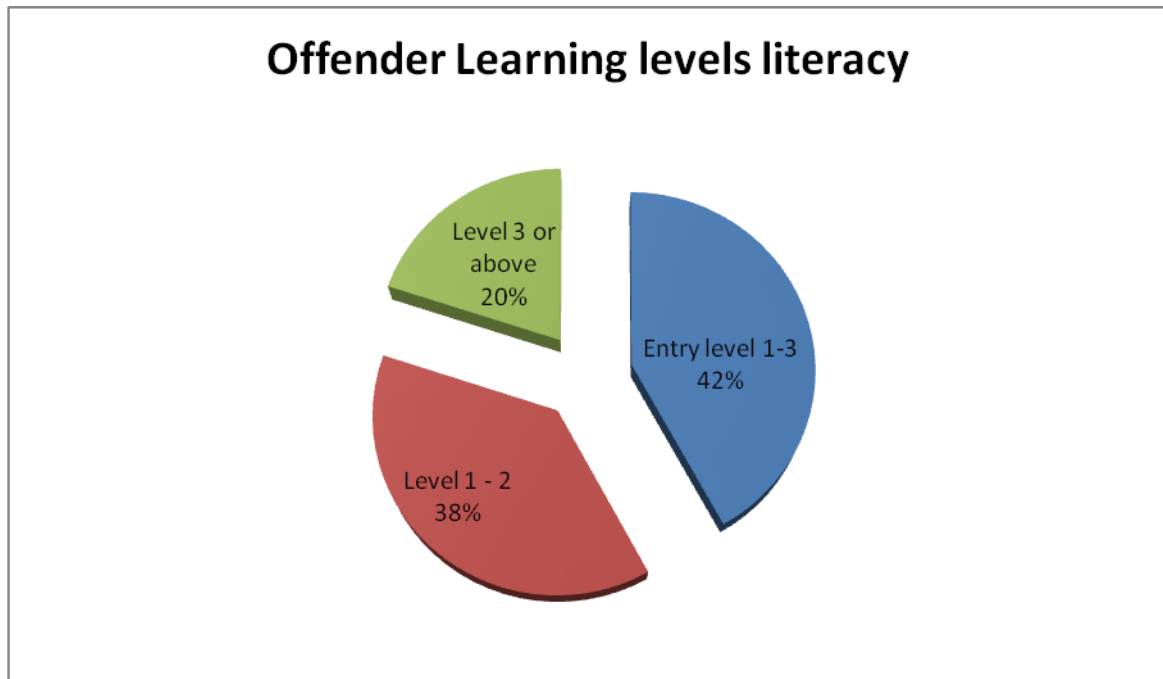
“Education within prison is only of real benefit to lower level learners who need to develop their basic skills and not for the learners who need access to education and development of a higher level to meet their educational and employment aspirations”

For this end I collected the data over a four week period from

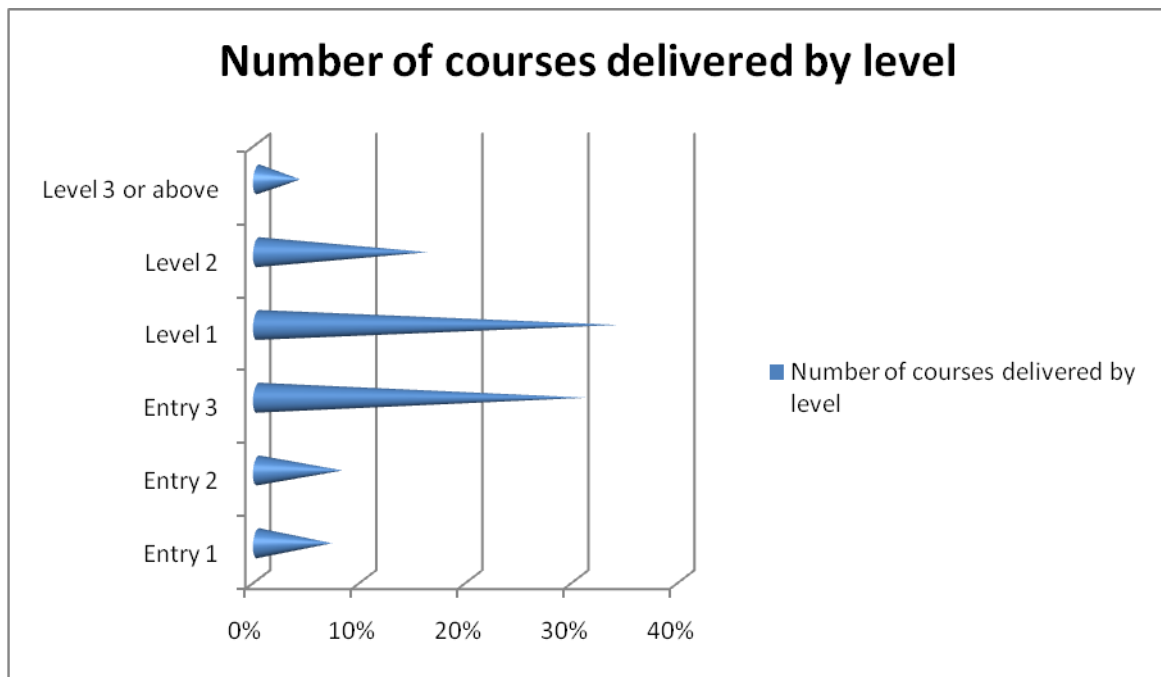
- HMP data
- Offenders
- Ex-offenders
- Teaching staff in the prison
- Ex-offender support staff

This was to capture enough information both Quantitative data and Qualitative data to ensure that I could draw a conclusion.

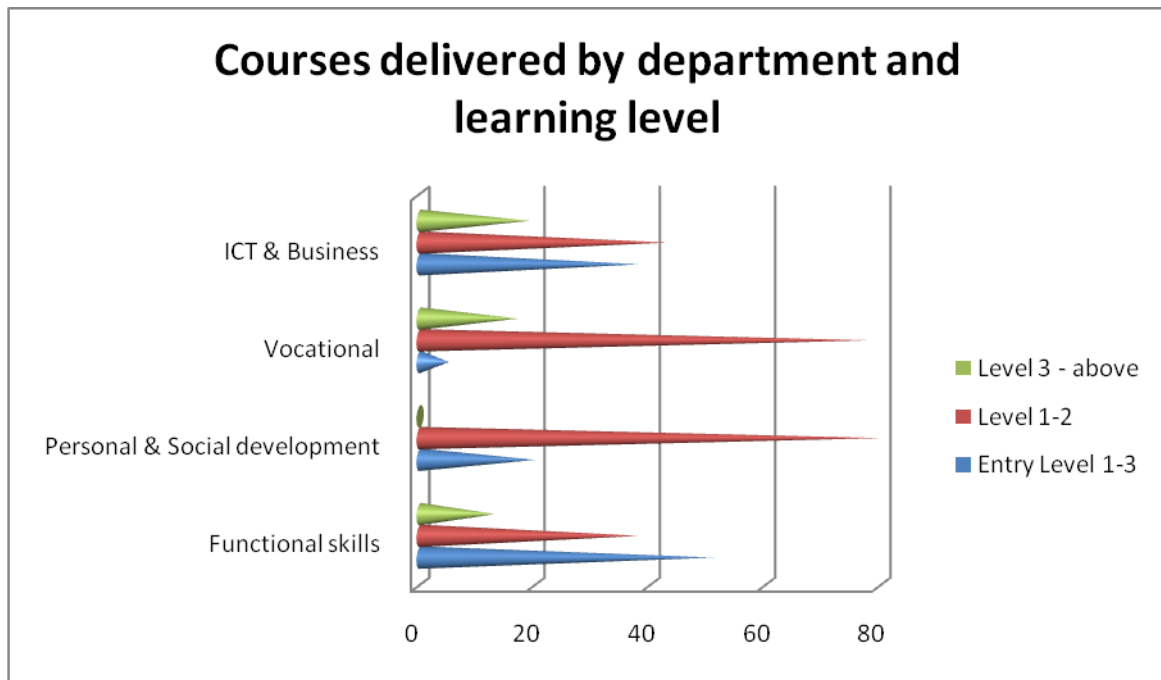
Statistical data



The literacy and numeracy levels show that the main learning levels of our offenders/learners are Entry level learners who have a need to develop their basic skills within literacy and numeracy levels prior or whilst developing other skills and academic learning.



This is a representative that shows what level of courses are delivered to offenders within prison; this shows that the majority of courses that are delivered within prison are aimed toward Entry 3 and Level 1 learners. This shows that at either end of the scale of higher and lower level learners the courses are restricted, for the higher level learners I think that this is due to lack of resource and funding for these courses, and for the lower level learners I believe that this is due to the fact that basic education is the priority and they will then have access to the other courses once they have completed their basic education.

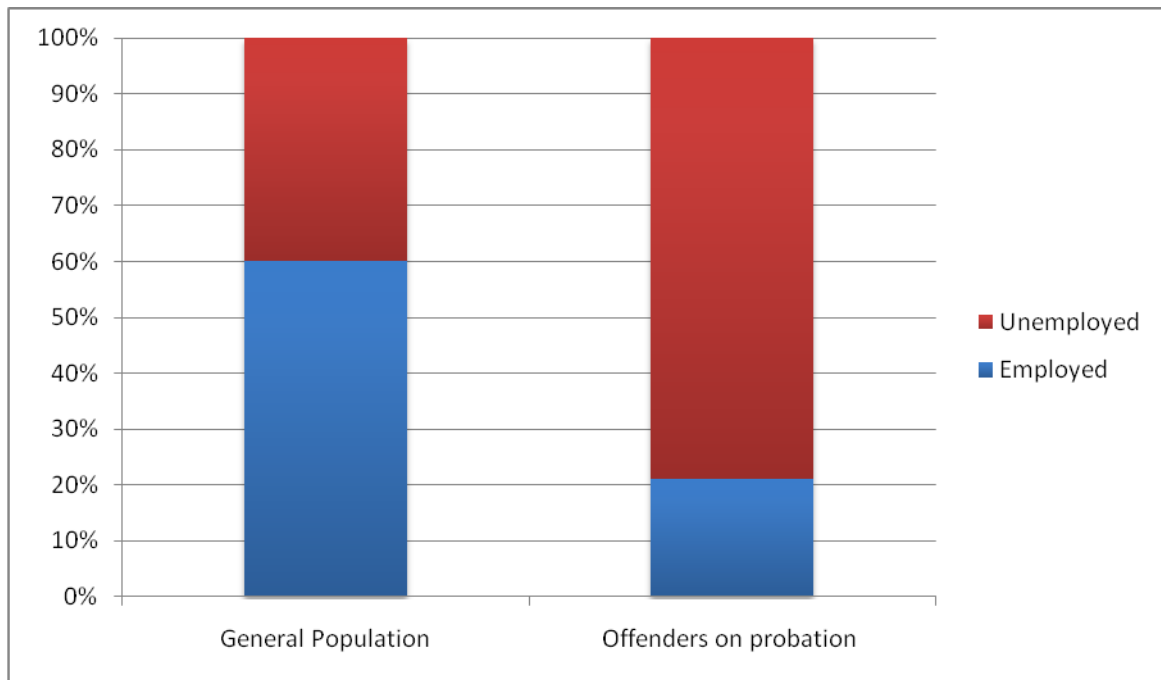


The data shows that there is a difference of education level delivered from each department; this could be due to the differences in the needs of the learners who attend. With the functional skills department their main objective will be to ensure their learners gain the basic education so they can then develop further in other areas, this explains why they have more entry level courses delivered.

The PSD team they are challenging the behaviours of the offenders and how they see the world in general, these courses have a larger impact on the lower level learners who may not have many life experiences or have experiences of a diverse world, the higher level learners will have more world and educational experiences and challenges therefore will not benefit from the courses however learners need a basic written level to enable them to write their portfolios and complete the course to the requirements set by the awarding bodies which is the reason there are more courses available at level 1.

The vocational teams delivers more level 1&2 course due to the nature of the course the learners need to be able to read, write, take exams and complete portfolio work for the theory work and writing up their practical work, this again is due to the awarding bodies needs and the courses that are available from them which is why there is less choice within the entry level qualifications, with the level three or above the reason there is less choice for this I would say is due to two area, one there is less funding for level three or above courses which for a private organisation would make this less attractive proposition for them to deliver the courses but also with vocational learning regardless of literacy or numeracy level the learner needs to understand the basics of the practical application of the learning and due to time constraints and offenders moving or leaving prison they may not have time to start or complete the level three or above courses.

The ICT and business courses have more of an even spread of qualifications but still deliver more level two and below qualifications, I think that the learners can see a more practical purpose of these courses and how they can utilise these in employment once they are realised so there is always a high level of learners asking to be placed on to the courses so have a good attendance, retention and achievement rates for all of the courses and then can offer a wider range of courses.



The comparison between the employment rates between offenders on probation and the general population shows a significant differential in employment status, this could be due to many different reasons, one being that employers may be less willing to employ people with criminal records and that offenders in general may have had less education or work experiences than others in the general population and have to disclose and explain the reasons for gaps in employment to possible employers.

Questionnaire data

i. Offender/learner questionnaires

Could you please complete this confidential questionnaire and return it to your tutors please. Please be honest on a scale of 1 fantastic and 5 not at all effective.

