

Vocational Training in Prisons

David Pallas

Chapter 1 Introduction

There are many factors that have been explored and documented to explain why people turn to crime. Many of these early criminology theories had at their core, the premise that crime is more prevalent in sectors of society that are deprived and where young people have little education.

In prisons in the UK today education and the attempt to offer skills to a previously unskilled and uneducated prison population has proved successful in part. This work will attempt to discover what factors might put a prisoner off taking up vocational training offered and what measures could be taken to encourage more prisoners to enrol in further education or vocational training.

The initial induction of prisoners to a new prison is a time when those who are habitual offenders customarily show resistance to what they see as going over the same ground that they have been over maybe dozens of times before.

Following on from this induction period is the placement of prisoners on vocational courses designed to give them useful skills with which to make a future for themselves when they are released. This paper will seek to discover to what extent frustration at the initial induction period puts repeat prisoners in the 'wrong frame of mind' to look at the educational opportunities being offered to them.

It will also seek to understand the motivation of those who readily take up vocational training and those who appear to have come to training reluctantly as well as those who refuse to undertake any training at all. This work will seek to answer the question; How do we reach prisoners who are reluctant or completely against the idea of vocational training?

Many of these early criminology theories originated in America. The Chicago School emerged in the 20's and 30's as the first major contribution to theorising an approach to crime under the banner of urban sociology. The basis for this work was carried out in the University of Chicago with Chicago as the model for study. It sought to explain criminology as a direct result of social influences.

Those supporting this theory were convinced that the environment that an individual inhabited was directly responsible for the development of his behavioural tendencies. The city, they believed represented a microcosm in which it was possible to study all forms of human behaviour as the diversity of humankind in such a relatively small area gave the opportunity to observe all passions and human nuances.

In 1916 the work of Frederick E Clements (1916) proved particularly influential in supporting the Chicago School. He suggested that an individual, despite whatever changes he underwent from cradle to grave could never overcome his environment.

The Chicago School theorists chose Chicago as their study area in 1860 when it was a city of a mere 10,000 people. Following the great fire of Chicago in 1871 the population of Chicago grew dramatically until by 1910 it numbered some 2 million inhabitants. A massive influx of immigrants from Europe was largely responsible for the growth of the city, but the massive increase in a population largely without income, led to homelessness, (Anderson 1923) the social structure further strained by poor living conditions, little or no education, low wages for very long working hours.

In this study of Chicago, areas were pinpointed and data collated relating to incidences of poverty, alcoholism, suicides, psychoses and homicides, and it was possible, in this way to identify areas that had a preponderance of certain types of antisocial behaviour.

Howard Becker developed the Labelling Theory, which was popular in the 1960's and 70's. A socialist, Becker put forward the premise that members of society could be persuaded into criminal and other roles in society by being 'labelled'. In other words if you were perceived as being from the criminal classes by virtue of where or how you lived or the company you kept this influence would have enough weight to lead you into a life of crime and in fitting in with your peers, away from organised activities like education.

By stereotyping sections of society, a self-fulfilling prophetic future could be assured for those falling within the stereotype. The interesting starting point for this theory was put forward earlier by George Herbert Mead (1913) a philosopher, socialist and psychologist associated with the University of Chicago who put forward the idea that the evaluation of an individual's sense of self is made up from his interactions with first his family, then his friends and then with wider society and the influences of external factors such as education.

As the ripples in the pond of an individual's interactions increases with exposure to a wider range of acquaintance, at study and then at work, the perception of self has to be altered and adjusted to compensate for the different impact that is made in a work or new social setting. If an individual in any group deviates from the accepted behaviour of that group 'labelling' will be the result and the offending individual will be treated differently to a greater or lesser degree depending on the seriousness of his deviation from the accepted and expected behaviour of the group.

In direct contrast to the theory that society could literally 'breed' criminals by placing them in the right socio-economic and geographic setting to nurture their criminal tendencies, Biological Positivism works on the theory that criminals are literally biologically different to the 'norm' in society. Phrenology, the study of the shape of the brain as felt through the skull was thought to show that criminal's brains were in fact a different shape to those of their more law abiding peers.