1. How effective is education in prisons in supporting your education aspirations?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

2. Do you feel that education within prison helps prepare you for employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

3. Do you feel the level of education is set to the right standard to gain employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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4. Do you think there is a well rounded package offered in HMP for education and employment purposes?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

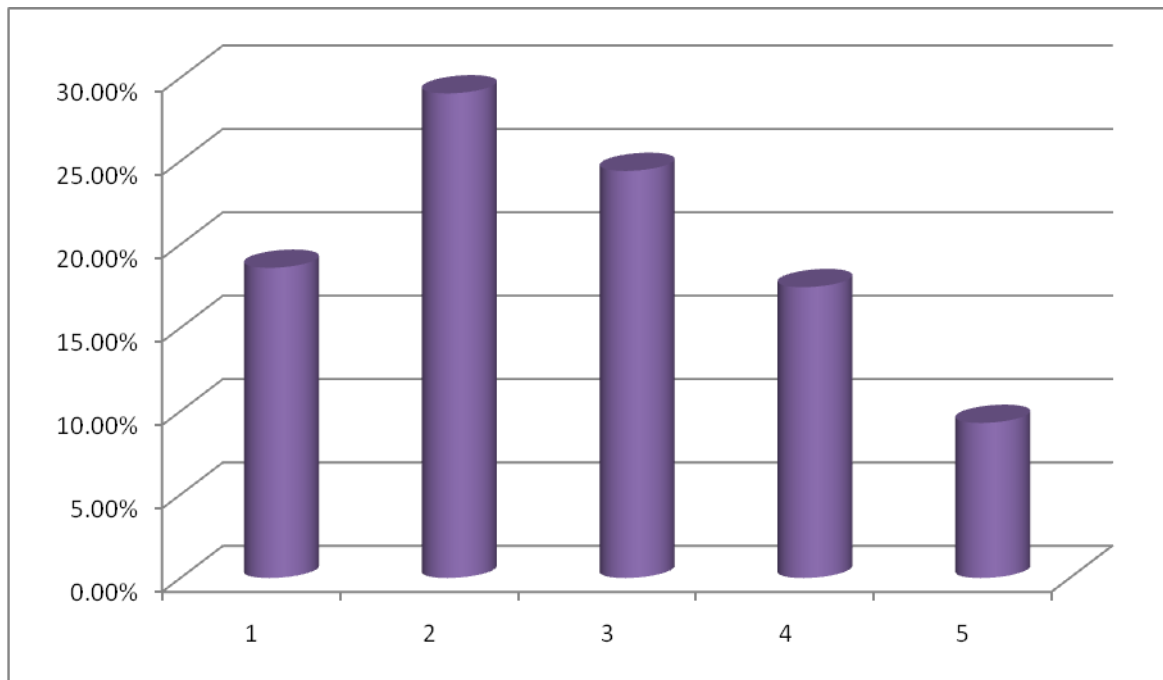
5. Do you feel other prisons have supported you better in reaching you educational and employment aspirations? If so how?

6. Within HMP ! what course do you feel will best met you education and employment needs and why?

7. Any Further comments are welcome

Responses to offender questionnaires

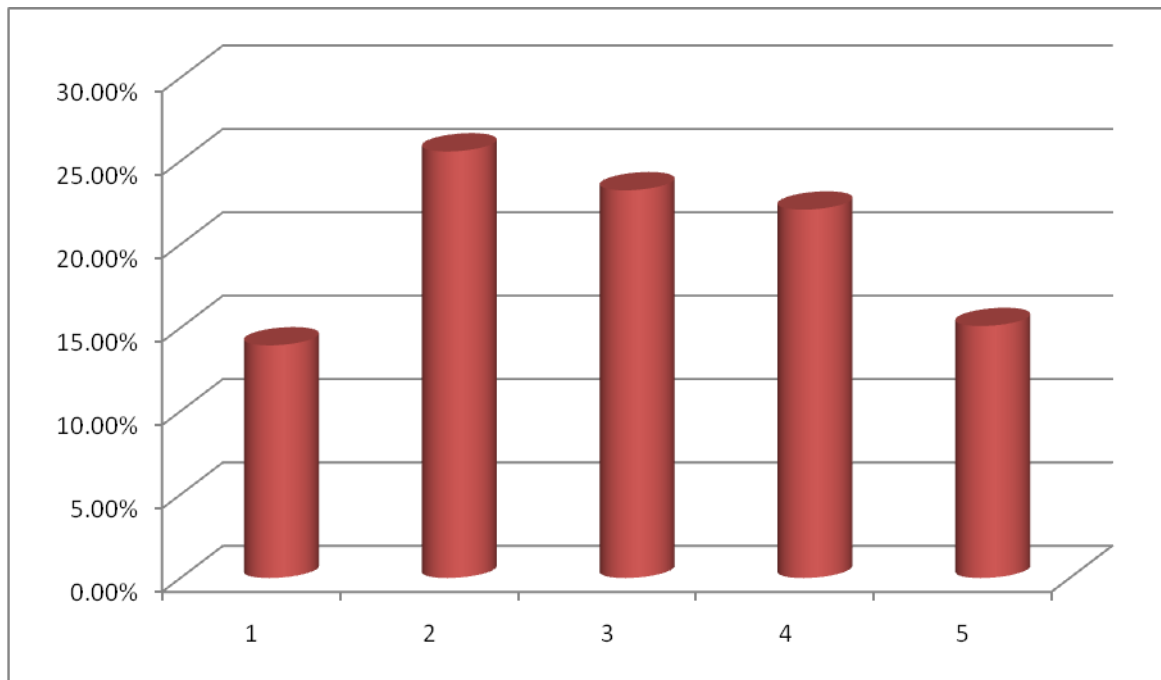
1. How effective is education in prisons in supporting your education aspirations?



This shows that overall the learners feel that the educational department does support their needs in educational aspirations in the majority of cases with only a small margin saying they felt the education provided does not meet their needs.

This would be influenced on what the aspirations are and how they view education in supporting them in their educational journey but also what level of education they would like to have access to.

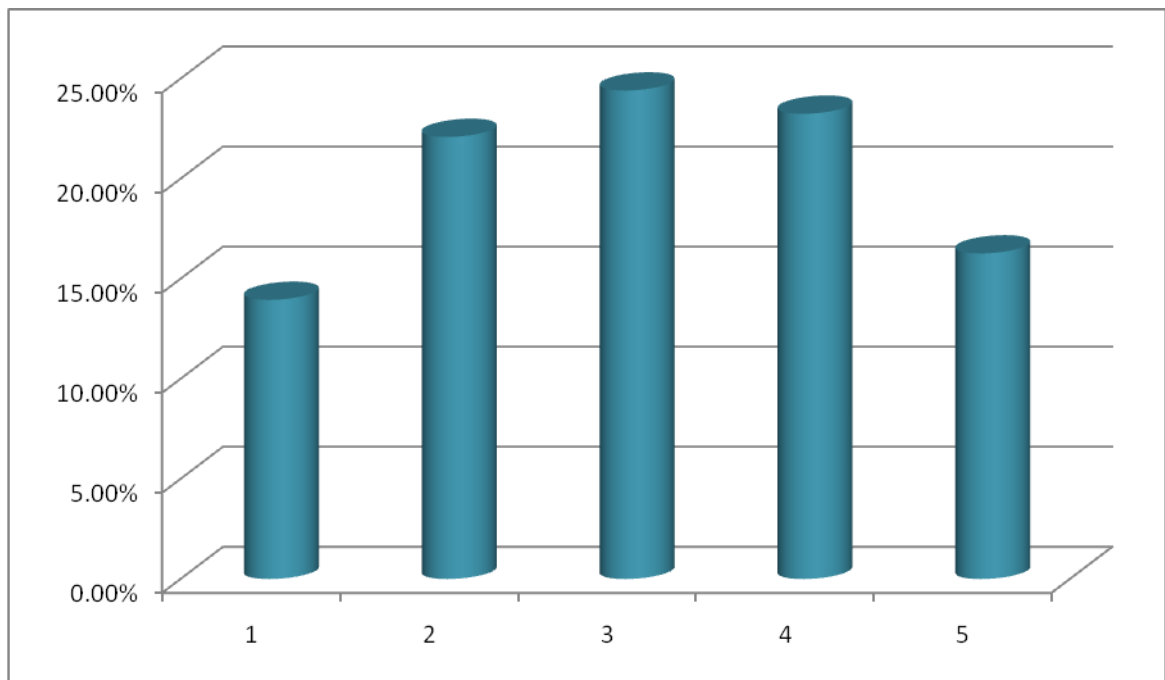
2. Do you feel that education within prison helps prepare you for employment?



The amount of offenders who feel that the education they receive will help them back in to employment is fairly evenly spread to whether or not they are supported back in to employment.

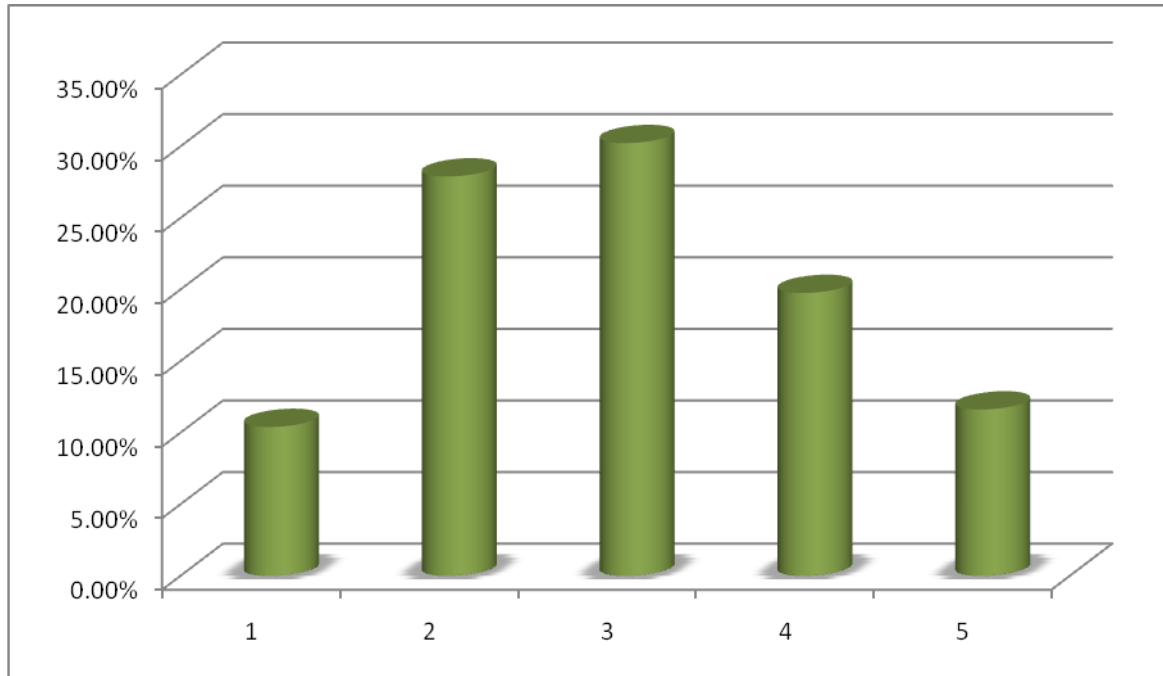
This is influenced on what they would like to do for education once they are released but also if they have an understanding of what gaining employment will be like, if the in learner is a first time offender they may not have an understanding of what they will be able to achieve or if they are repeat offenders they may feel that they will have more issues to address to gain employment outside of education.

3. Do you feel the level of education is set to the right standard to gain employment?



The results showed that the offenders were middle of the road to whether or not the education was to the right standard for employment, though for the majority felt that they weren't receiving education that was to the right standard to gain employment, this could be due to the fact that the offenders may have a bigger picture of what they would like to achieve after prison and the course that they may wish to complete could be inappropriate for a prison environment or would not meet the needs of a large percentage of the offender population.

4. Do you think there is a well rounded package offered in HMP for education and employment purposes?



This shows that the offenders feel that there is a good package of education available within the prison but also think that there could be more to offer within the education, as there is a slight sway towards the package being well rounded but overall it shows that there is room for improvement.

5. Do you feel other prisons have supported you better in reaching you educational and employment aspirations? If so how?

I will show a selection of the answers.

L6 “No I didn’t get to go to education in my last prison”

L7 “Much the same”

L20 “Higher level of education and training offered at other prisons”

L41 "NO. HMP * has the best resourced, best structured department I have come across"

L35 "I have been to two other prisons: the first had no education provisions, the second had very little which by comparison are extremely poor"

L2 "I found most of them the same"

L8 "better trade skills –carpentry, welding, vehicle maintenance"

L42 "Other prisons are of equal effectiveness"

L70 "No"

Overall the offenders who completed this section showed that the majority feel that education within prison is basically the same within all prisons by responding NO to the questionnaire and the offenders who did responded that they have received better education advised that it was due to the range of vocational training was better in other prisons, this is changed from prison to prison due to educational department, space and security clearance within the particular prison.

6. Within HMP ! what course do you feel will best met you education and employment needs and why?

I will show a selection of the answers.

L3 "English, Maths"

L12 "Unfortunately there is not a lot to offer here, so really no benefit to me"

L10 "The varied Business courses as I am looking to go self employed"

L7 "Business enterprise and IT"

L25 "Maths, English, computer skills, CAD and multiskills as all of these courses will help with employment. As most companies required at least a level1 maths and English, and most companies are computer based"

L16 “To help me IT and Health and safety”

L41 “The opportunity to do Open University study. This gives broader, deeper education at a higher level, with qualifications that are more useful in the real world

L53 “Assertiveness course. It helps you be aware of your rights”

L55 “Art because I want to go back into air brushing”

The answers given back from the offenders included courses across all departments though the majority advised that the IT and business enterprise courses were of best use as they wished to become self employed upon release from prison. There was no indication that one course of department met the needs of the offenders more than others, overall the courses and departments have helped many offenders in various ways.

7. Any Further comments are welcome

I will show a selection of the answers.

L74 “Levels need to be high enough on courses to be recognised to an employer”

L81 “scheduling need to listen to the needs of the prisoners and not just put random stuff on our timetables without consultation”

L6 “ would be good if HMP ! had other courses like welding”

L69 “It would be a good idea to ask the major employers in the country if they would under which criteria they might employ ex-offenders and adjust the courses accordingly”

From the offenders who completed this section the vast majority chose to use the section to bring up personal issues being handled within the

prison/education department which are not relevant to the study but others did use it to ask for higher levels of education to be available but also a wider range of vocational education would be of better benefit to them being able to become employed once released.

ii Ex-offender questionnaires

Could you please complete this confidential questionnaire and return it to your tutors please. Please be honest on a scale of 1 fantastic and 5 not at all effective.

1. How effective was education in prison in supporting your education aspirations?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

2. Do you feel that education within prison helped prepare you for employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

3. Do you feel the level of education was set to the right standard to gain employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

4. Do you think there was well rounded package offered in your prison for your education and employment purposes?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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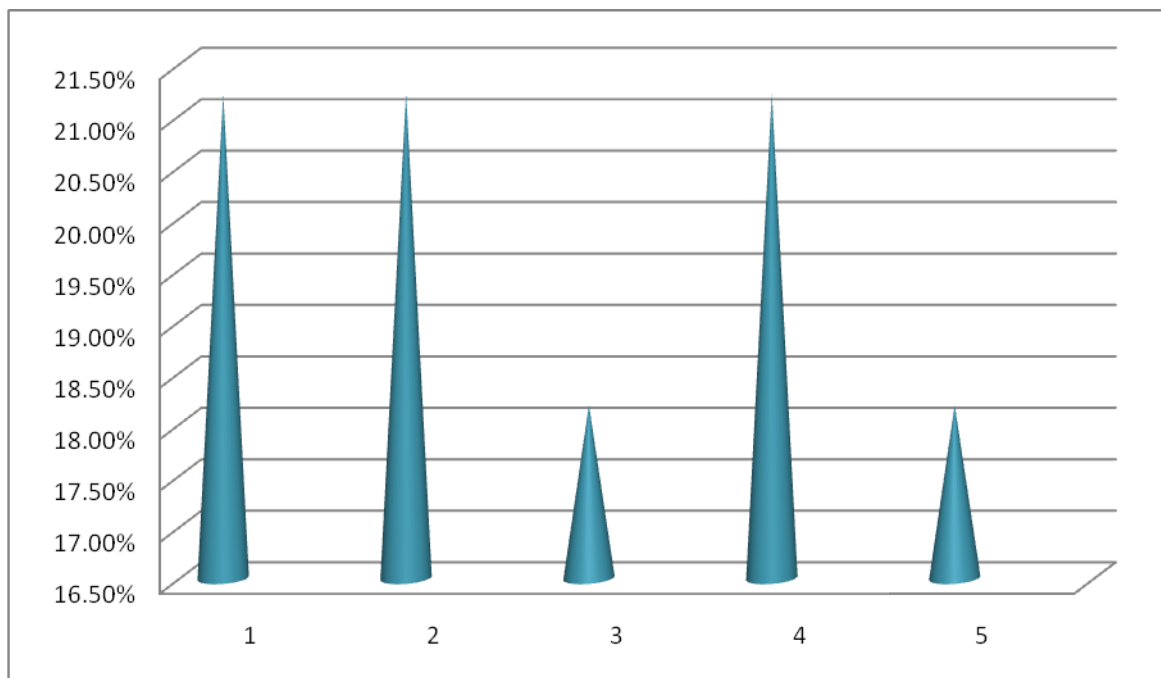
5. Do you feel specific prisons have supported you in reaching you educational and employment aspirations? If so how?

6. Within the prison system which course do you feel best met you education and employment needs and why?

7. Any Further comments are welcome

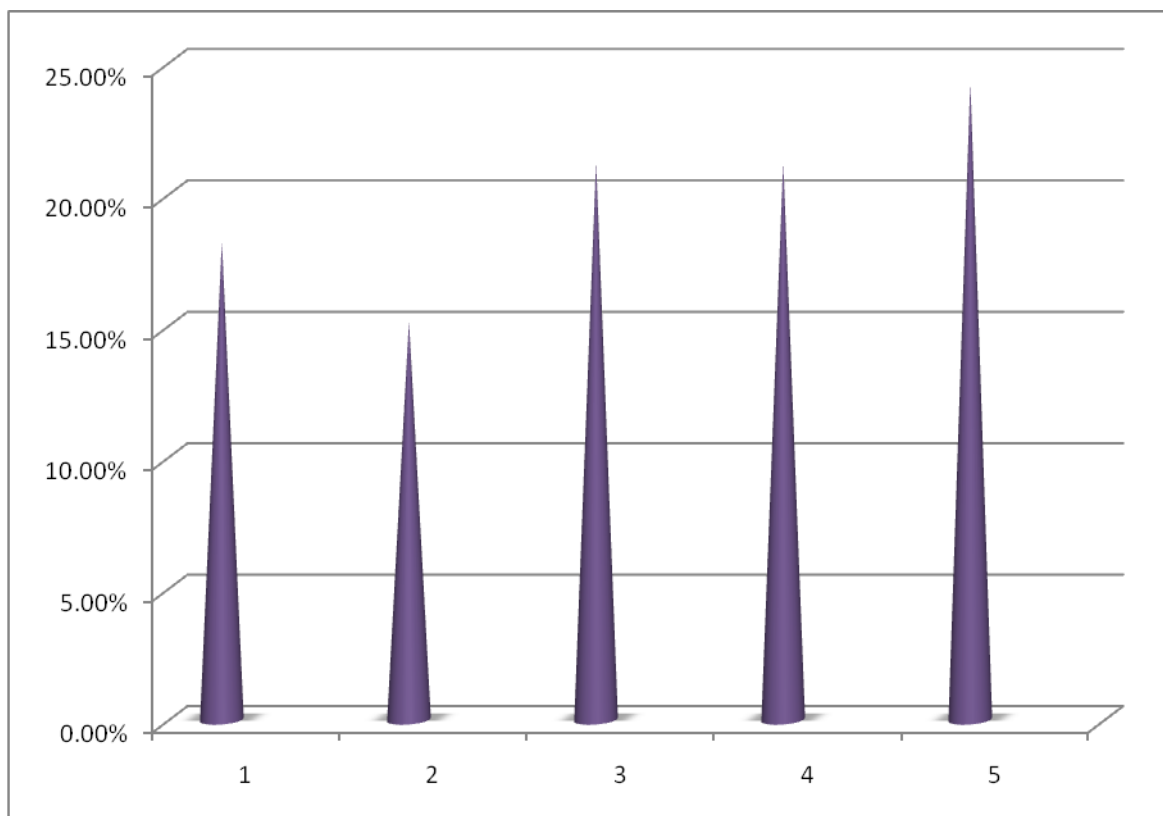
Responses to the questionnaire

1. How effective was education in prison in supporting your education aspirations?



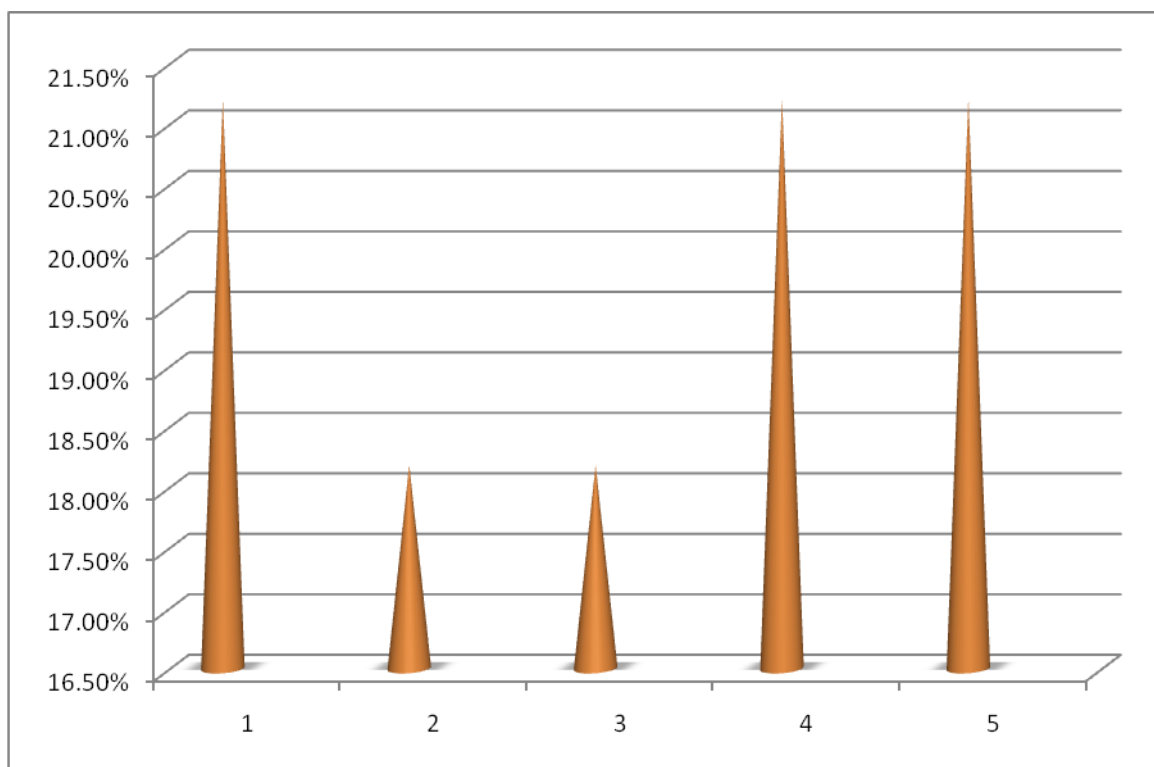
This shows that the ex-offenders released from prison were split into two camps to whether or not the education they received in prison was effective in supporting their educational needs they either felt that it was very effective or not that effective to meet their needs.

2. Do you feel that education within prison helped prepare you for employment?



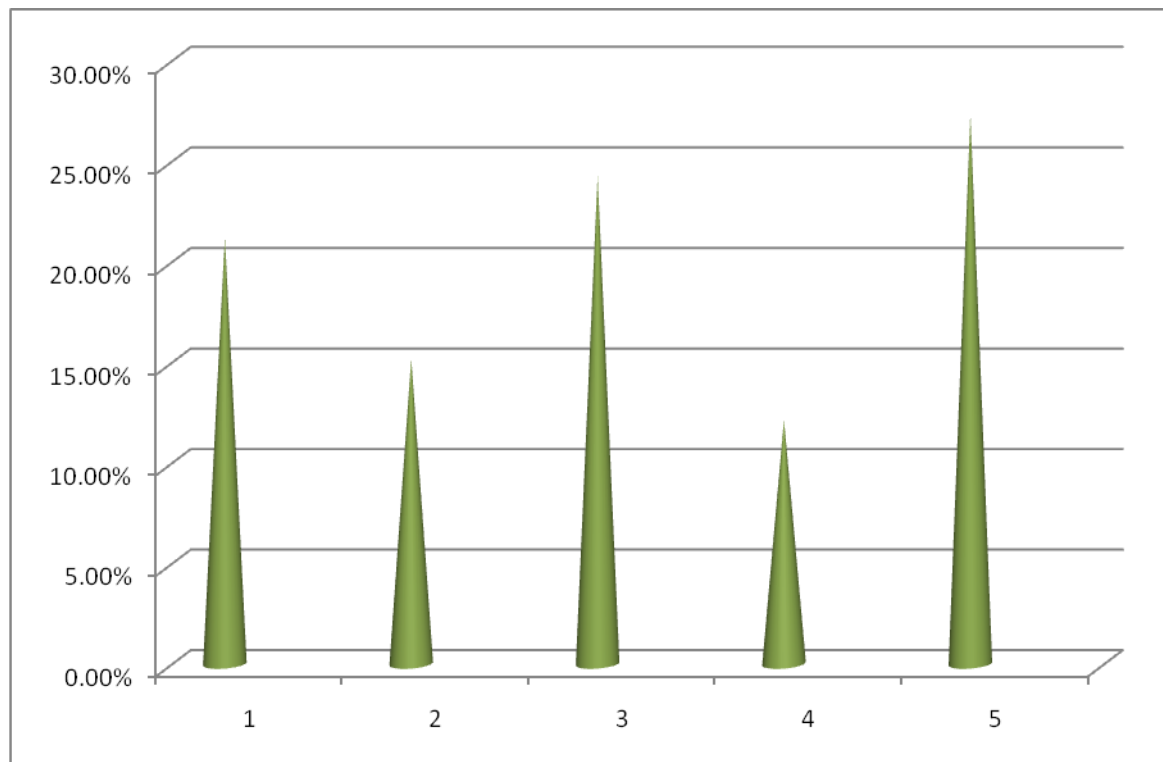
The responses to the question shows no strong indication to whether or not prison education prepared them for employment, however more answered that they didn't believe that it did help them be prepared for employment once released from prison.