Cesare Lombroso (1909) from The Italian School wrote extensively on the theory that the criminal was in fact an atavistic throw-backs to an earlier evolutionary form of man. Writing in 1913 Charles Goring, while he could not corroborate the physical findings of The Italian School, concluded that the criminals he studied were shorter, lighter and of lower intelligence with less education than those not set on a criminal path.

William Sheldons discovery of three body shape identifiers; edomorphs, ectomorphs and mesomorphs claimed to identify criminals tending more towards the mesomorphic model. In modern criminology, apart from the acknowledgement that the bigger stronger

person may attack more readily being assured, because of their physical size, of little chance of being hurt, most of the early ideas surrounding Biological Positivism are now largely discounted. But that is not entirely the end of the road for biology as study of genetics strives to identify a chromosomal link with criminal behaviour. Studies have been done amongst twins and adopted children which so far have not supported this link.

So with these three differing theories on what makes a criminal a criminal which one is the closest to modern thinking? All three have some convincing elements as, in line with the theories of the Chicago School, it is widely accepted that social influences and exposure to education have a bearing on an individual's future. Not many would argue that the roughest sink estates in the UK where truancy and early drop out from school are epidemic, were not hot beds of crime and antisocial behaviour.

Peer pressure or the conditioning of young people and lack of opportunity due to limited education will account for crime in these social groups. As was discovered in the last century, the best antidote to this hopeless self fulfilling prophesy among young people in socially deprived areas is occupation in further vocational or other education, sporting endeavours or similar pursuits.

But these cost money and traditionally where these schemes have been tried, those extremely entrenched in anti social behaviour have destroyed any effort to build something worthwhile in their communities. Why is this? Fear of the unknown? A perception that control is being taken out of their hands? The recent rise in knife crime amongst young people in the UK seems to show a worrying trend towards an eventual outcome of an entire section of society that is potentially ungovernable.

The Labelling theory overlaps the Chicago School theories where sections of society such as those on sink estates are labelled as 'police and rescue services no-go areas' and 'rough neighbourhoods' There will be many individual households within the estate that are law abiding and blameless but whose address will possibly exclude them from jobs they might seek or other attempts to secure a foothold outside their own community. So we see that The Chicago School and Labelling dovetail quite well in relation to societal causes of crime.

But what of the theory of Biological Positivism? The early observation that criminals were smaller, shorter and thinner than non-offenders could, of course be explained by deprived social conditions, cramped living conditions, a lack of nourishing food or of any food at all and the adoption of unhealthy habits like excessive smoking and drinking. A genetic link is yet to be proved but it is hard not to give some credence to the fact that there may be a genetic link.

We do, after all inherit other aspects of our personalities from our parents, a sense of humour maybe, or a quick temper, so why not a propensity to steal or fight? There have been reported cases of very young children being adopted but having to be returned because of behaviour traits so antisocial that the adoptive parents could not cope with them. It is possible that, so long as a child has been in the world for any time at all, negative, personality-distorting influences could have been brought to bear.

But if a child is from 'bad stock' how convinced can we be that along with his hair and eye colour his parents deviant tendencies have not also been passed on? The argument of Nature or Nurture seeks to explain whether the nurturing of a child away from negative social influences can overcome inherited traits.

On the other hand, every now and again we hear of cases where a seemingly well brought up and well-educated person becomes a killer, as in the case of Harold Shipman the GP who killed many of his patients in the 1990's. As yet there is no definitive

evidence either way. Those early and progressive theories as to the causes of crime have all contributed to our understanding and perception of where and when crime is likely to occur and who is the most likely to perpetrate it.

It is clear that all three of the theories explored above contribute to our understanding of criminality in today's society. Perhaps the 'labelling' theory has taught us the danger of labelling sectors of society thus writing off many decent individuals for the sake of a few bad apples. Modern councils we hope give at least a passing nod to The Chicago School theory when planning housing and other communal projects and health services can keep a watchful eye on the health of those in deprived areas where education gained from those earlier findings can play a role.

The effect of food additives on younger children and the hyperactivity that they can cause is a new challenge. However, with today's poor diet, potential criminal classes, ironically, far from being too thin, short or small are likely to be too fat and unfit to run away! One thing that all theories agree on is that education is a way to rise above a cycle of criminality from whatever source. If that education cannot be gained in childhood, can the trend to criminality be broken by successful education in prison?

Poor living conditions, typically with over crowding, lack of privacy and dehumanisation are undoubtedly responsible for stifling the human spirit, and can lead to restlessness and rebellion in the young who, having abandoned education may take to a life of crime in order to escape the monotony, tedium or degrading effects of the places in which they live. Crime may also be motivated by a need to supply drug or alcohol habits and this is a common theme.

Others whose work we have examined suggest that lack of work leads people into crime while other authors site a benefit culture as keeping people from work even when it is available. Nicholas, Appleyard, (2008) Another school of thought is that crime does not emanate from deprived housing areas; they just provide a convenient anonymous hiding place for offenders. Lack of education, aspiration, positive role models and a nurturing societal base are more considerations we have examined that may lead those in these poorer housing areas into crime.

There is no doubt that all these factors play their part to a greater or lesser extent in most countries. The media also has a role to play in suggesting that if we have the latest car/clothes/holiday we will be fulfilled. The reasons and connections between poor social situations, lack of education and crime are obvious, while the solution necessary to break this cycle with education seems to be difficult to implement in school age children.

When these same young people begin a prison career, could this be another chance to capture their interest and their enthusiasm and their realisation that if they do not want to spend the rest of their lives in and out of prison, they have an opportunity to equip themselves for their futures with a vocational trade. Perhaps when seen against the option of prison this educational opportunity may appear more tempting.

In their paper Feinstein and Sabates (2005) explore the fact that education is a potentially large influence on individual's likelihood to offend. They point out that crime statistics for England indicate that *crime rates are lower in areas with higher levels of education, which are also areas of higher per capita income and contain a higher proportion of families belonging to the highest socio-economic status (Home Office, 2003).*

Their paper provides an empirical evaluation of the what impact the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) may have in terms of reducing crimes. The EMA programme was designed to increase participation in post-compulsory education and

piloted in 15 Local Education Authorities in 1999. The authors observed that providing financial support to youths from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, the EMA aimed to remove any financial Barrier there might be to participation in education.

In theory, it likely that taking part in education will contribute to a reduction in crime reduction by increasing income to some extent removing the financial need to engage in criminal activity. Education will also improve the understanding and parenting skills, which will pass from generation to generation and give an advantage that may prevent young people from becoming involved in crime. The authors also highlight patience and risk aversion, which with increased exposure to education may also deter young people from committing crime.

So from the very earliest thoughts about criminology to the most up-to-date studies conducted around education, it is apparent that education has a significant role to play in the outcome for individuals in society, although in some studies this is seen as to be of little relevance. The premise of educating prisoners to rehabilitate them and give them an alternative to crime is actively pursued in prisons in the UK.

But the question remains, how do we persuade those who are resistant to education to give it a chance? Is the induction process affecting the general demeanor of repeat offenders to the extent that they are just too annoyed by what they see as a waste of time, to give training a chance? Are they in fact cutting off their noses to spite their faces, or is there another reason behind the reluctance of any prisoner to take up the offer of vocational training?

The hypothesis that there may be a simple solution to overcoming the reluctance of some prisoners to taking up vocational training will be tested as well as any other factors that may be influencing prisoners away from the vocational training being offered.

In testing the hypothesis that there may be some simple procedural factors that keep repeat and other offenders from participating in vocational training the study will be conducted as follows:

Study Outline

To identify three groups of prisoners and gauge their responses to prison induction and to the educational courses offered in prison:

Group One:

Ten prisoners who have welcomed the chance to take up motivational training will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course, and why?