3. Do you feel the level of education was set to the right standard to gain employment?



This shows a clear difference of opinion from the ex-offenders to whether the education was set to the right standard for them to gain employment, this could be due to their own aspirations of the type of job they would like to complete or their previous educational level or job roles that they had previously completed and whether or not they would still be able to complete these roles after leaving prison.

4. Do you think there was well rounded package offered in your prison for your education and employment purposes?



The ex-offenders were split on whether they were provided with a well rounded package of education at their prison, this could be due to several factors

- Different prisons may offer different packages
- Their individual needs
- Whether or not they wished to partake in education whilst in prison

5. Do you feel specific prisons have supported you in reaching you educational and employment aspirations? If so how?

I will show a random selection of answers

EXO2 "Yes CSCS card"

EXO13 "NO"

EXO20 "Did English talk, write help later"

EXO21 "I think my needs where best met within HMP! The Art department was good"

EXO30 "None of them"

Only a small number of ex-offenders chose to complete this section and from this there was a wide range of answers, but significantly only one choose functional skills was the best support in gaining their educational/employability aspirations when the main focus of prison education is to improve the overall level of functional skills for all offenders.

6. Within the prison system which course do you feel best met you education and employment needs and why?

I will show a random selection of answers

EXO4 "Painting"

EXO11 "Writing"

EXO13 "ICT"

EXO16 "Business studies to help me start my own business"

EXO19 “We need more vocational course”

EXO22 “Maths”

Again only a small number of ex-offenders answered this section, they answered with a wide range of courses again this could be due to the wide range of courses that may have been available and the diverse needs of the individual, but no one area or course was flagged in this to be of overall best use in meeting their needs.

7. Any Further comments are welcome

I received only three responses to this question.

EXO5 “None”

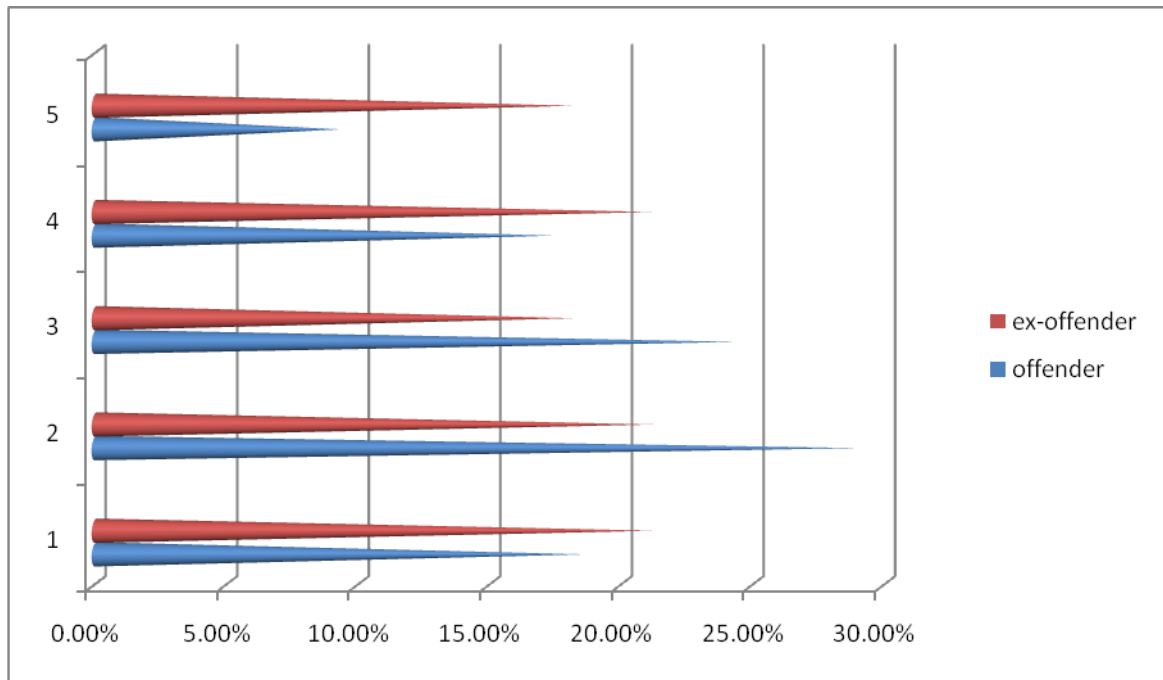
EXO23 “I have more help now”

EXO24 “I’ve found that I have gotten more help since leaving prison”

This shows that from the answers I received the ex-offenders felt they were receiving more help out of prison than within this could be with assistance finding employment or gaining further education or training neither specified how they felt they were gaining more help.

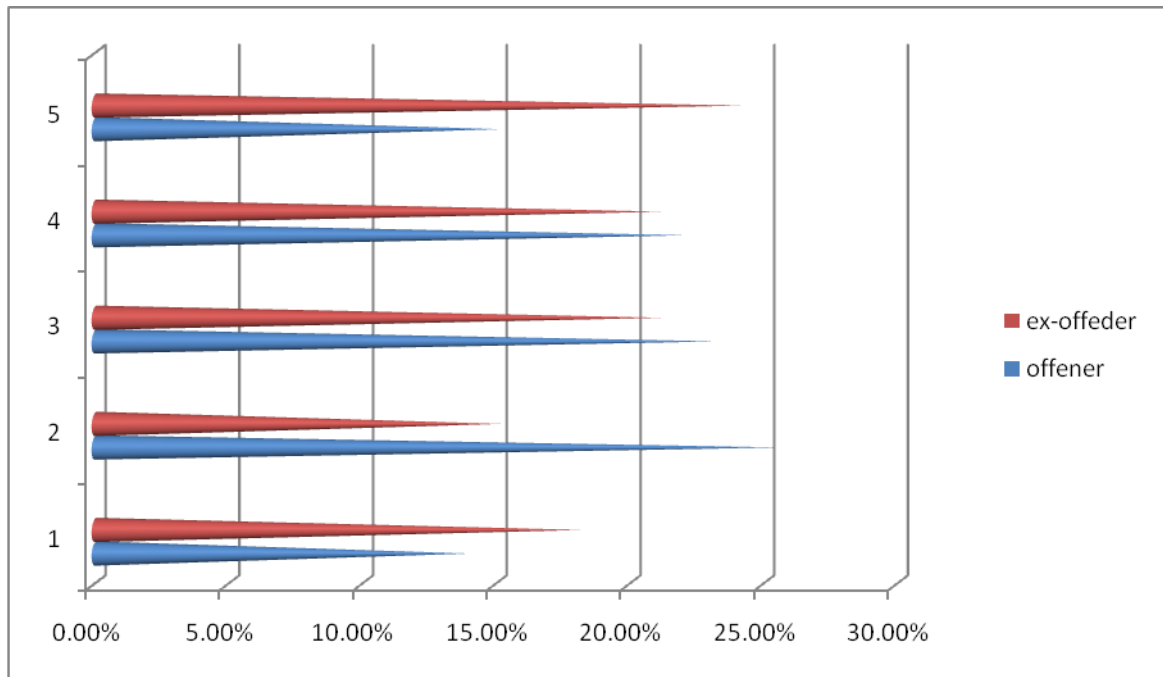
iii Comparison between offender/learner and ex-offender

1. The effectiveness of prison education in supporting educational aspirations



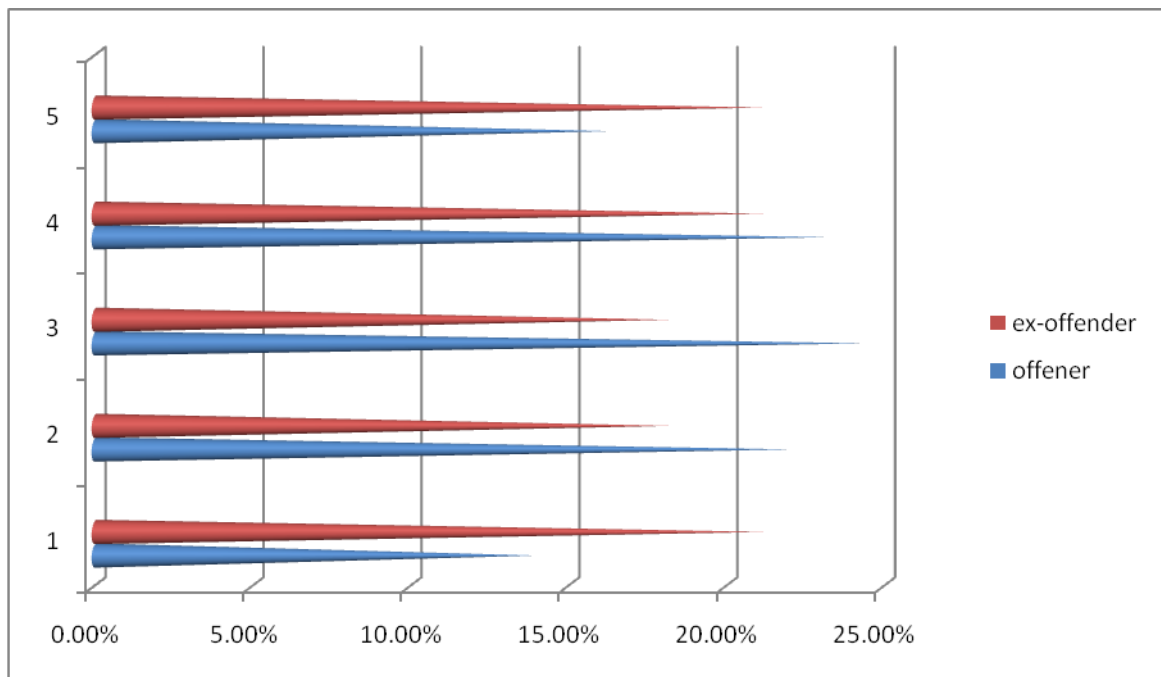
This shows that offenders within prison feel that education is supporting their needs, however ex-offenders show that they felt the education they received did not support them in meeting their aspirations the reason for this could be due to individual needs, differences of education received in different prison or it could be whilst in prison they believe they are getting the education they require but once released they may change their view point as they are able to assess what further education they may need to meet their own aspirations.

2. Do you feel that education within prison helps prepare you for employment



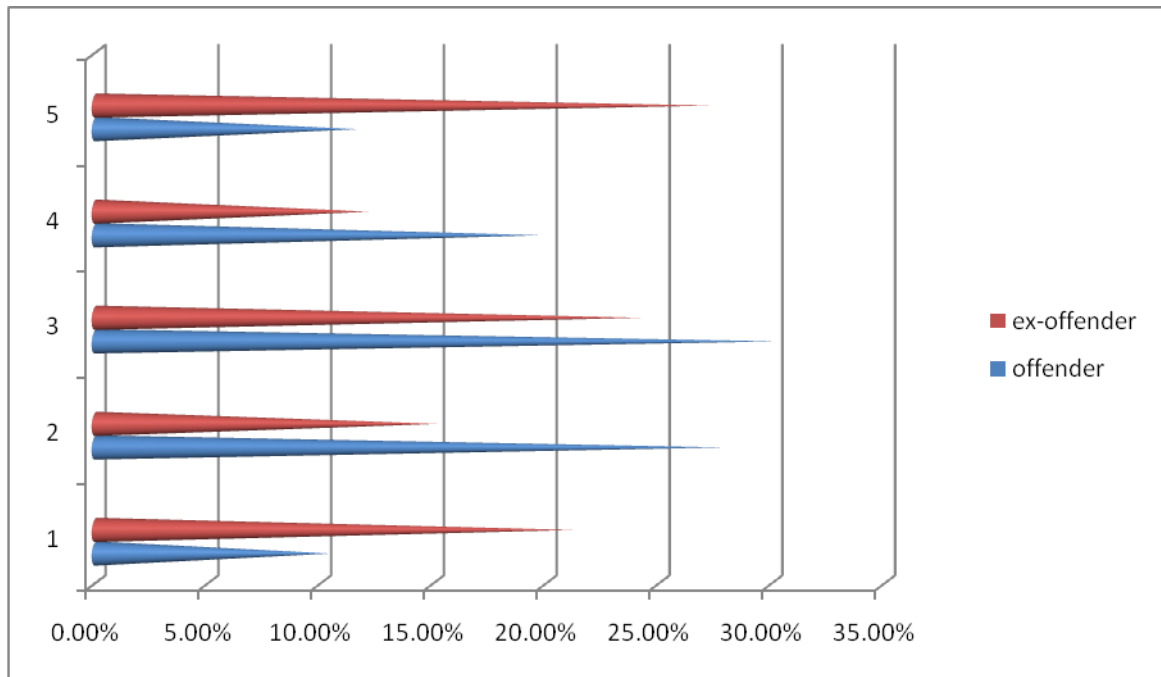
Again this shows a differential between the answers given between group types this shows the offenders within prison feel that the education they are receiving is preparing them for employment and the ex-offenders feel that it did not prepare them for employment, this difference could be due to the fact that the offenders have not had to handle employment issues since being imprisoned and the ex-offenders have dealt with the realities of gaining employment after their prison term.

3. Do you feel the level of education was/is set to the right standard to gain employment



This shows that the offenders were unsure if the education as set at the right standard with the majority answering that they felt that the levels were set to an OK level and or leaning towards ineffective or fantastic but few with the strong connection to either side, however in comparison the ex-offenders had a strong view either way with an equal number for each side, this again can show the wide range of needs offenders have for education and the reality for education to meet the needs of employers.

4. Do you feel that there was/is a well rounded package offered at HMP for education and employment purposes



The comparison shows that offenders within the prison feel that they are receiving a well rounded package to meet their needs in education and employment, however the ex-offenders felt they didn't receive a well rounded package again this could be due to differences of prison packages or differences in hindsight in how the education actually meets their needs in terms of gaining employment once released.

iv. Prison teaching staff questionnaires

Could you please complete this confidential questionnaire and return it to your tutors please. Please be honest on a scale of 1 fantastic and 5 not at all effective.

1. How effective is education in prison in supporting your learners' education aspirations?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

2. Do you feel that education within prison helps prepare your learners for employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

3. Do you feel the level of education is set to the right standard for your learners to gain employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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4. Do you think there is a well rounded package offered in HMP for education and employment purposes?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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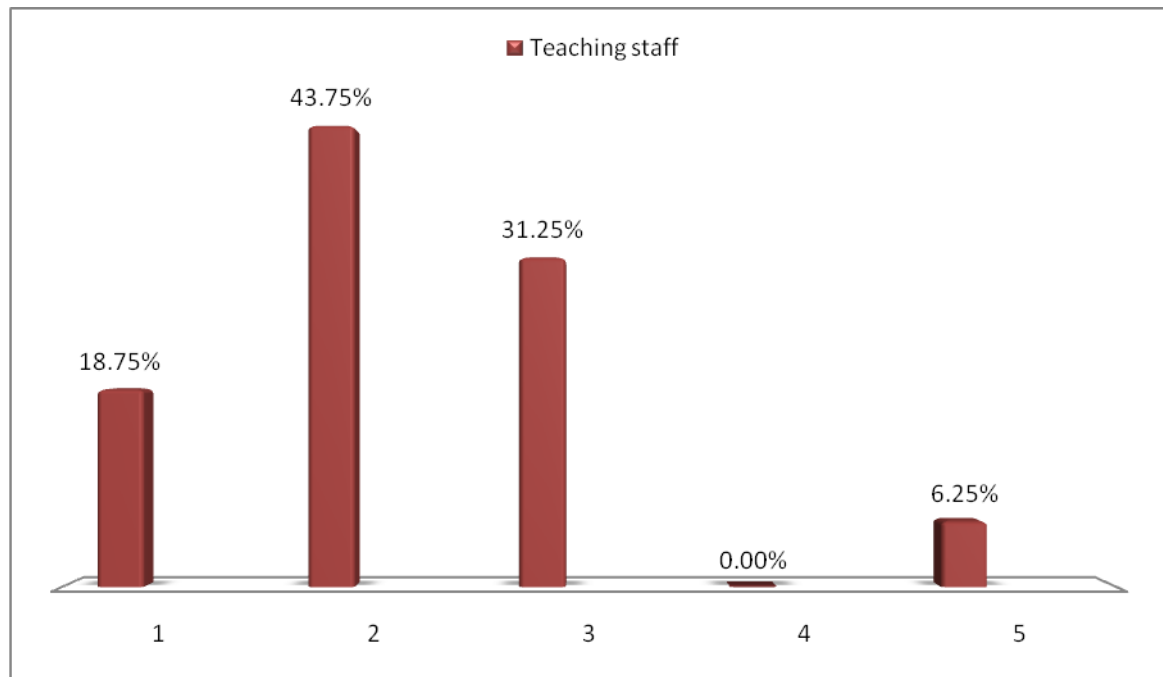
5. How effective do you think your course is at assisting your learners' to achieve their employment goals?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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6. Any Further comments are welcome

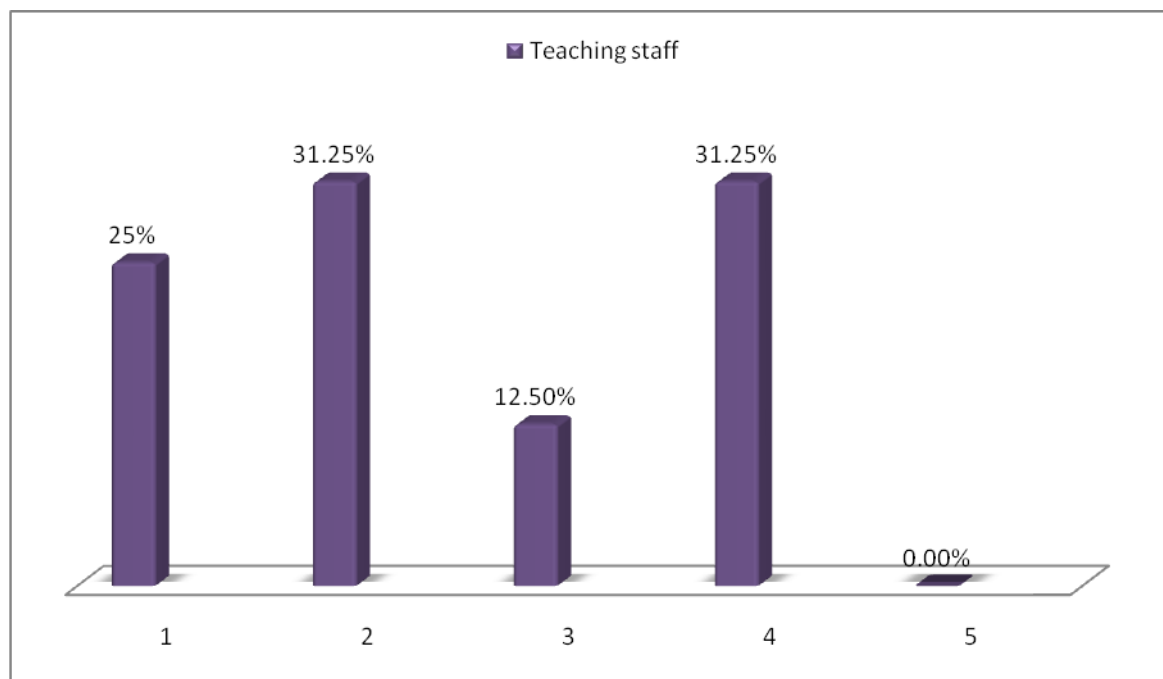
Responses to questionnaires

1. How effective is education in prison in supporting your learners' education aspirations?



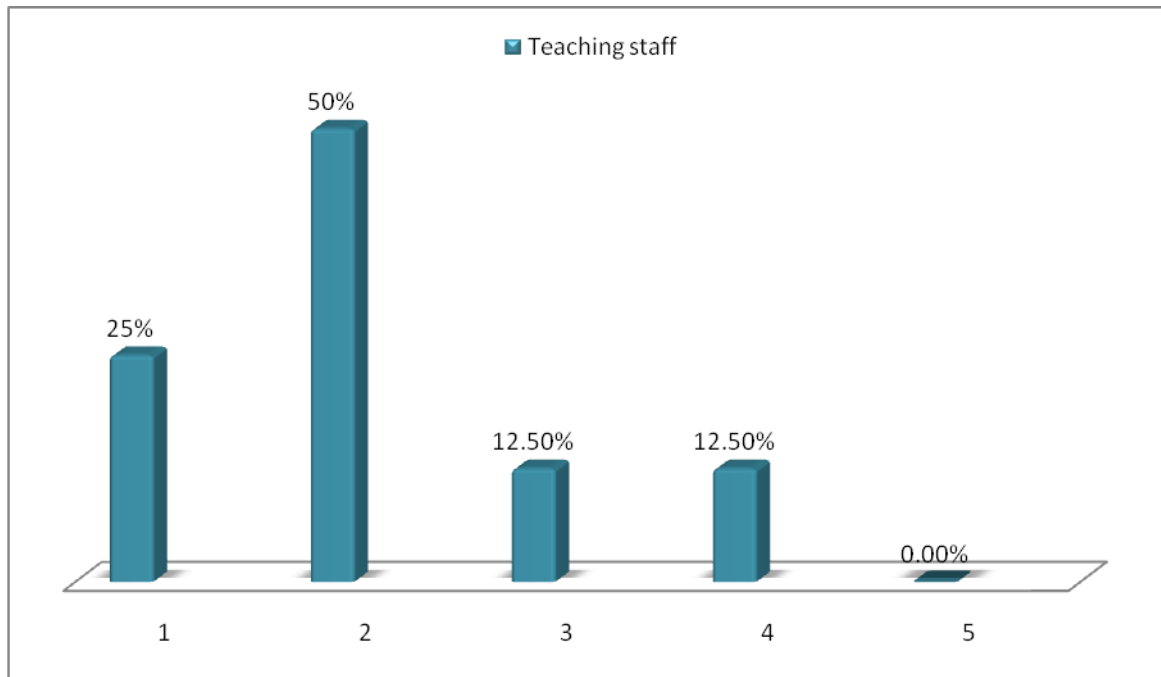
An overwhelming amount of teachers feel that the courses that are effective in supporting the needs of learners in achieving their educational aspirations.

2. Do you feel that education within prison helps prepare your learners for employment?



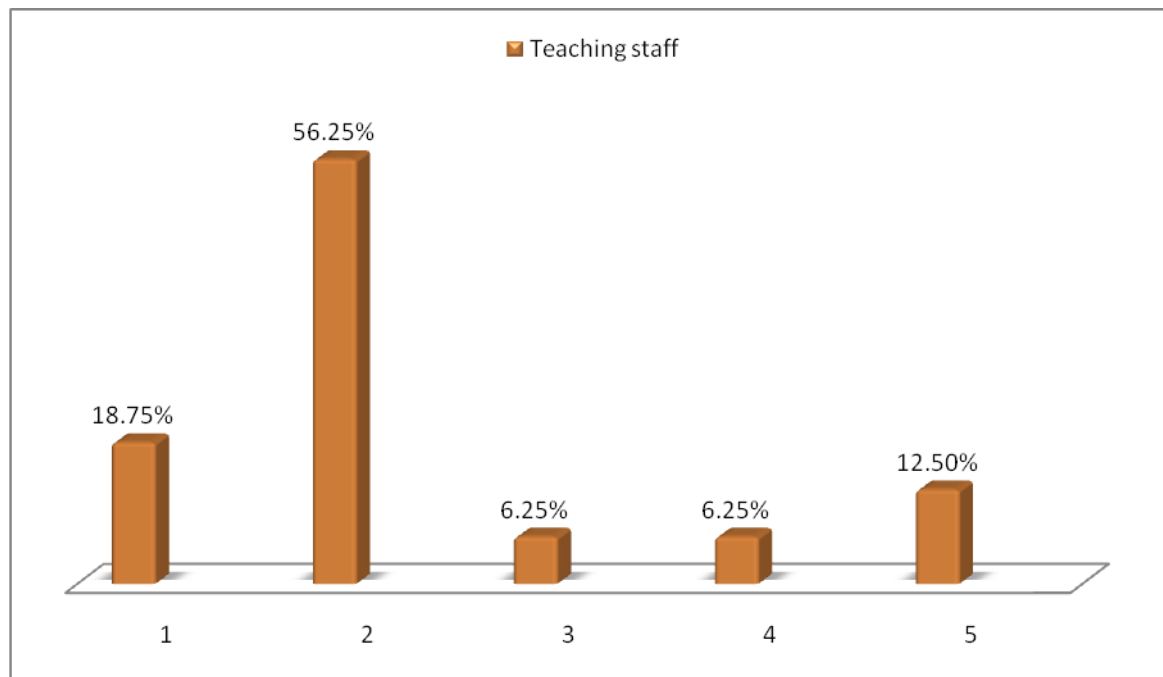
This shows a distinctive split of opinion between the teachers, most feel that education in prison helps learners to prepare for employment when released however that opinion is closely followed by the teachers who are unsure that the education achieves this purpose this split could be because of the education that they individually deliver or it could be that the teacher is inexperienced with assisting offenders with their employment needs or understand the challenges facing the offenders.