Why have you decided to do a course?

Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

What do you hope to gain from this training?

What other training did you consider if any?

Group Two:

Ten prisoners who are on the course but seem half hearted about it will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course and why?

Why have you decided to do a course?

Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

What do you hope to gain from this training?

What other training did you consider, if any?

Group Three:

Ten prisoners who were offered places on the course which they have turned down will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course and why?

Why have you decided not to do a course?

Have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

What do you see as the benefit of this training?

What might make you consider taking a place on a vocational course?

This area of study will be a great help to me in my understanding of the offenders I am teaching, if we don't understand them how can we teach them not just about what is so called right and wrong, but get them to believe that we are teaching them something, that will not only help them when they get out of prison, but will help them understand and expect that we do want to help.

The basic concept of action research being an interactive inquiry process that balances problem solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes enabling future predictions about personal and organizational change. With the above statement taken on board I believe that the action research I will be carrying out on this subject will bring the required understanding of several problems that are very prevalent in the prison system.

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Chapter 2 Literature Review

One of the factors that is prominent within the prison service when education is talked about, is both the value and usefulness of this service to the tax payer, with this in mind I have researched the problem and found the following information.

"The University and College Union warns Learning and Skills Council not to deliver prison education 'on the cheap'

3 August 2009

UCU has written to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and warned the funding body that it risks putting quality and standards in prison education at risk if it hands out contracts to private providers. The call comes as contracts for three North London prisons - HMP Pentonville, HMP Holloway and HMP Belmarsh - are being re-tendered and the union is concerned that a lack of appropriate investment, from the LSC is discouraging further education colleges, who guarantee better pay and conditions for staff, from bidding for the contracts.

City and Islington College and Hammersmith West London College have both withdrawn bids for running training programmes at the prisons after complaining that there wasn't enough money to provide a good quality service. UCU has warned that allowing private sector bidders, some of who have failed with previous bids and have little or no experience in the field, to maintain prison education programmes will make it much harder for staff to do their jobs.

In March 980 prison educators signed a petition calling on the LSC to ensure that whoever wins the contracts provides pay rates and career development structures that are commensurate with further education lecturers.

UCU general secretary, Sally Hunt, said: 'Prison education cannot be run on the cheap and it is essential that standards and quality are the first consideration when contracts are handed out. UCU members perform an invaluable job with in-mates at Holloway, Pentonville and Belmarsh and deserve decent pay and good working conditions. Their employment needs to be properly funded.

'Further education colleges have an excellent record of providing quality amenities and meeting the needs of service users. They are a much better choice than private sector bidders, especially those who have been unsuccessful with bids in the past and lack experience. Colleges must be allowed to continue to provide this invaluable service.'

Then after the financial problems are discussed and understood or not, we get the even more confusing academic thinkers and government ministers who can and do encourage statements like the following:-

"There is little value in providing literacy skills to an offender if the outcome is to release one morning a burglar who can now read and write but is still a burglar"

Prison Education - A Gateway to Nowhere?

"The current approach to criminal rehabilitation is based on the notion that offenders 'think differently' or more accurately put, have a lack of cognitive skills and should, therefore undergo 'thinking skills' courses to learn to 'think and reason correctly'. Such courses as ETS and R&R have been around for some time and are claimed to reduce offending behaviour although such claims have been shown to have a very limited value according to Home Office Research Findings.

The current research also suggests that teaching offenders to empathize with their victims has made little difference to reconviction rates. Martin Narey the chief executive of the Prison and Probation Service now known as the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), a one-time advocate of offending behaviour programmes now suggests that teaching offenders to read and write could help them get a job and prevent them returning to crime.

It is not clear what kind of job he might have in mind, for many prisoners have had no vocational skills training or have an occupation to offer in the job market place. For sure, there are many prisoners who do have self-acquired skills, those who can disassemble a car engine and reassemble it, carry out all kinds of construction tasks, operate machinery and do semi-skilled work and would benefit from being able to improve on those abilities, even passing on those skills to others.