3. Do you feel the level of education is set to the right standard for your learners to gain employment?



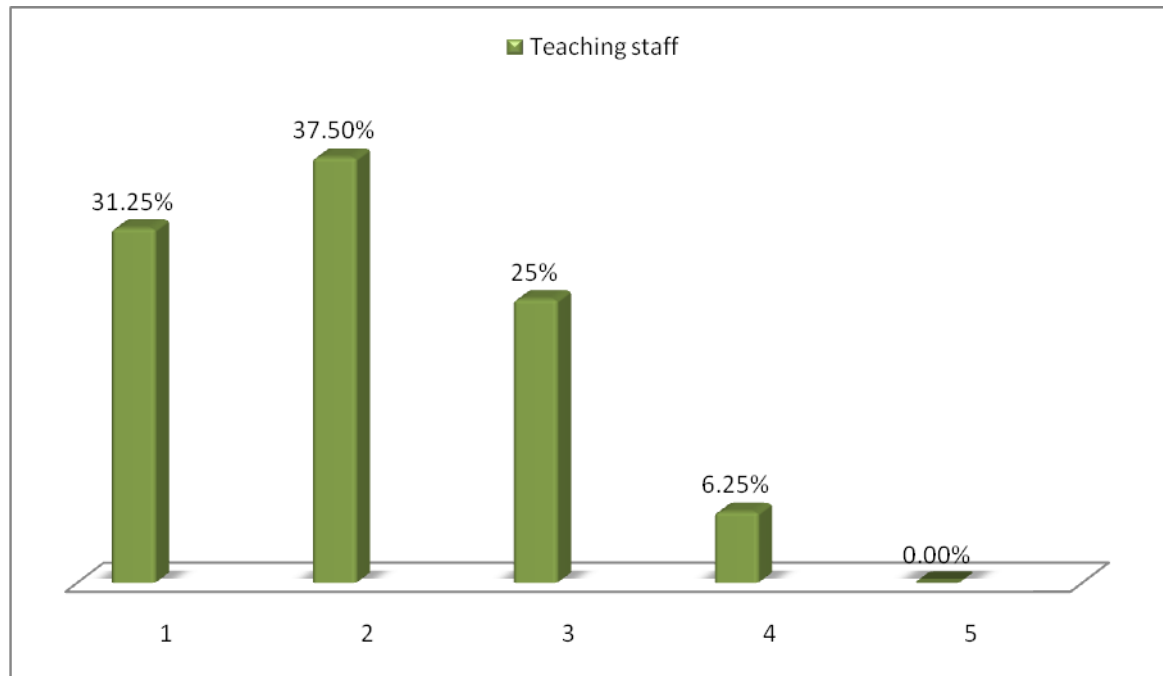
The teaching staff agrees that they believe that the level of teaching available in prisons is set to the right standard for the learners future employment.

4. Do you think there is a well rounded package offered in HMP for education and employment purposes?



The teaching staff also agree that the education offered within HMP is a well rounded package for both education and employment purposes, this shows that they believe that for the purposes of education and employment the HMP educational departments meets the needs of the learners with the packages that are delivered only a few of the teachers disagreed with this.

5. How effective do you think your course is at assisting your learners' to achieve their employment goals?



The teaching feel that the course they deliver are effective in assisting the learners achieve their employment goals, this could be influential to how the teacher knows their course can be applied effectively to gain employment however it is unclear if this is tailored further to meet the need of specific employment goals for individuals.

6. Any Further comments are welcome

None of the prison teaching staff gave any further comments

v. Ex-offender support staff

Please be honest on a scale of 1 fantastic and 5 not at all effective.

1. How effective do you think education in prisons is at preparing your clients for employment?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
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2. Do you think the level of education your clients have achieved in prison makes them employable?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
----	----	----	----	----

4. In your opinion what percentage of your clients have benefited from prison education?

0 – 25%	26 – 50%	51 – 75%	75 – 100%
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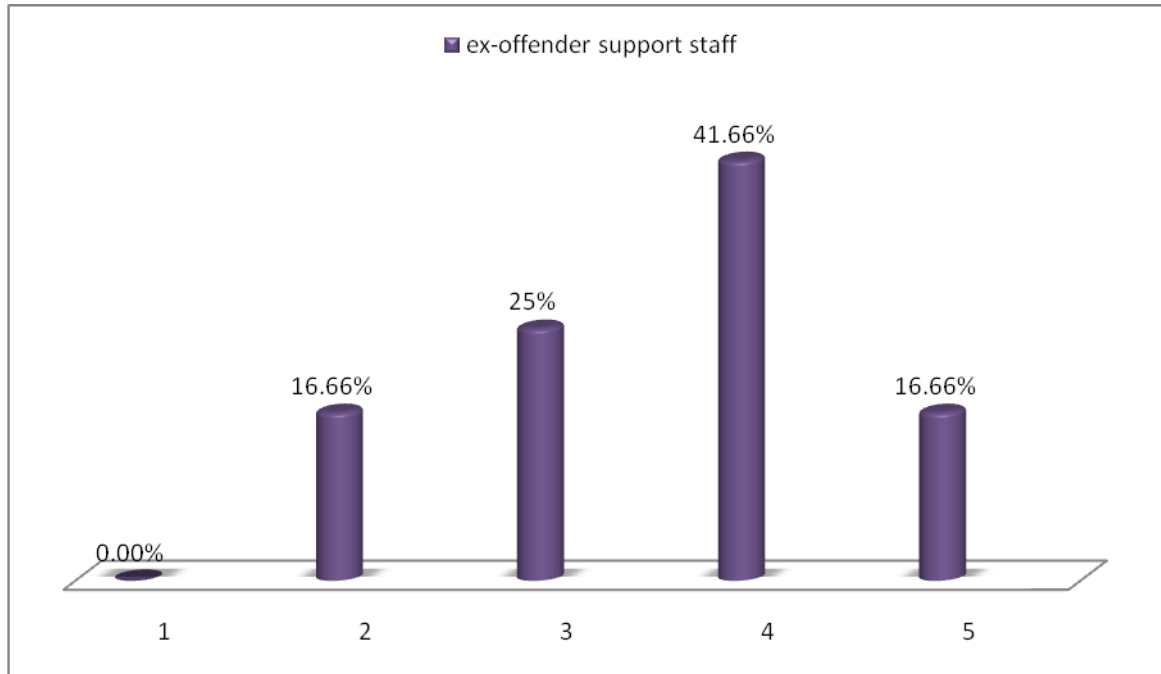
5. In your opinion do you feel the clients who have completed education in prison will gain employment easier?

Yes	No
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Please explain you reasons.

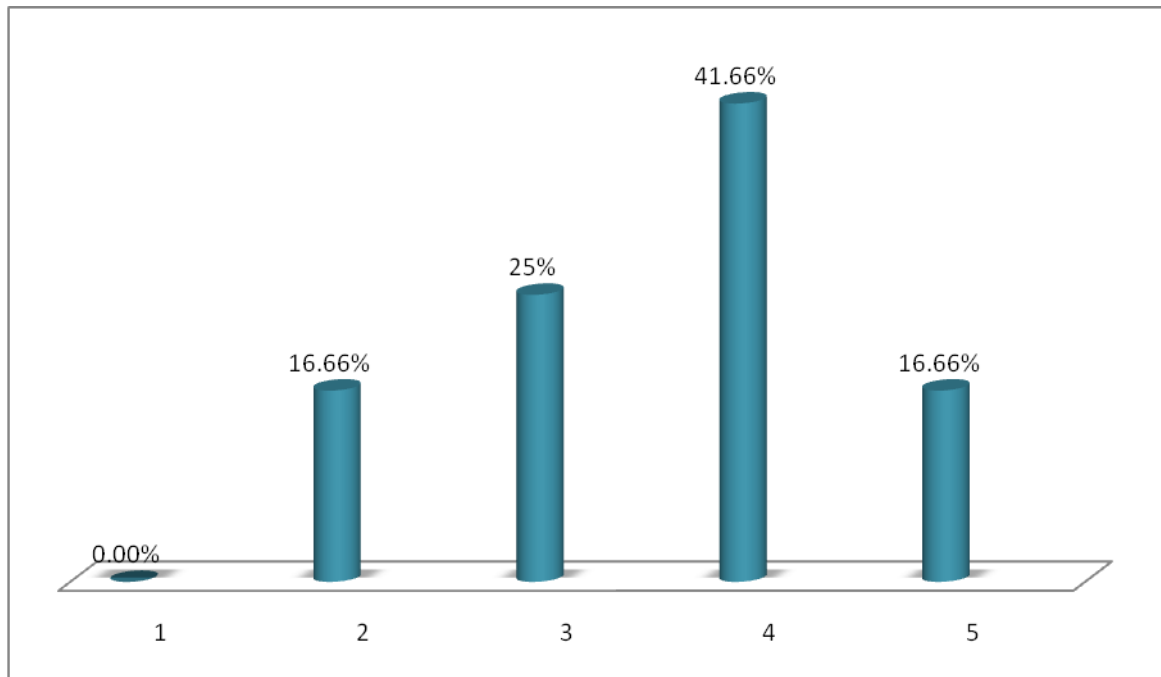
6. Any Further comments are welcome please

1. How effective do you think education in prisons is at preparing your clients for employment?



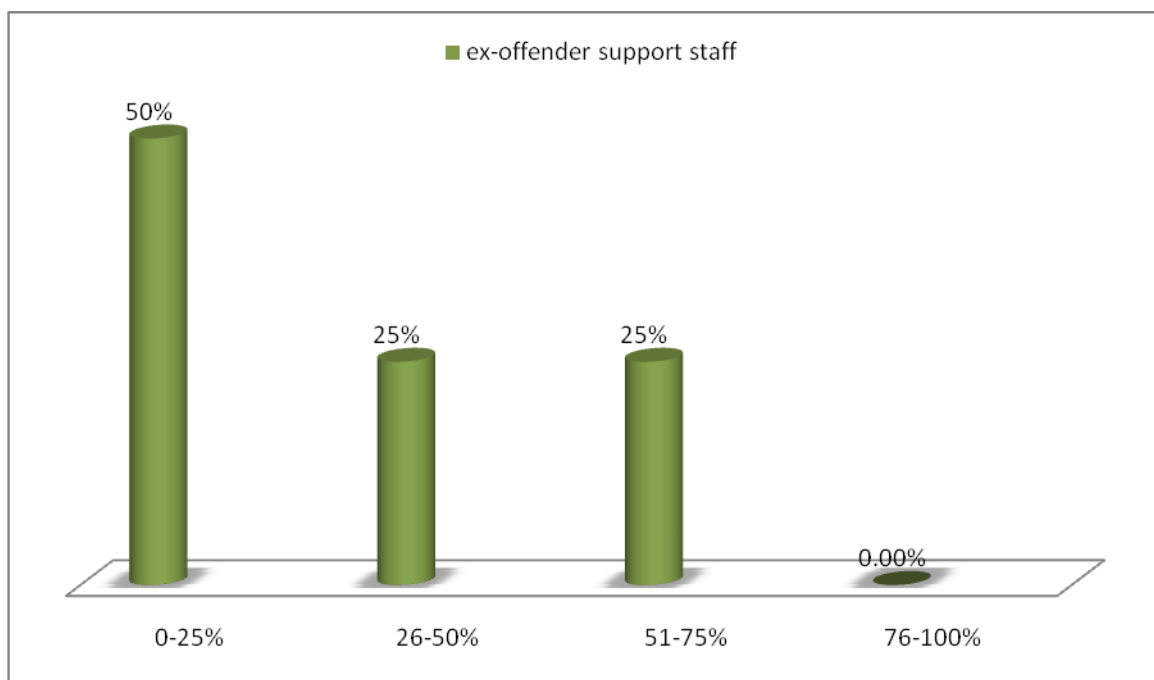
This shows that the staff who support ex-offenders do not feel that education within prison is effective at preparing ex-offenders for employment with the experiences they have assisting ex-offenders gaining employment.

2. Do you think the level of education your clients have achieved in prison makes them employable?



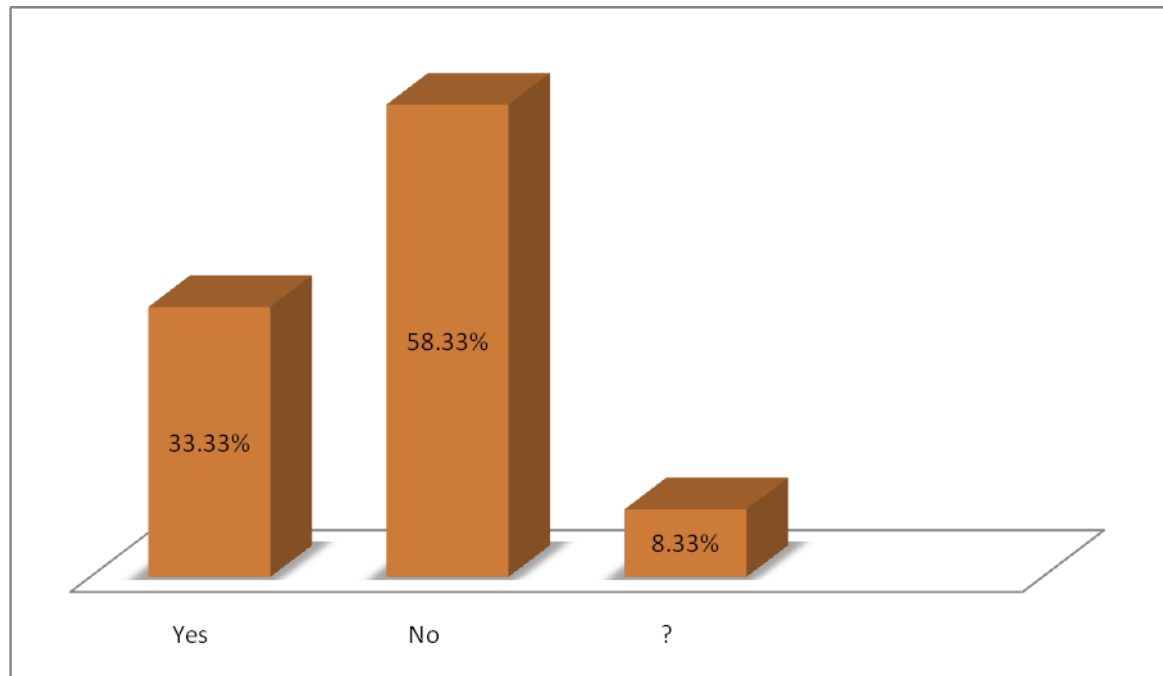
The support staff replied with the exact same percentages from question one, this shows that the ex-offender support staff think that the level of education that their clients achieved within prison doesn't make them employable over all.

4. In your opinion what percentage of your clients have benefited from prison education?



The majority of support staff feel that only 0-25% of their client have benefited from education whilst in prison, the other staff feel that it could be between 26-75% of learners but many feel that the education in prisons was not of benefit to their clients with their long term goals of gaining employment.

5. In your opinion do you feel the clients who have completed education in prison will gain employment easier?

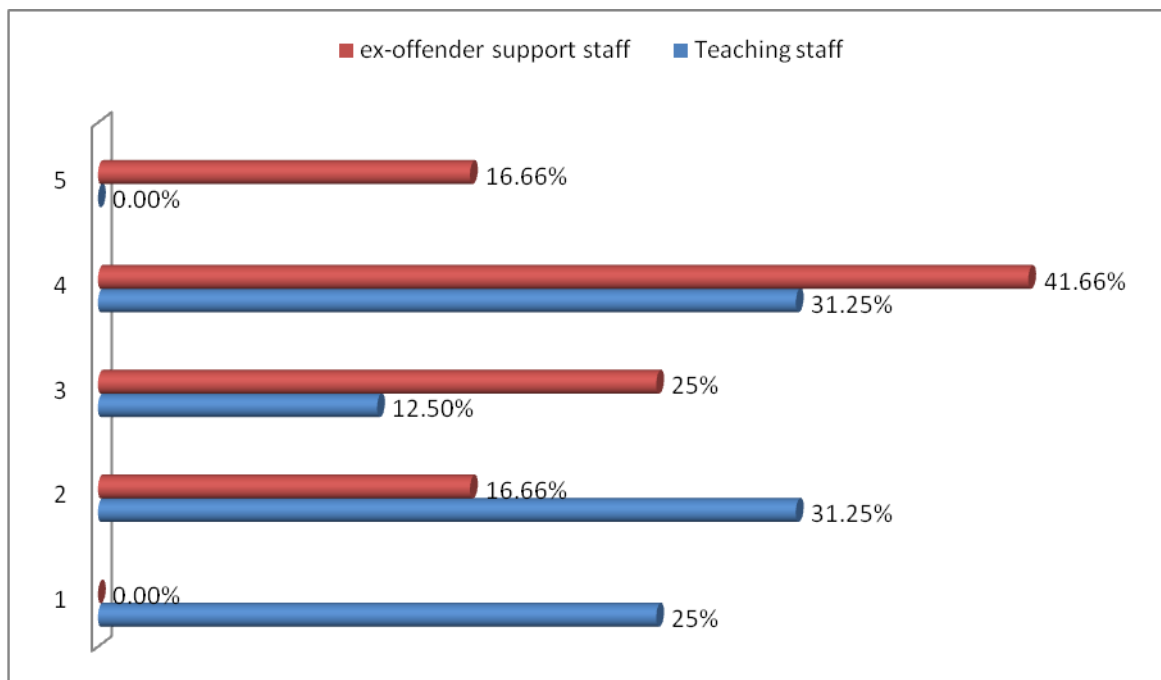


Overall the ex-offender support staff didn't believe that their clients who have gained education within prison will get employment easier than those who have not.

The reasons given for this could be that they deal with the ex-offenders /learner who have had difficulties gaining employment or did not see the benefit of education when they were in the prison or they just have the experience of handling the reality of ex-offenders gaining employment after release and have both the knowledge and experience of the pitfall that the ex-offenders have to deal with in gaining full time, sustainable employment.

vi. Comparisons between prison teaching staff and Ex-offender support staff

Do you feel that education within prison helps prepare your learners for employment? / How effective do you think education in prisons is at preparing your clients for employment?



This shows that there is a complete contrast in opinions from the education staff and ex-offender support staff; this shows that the staff within prison believe that they are preparing the offenders for the reality of gaining employment however the staff who assist the ex-offenders with the goal don't believe that prison education achieves this.

This is the theme with any of the questions asked, the prison staff feel that they do set and deliver education to the right level and standard to prepare the offenders for gaining employment and meet their aspirations however the ex-offender support staff have the opposite opinion in that the education

within prison doesn't help and support offenders in gaining employment once they are released.

This contrast could be explained by the differences in roles and experiences, many teachers within the prisons have never assisted ex-offenders in the community with education or gaining employment so many have little or no knowledge of the reality of ex-offenders gaining employment, where as the ex-offender support staff have a well rounded experience of assisting ex-offenders within the community but many have never been in to a prison or experienced the way prisons are managed and how education fits in to the daily routine.

Semi-structured interview data

a. Offender/learner semi-structured interview

L1SSI

The learner felt that the education he received within the prison would support his goal of becoming a self-employed industrial cleaner in the future, he did wish that he could build on the Level one Industrial cleaning qualification he had gained to make him more employable but felt the level one would give him an opportunity to open doors.

He felt that the range of qualifications available didn't appeal to him or would help him gain employment and because of this he preferred to work and develop his experience within prison.

L2SSI

The learner felt that whilst in prison he was using education to develop himself personally and not as a view to develop toward becoming more employable, he said that the courses that are run within prison would not help him develop to gain employment as the roles he has completed previously have been driving roles.

However he did find that the PSD courses especially the developing personal skills course has helped him assess his behaviour and self destructive behaviour to understand himself better and be able to ensure that he doesn't offend again for himself and family.

L3SSI

The learner was surprised at the amount of education that is available within a prison and how it is geared to assist with developing skills to gain employment or becoming self employed, he advised that he found all the courses he had completed to be well organised and applicable to the goals that he wanted to

work to, he especially liked the business enterprise course which has enabled him to develop a business plan for the future but has also found that the IT course was good for him and set at a good learning level.

He said that the best way he was meeting his learning and employment goals was completing distance learning course to build up to a degree (which the prison, not education department provides when appropriate) as this will educate him to a high level.

The education that he would have liked to see would have been horticulture type courses, as he has a keen interest in this subject but this would not have made a difference to his future plans for employment.

L4SSI

Learner 4 felt that the education available wasn't high enough for an employer to take notice as he felt that unless you had level 3 or above and as very few qualifications within prisons reach this level he felt that he was only getting tasters of the types of courses that would enable him to gain employment.

He felt that the vocational courses available would have been good for him to learn a trade but again the levels would not be high enough to leave prison and gain work, he would have to complete further training to achieve this goal but didn't think this would be realistic as he wouldn't have the funds to pay for these courses.

L5SSI

The learner felt that the courses were not applicable to gaining him employment and felt that there was no consistency within the prison or with probation to see the benefits of him gaining qualification as it has been his experience unless it is a formal qualification level 3 or above the qualifications are not seen as proper qualifications that could support him.

He felt that he had worked on qualifications in the past and these were dismissed from everyone but education staff and seen as just a past time and not rehabilitation.

The art classes have been the best benefit as he has found these to be of great personal benefit and achievement especially when these have been supported in the Kosler Awards for prisoner art.

L6SSI

Learner 6 did not see the benefits of education within prison, his view point was that it was forced activity to keep him busy rather than being a productive activity that could help him become employed later, however he did feel that the industrial cleaning would help him gain employment if he wished to in this field which he did not.

L7SSI

This learner was very happy with the education that he had been receiving he felt that he had been given the opportunity to develop his literacy as being able to read and write will make him more employable.

His long term goal is to become an electrician and he feels that the multi-skills course will help him with this goal combined with his literacy courses.

Overall the learner felt that his time in prison would be best spent gaining qualifications to help him reach his long term goals rather than working.

L8SSI

Personally he felt that as he was academically qualified before coming to prison that the education that had been offered to him would in no way help him in gaining employment again, however he has found that the access to distance learning to complete a degree has been a positive experience as he would not have been able to do this outside of prison.

L9SSI

Felt that the education delivered within prison as inadequate, he felt that the tools used to learn in the vocational settings were out dated and would not be used within the real world within the jobs that you would need, he also felt that there was a lack of further support to keep new skills updated and used, once you completed a course you are done and there is no follow up.

He said that he would like to see more offenders being able to complete higher education and this would give people a better understanding of the way the world works and how you can fit in to it would in his opinion reduce many repeat offenders as they would have more to offer and the gain more.

L10SSI

The learner felt that the education that he had received was of an excellent standard and would help him gain employment as his English both written and spoken had improved greatly, this would enable him to apply for a wider range of roles than he could of applied to before prison.

b. Offender/learner semi-structured interview overview

From the interviews I believe the majority of the learners felt that the level of education they receive should be higher to ensure that they are more employable, they all found a course that they had enjoyed or found useful in their own individual way however the overall judgment was that they needed a higher level of qualification that would or could make them more qualified and therefore more employable.

c. Ex-offender semi-structured interview

EO1SI

The ex-offender said that whilst he was in prison he felt that the courses he was completing would be of benefit for gaining employment, however he has found that he is struggling as much to gain a job now as he was before he came to prison.

He said that if the course level had been higher than level 1 he felt that he could have been taken more seriously with an employer and this could have helped him.

He does think that he has developed but would have also liked to have help linking in to external courses whilst in prison so he could have started courses as soon as he was released rather than waiting until he was released and then having to wait.

EO2SI

The ex-offender advised that he felt that he has very little access to education whilst in prison, he said that the only main courses that were available to him

would have been literacy, numeracy and ICT, he did not complete these courses as his previous qualifications covered the levels.

EO3SI

The ex-offender advised me that he had received education for his literacy and numeracy whilst in prison and completed toe by toe (prisoner reading scheme), he said that he could barely read and write prior to coming to prison and felt that the prison had given him the opportunity to learn which has helped him finding jobs to apply for and gaining interviews.

EO4SI

The ex-offender told me that he found the training he received gave him a good overview of various vocational roles that he could do when leaving prison, he said that he saw the training in prison as an introduction to what he could do and is in the process of applying for further electrical training and is hoping to gain work experience as part of the course. Overall he said that he felt the education did not prepare him to gain employment straight away but did give him a good start to apply and gain further education either from a college, adult education or as part of an on the job learning.

EO5SI

He advised me that the education that he received in prison was inadequate to be able to gain employment or further his career, he felt that he was pressured in to completing education and didn't gain anything valuable.

EO6SI

I was advised that he found the ESOL education very useful and feels confident communicating in English and feels that this will help him gain employment, he said that he would of liked to have had a more intensive approach to his education as this may of given him more time to complete other education within the prison.

EO7SI

The ex-offender advised me that he refused to complete education within the prison as he wanted to work because he could earn more weekly pay this way, he also advised me that he regretted this as he now feels that he could have been better prepared for employment.

EO8SI

The offender said that he enjoyed the education that he completed especially as he become an orderly and assisted the tutors within the class room and supported others through their learning; he felt that this improved his self-confidence as he saw that he could be productive within a working environment and felt that he was respected for his work. He advised that even though he hadn't been employed yet he was confident that he would gain employment and said that he would be happy to start at the bottom and work his way up and he realises that this is the reality of his personal situation.

EO9SI

Ex-offender 9 advised that he didn't feel that prison education helped him in preparing for employment and that he believed that no one would even be willing to employ him whilst on licence so is looking to gain further training via a college or adult education but was finding it difficult to gain acceptance on a course as he doesn't have the entry requirements as his education is only at Level one stage and he felt the courses he has been offered would be a backwards step but he is trying to find something with the assistance with the ex-offenders advisers.

EO10SI

The ex-offender advised me that he started several courses within different establishments but didn't finish any he said that he was moved several times which meant that he couldn't finish his courses and found it frustrating that he would have to either start the course again or the same course wouldn't be available for him. He did also say that he did start and quit courses as well and his motivation wasn't great within prison to really achieve.

He advised me that he felt more supported within the community with the support of the ex-offender support staff and probation.

d. Ex-offender semi-structured interview overview

From the interviews I saw that the ex-offenders had a range of courses they attended and different successes, apart from the learners who completed basic literacy or ESOL courses they felt that education should of been valuable for them in gaining employment however they said that in the real

world the education has had no or little impact for them in gaining employment in the roles that they would of liked to complete.

e. Prison teaching staff semi-structured interview

PT1SI

PTS1SI advised me that they felt that the education in prison in general was aimed for lower level learners and that the education provided gave the lower to medium level learners in a position to gain access to education that they either wouldn't have access to or would not put themselves forward for the education. They also advised me that they felt some learners would have benefited from higher level education however the funding we get for achievements wouldn't cover these higher level qualifications for the offenders.

PT2SI

I was told that they believed that their course had practical purposes and would enable the offenders to gain an entry level position within an organisation and prove what they have and then develop further with a combination of on the job training and further education. When asked if they thought the offenders who have passed her course would be able to gain these positions she advised me that she thought that it was possible but they would have to learn how to sell their abilities and try to ensure they put themselves forward in the right way and wasn't sure that they would be able to do this effectively.

PT3SI

The teacher advised me that they didn't believe that the course she delivers helped any offenders gain employment but said that they course was more therapeutic and gave the offenders a chance to learn about themselves and develop further individually to make them more socially aware and productive in their private lives which in the long run will enable the offenders to gain and work well either within education or work.

PT4SI

They said that there was no doubt in their mind that the course they deliver makes the learners more employable that they were before entering prison but wasn't sure how the qualifications where understood by employers but knew that the qualification would show a level of understanding but not competence to be able to complete a particular job.

PT5SI

The teacher advised me that they felt the courses offered within prisons where at a level that the offenders could achieve them within the guided learning hours and quickly to ensure the offender could finish the course and achieve, he said that the courses may not push the offenders to much but would make them more employable as they would have certification to show learning level and learning capability if nothing else. He felt if an offender was going to gain employment it would be down to their attitude and the want to change rather that gaining as many qualifications as possible.

PT6SI

During the interview the teacher advised me that they felt the offenders would be better off if they concentrated on gaining vocational training and focus on gaining employment in a manual industry, he said that the education offered in this area is a good introduction they would not give an employer in these fields enough to gain employment but they could gain access to further training once they leave the prison.

PT7SI

The teacher advised that they would like to see more consistency to prison education where the offender is given more choice to what they want to complete but must be on the condition they have achieved their level 2 in literacy and numeracy due to the government targets and funding obligations but then give the offenders a higher level and more diverse training. He did say that even though he felt the qualifications as a standalone would not give the offender the edge on the employment market but having qualification no matter what is better than none at all.

PT8SI

The teacher said that they felt that their course helped set the offenders up with a long term plan to achieve as well as gaining a qualification, he said that he felt the course has been well received by the offenders and they can see the relevance with employment and he felt the employers in many different industries would see the qualification as beneficial to them.

PT9SI

They believed that the learners they teach are in need of basic education to make them more effective in all areas in their life and felt that even though the offenders generally don't see the relevance of basic education she felt that it was needed to give the offenders foundations to make the most of their future learning and jobs.

PT10SI

The teacher said that the educational levels of offenders as a general rule was lower than the rest of the population and that for the need of functional skills and the learners who gain the education will see the benefits in terms of gaining a job in later life as having qualifications will always make a person more employable however for offenders who have a longer stay in prison they will either run out of courses to complete and the levels are static so they cannot develop further once they hit a level 2 for any particular qualification but this is due to funding.

f. Prison teaching staff semi-structured interview overview

The majority of teachers believed that the course that they teach and the package offered within prisons would make the offenders more employable once released but agree that the levels could negatively impact the higher level learners or not push them due to basic education levels offered. They generally agreed that giving the offenders education, any education was better than not providing any at all and this would make a difference in

showing an employer what they are capable of and learning level rather than being qualified to a particular role.

g. Ex-offender support staff semi-structured interview

ESS1SI

They advised me that they found that ex-offenders leaving prison as a general rule felt that the education they gained would be of more benefit than it actually does which then has an impact on their job search, they found that even though it is better to have an education within prison it needed to be more specialised to industries and roles for it to have a positive impact on them gaining employment.

ESS2SI

The adviser said that she saw the benefits of prison education in ex-offenders who had no or little basic education to bring their education level higher which makes them more employable but found that employers had little understanding of qualifications that are not mainstream such as GCSE or A-levels and that the levels confused them and many see a level 1 qualification as the starting point so they either understand the qualification wrong or disregard it so overall she couldn't see that the education would make a large impact on whether or not the ex-offender would gain employment.

ESS3SI

The adviser said that she hadn't seen any benefits for an ex-offender in terms of gaining employment from any of the education she has seen completed; she said that she saw that this could improve confidence for the ex-offender but the courses were too flimsy to be of real benefit.

ESS4SI

During the interview the adviser said that if an ex-offender really wanted to make best use of the education available to them they could and this would be a benefit to them in terms of showing a potential employer they were willing and want to learn, this is down to the individual over anything else. He also advised that he felt that individual courses had little benefit to gaining employment and little or no influence in an offender gaining employment, this would be down to the individual's want and willingness to start again at an entry level position and hard work.

ESS5SI

The support worker said that she had never seen an ex-offender tailor their job search or employment choices on the basis of the education gained in prison as the ex-offenders understood that the education would not be high enough to gain a job in that field but did see ex-offenders gaining further education on the basis of the courses they had completed and long term this has added up for the positive change of gaining a role.

ESS6SI

They advised me that they felt that the offenders within prison are discouraged in completing education due to less pay and peer pressure especially from the younger and/or less educated, she advised that as they couldn't see the benefits of the education, they couldn't explain to an employer the benefit of the courses they have which then doesn't show the ex-offender in the best light so then build further barriers in changing their offending behaviour.

ESS7SI

The support person said that she had seen several ex-offenders who had benefited from ESOL classes and this had definitely made them more employable as they had a better grasp of English both spoken and written, however this is the exception of the rule. She said that if the ex-offenders learning had been more challenging and specific to their future employment needs this would be beneficial but she felt that this wasn't the case looking at the qualifications they ex-offenders showed her and had spoken to her about the education they had attended in various prisons.

ESS8SI

He felt that education in prisons is a plaster for the issue of offending behaviours, he advised that he felt the offenders within a prison were taught to pass exams or to complete portfolios but not to actually understand how to complete tasks or the reasons behind them, and in this light he felt that education in prisons didn't make the person ready for employment as they would never be able to put the course or taught theory in to practice as they wouldn't have the skill or knowledge to do so.

ESS9SI

The advisor said that the level of education within prison was good and appropriate for offenders who had not completed much schooling, this gave them the opportunity to develop and will always make them more employable, he found the largest issue was addressing the attitudes of the offenders and offending behaviours was the largest issue and this couldn't be adjusted until the offender wanted to.

ES10SI

She said that she hadn't seen any great impact of education for assisting her clients gaining work as the majority of them would be aiming to get jobs at the lower end of the employment scale so education didn't play a large part of their job search.

h. Prison teaching staff semi-structured interview

Overall the staff were in agreement that education within prisons is of benefit to offenders who had basic education needs whether that was literacy, numeracy or learning English however they felt that once the object of gaining basic education had been achieved there was little room for further educational challenges for the offender and the available education was not tailored enough to assist the offenders in employment specific training that will enable the offender to gain employment.

I have concluded from the data I collected that there is no straight forward answer to my hypothesis of

“Education within prison is only of real benefit to lower level learners who need to develop their basic skills and not for the learners who need access to education and development of a higher level to meet their educational and employment aspirations”

From the data collected the different groups

- Offenders
- Ex-offenders
- Prison teaching staff
- Ex-offender support staff

They have their own very distant opinions of prison education and the value of it for all offenders in terms of being prepared to gain employment.

Offenders

My conclusion from the offenders given data is that they felt that there is enough basic education within prison and this is well received within the prison, however there is a strong overall opinion that there is not enough education for all offenders or to suite the needs of higher level learners or

enough variety to meet the needs of a diverse range of people and their aspirations for both education and employment.

Ex-offenders

The ex-offenders were split to whether or not the education they received within prison is of benefit to them, some said that it was of great benefit or both employment and educational aspirations however the flip side was that the same said that it was not of benefit at all to them. This shows that the benefits of education within prison is down to the individual and not offenders as a whole, there was a very strong contrast between the answers given and from this my conclusion for this group is that they either were helped a great deal or not where near enough, there doesn't seem to be a middle ground achieved.

Prison teaching staff

The prison teaching staff were in overwhelming agreement that the education that they provided has great benefit to the offenders for both education and employment for all of the offenders they teach, they didn't point out negative aspects of the educational system within prisons and all felt that they delivered to the standard that the offenders need to gain employment.

Ex-offender support staff

The ex-offender support staff were in agreement that education within prison was not of use to the ex-offenders and said that the experiences they had with supporting offenders, they said that the education did not make the ex-offenders more employable and that the employers don't see the benefit or understand the type of qualifications the offenders gain in prison.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

Overall conclusion from data collected

Overall I think that I cannot draw a specific conclusion against my hypothesis, I think that everyone agrees that education within prisons is very important to all offenders but cannot come to an agreement to whether the education delivered is at a high enough standard or if the range of education offered is diverse enough to make a difference for all offenders in prison to make them more employable and to meet their educational and employment aspirations. I think this is down to the diverse range of offenders within all prisons where offenders range from not having basic education though to having PHD, and having no experience of employment to having a large range of experiences from this I think it would be very difficult to meet everyone's needs and aspirations with the funding restraints a prison education provider has to work with.

Improvement areas

I feel that I could have improved this research by asking the offenders and ex-offender what their literacy and numeracy levels this would have given me a better indication of whether or not the education would have met their needs by completing basic education, or if their educational needs would have needed to be met at a higher level.

I also would have liked to have gathered more information from a management point of view of what they thought of the education and if it meets the needs of our offenders and the ex-offenders that the ex-offender support staff manage and what they find the difficulties are with balancing a provision and funding in terms of meeting the needs of the offenders and ex-offenders.

Further discussion

“Education within prison is only of real benefit to lower level learners who need to develop their basic skills and not for the learners who need access to education and development of a higher level to meet their educational and employment aspirations”

My hypothesis is agreed with and challenged with many of the existing research and literature surrounding education within prison to meet the employment needs of offenders.

In 1979 Robert Martinson* said that education and treatment programmes within prisons added nothing to the standard procedures of conviction that are integral to the justice system, this was a standard view of thinking throughout the 70s, 80s and much of the 90s. Prison was seen as a deterrent due to the regime of long hours spent in lock down, conditions within the prison and sharing a cell with several other offenders with little or no sanitary provisions such as a toilet. As this was seen as a deterrent there was very little extra provision for rehabilitation as this was seen as non-productive use of time and a waste of tax payers' money.

And this view has grown within the prison that sees

“offender learning primarily as a means to occupy prisoners rather than
improving skills”**

This is a view point that that the government and prison educators are trying to dispel, prison education should and is seen as a fundamental tool to assist offenders on their rehabilitation journey to lead productive and law abiding life once released from prison.

“education will be geared primarily to providing skills to perform work
effectively”***

This is the purpose for all educational departments in all prisons and is a clear goal set out by OLASS (Offender learning and skills service)

“OLASS was set up to overcome long-standing problems in the delivery of skills and learning for offenders”

This was to ensure that there was consistency to education for all offenders and that all educational departments ensured that all offenders gained training that is tailored to meeting the needs of our diverse client group in preparing them for gaining sustainable employment.

This is a large goal for the government as they believe that good education within prison will enable the offenders to gain employment, which will reduce the likely hood of reoffending in the long run, however as private companies deliver the training and education to offenders within prisons there are funding and local issues to consider such as

- what achievements will be paid for by the European Social Fund (ESF)
- at what level are these achievements paid for
- what will the specific prison allow the educational department deliver

there is also the issue that different educational providers within prisons do not work together and therefore if an offender is moved from prison to prison they may never gain the benefit of completing education, this also cost the taxpayers up to £30m per year in uncompleted courses which is a complete waste of money, however as the education is delivered by private companies

that are in direct competition with each other which will make it very unlikely that they will work together to share information regarding specific offender learning and have learning transcripts that follow the offender throughout their time served within prison.

The SFA (Skills Funding Agency) and ESF state that the education provided within prison should be “effective” to increase the skills and abilities of offenders which increase their abilities to get a job on release, however they are not clear on what they would consider effective is it

- to ensure that all offenders have basic educational needs met in terms of literacy and numeracy?

or

- to the specific need of the individual offender?

From this I think the following questions need to be further investigated

- What is considered to be effective education from the SFA and ESF point of view?
- How can private educational companies work together to ensure that offender learning is not lost?
- What courses are of most benefit for offenders to gain employment?

6. Recommendations for further research

From the research that I have completed I feel that the following areas would benefit from research

What is considered to be effective education from the SFA and ESF point of view?

I feel this is an important area for future research as there is a split on what is considered to be effective education within a prison is it

1. Ensuring all offenders regardless of literacy and numeracy level leave prison with basic functional skills education

Or

2. Ensuring all offenders receive education that will help them towards their own education and employment goals regardless of the level of education needed

I feel if this is clarified then educational centres within prisons will have further clarity on how they should structure their programmes and what programmes that they could deliver, this would also give the offenders consistency within each prison of the education they can expect to receive.

How can private educational companies work together to ensure that offender learning is not lost?

I feel a research project in how different organisations who operate within the prison education sector and how a centralised plan could be developed to ensure that the offenders learning transcripts are sent with the offender to each prison could save the government up to £30m per year in payment fees, this could ensure that offenders are not repeating the same learning in different prisons but are developing on their knowledge as the teacher will have an understanding of where the offender is within their learning journey.

However as prison education is given to various private companies across the country this would have several fundamental issues with achievement rates, funding and potential bids for each centre so there will not be much willing from a financial point of view to work together to achieve this.

What courses are of most benefit for offenders to gain employment?

There is very little research in to what courses will benefit offenders the most to gain further employment, most teachers and companies agree that the offenders need to gain basic education to build their learning foundations

however after this fact there is not agreement or emphasis on what courses are of best benefit to ensuring offenders employment on release.

This is due to the offenders individual needs and wants within education, however I think that some courses maybe of better/best benefit for particular offenders in gaining them employment and this information could be best utilised within educational departments to ensure that the emphasis is placed on these courses and that the offenders can see the benefit of these.

This could also assist the government with their goals of ensuring offenders gain employment to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Overall conclusion

With the research I have completed combined with existing literature I can not come to a solid conclusion to whether or not

“Education within prison is only of real benefit to lower level learners who need to develop their basic skills and not for the learners who need access to education and development of a higher level to meet their educational and employment aspirations”