With the construction industry suffering severe shortages in all trades and salaries being at a premium, it beggars belief that the Prison Service has not seized upon that in offering a wider programme of vocational training. After all, painting and decorating, bricklaying, plumbing etc. and suchlike were always popular courses and oversubscribed by prisoners when City and Guilds 'Vocational Training Courses' were running in most prisons until the introduction of offending behaviour programmes and the pseudo social and life skills courses now being run in several prison education departments.

With the absence of any practical vocational training skills being offered, prison workshops are also increasingly being used as a mechanism to tack on some kind of meaningless qualification in spite of the fact that a recent internal report of Prison Industries acknowledged that, 'contract labour shops have little rehabilitative value, that the work is 'mind numbing' and offers no useful employment skills'.

The notion that literacy skills alone are the solution is as simplistic as is providing a mechanism to 'think correctly' and is hardly likely to commend one in the job market. It may well enable one to understand social security forms and sign for their weekly benefits, but training it isn't for little training actually exists in prison.

There is little value in providing literacy skills to an offender if the outcome is to release one morning a burglar who can now read and write but is still a burglar with even a lesser a stake in the community as an 'ex con' and little to offer in the job market and, therefore a means to earn a living honestly.

Such an offender may well still be attracted to a criminal lifestyle rather than what he or she might perceive as a meaningless work routine learned in prison. It has been suggested that prisoners ought to approach prison work as a positive and normalising experience although it is difficult to imagine what most prison work would equip one for in the community or what is normal about it.

It might provide mere pocket money in prison for packing nuts and bolts in plastic bags, but it is hardly likely to provide for a career move in the world outside of prison and rather than lifting an offender out of, the criminal lifestyle it is more likely than not to drive them towards it.

Prisoners can and often do feel exploited in the prison industries workshops and see themselves as cheap labour in an industry geared towards budgets, targets and key performance indicators which might have been avoided had the Government implemented the 1996 Prisoners Earnings Act that would have provided for prisoners to earn wages at a level whereby a proportions of those earnings would have gone towards contributing towards dependants maintenance, victim compensation and savings accounts for the prisoner's release.

Because of the shortage of work in many prisons, many prisoners now come to see prison education as merely being 'another job', a place where for 'sitting out the dance' they can still benefit from prison earnings which might be their only source of Income.

Yet, Home Office Research Finding 174 although noting the importance of qualifications to post-release employment also noted that those who acquired educational qualifications while in prison were statistically no more likely to have a paid job on release than those who had not attained educational achievements.

It is also noteworthy that vocational training has now almost disappeared from prisons to be replaced by literacy and mediocre educational training that provides for worthless certificates but more importantly a 'bums on seats' approach to prison education that often serves management more than the students.

Without a doubt, there are many people standing in weekly dole queues who have no problem with reading and writing. Their problem is that being unskilled and without a trade, they like countless others are chasing the unskilled positions in a highly competitive market. The world is full of educated derelicts.

It is clear that computer training which is the limit of vocational training in prisons, requires a far lesser investment than perhaps a plumbing or bricklaying course, and in talking about investment we ought also be talking about investing in a wider programme of training to accommodate those who may have abilities elsewhere or would like to acquire them.

Perhaps we really have not progressed much beyond what the 19th century Prison Commissioner Sir Edward DuCane observed, when he stated that: 'Experience has shown that literacy education has not had the reformatory influence which we once expected from it, and that moral and vocational instruction, are the most potent of the educational influences which can be employed to that end. "

After reading research as shown above, it brings to mind just how difficult the subject, that I am researching is, after all we have been jailing People and turning them into prisoners or as we like to know them nowadays offenders for many hundreds of Years, and the same problems keep coming back to drive society to despair. This jailing problem goes back to the time of 1166 when Henry II built the first jail, this included Newgate Prison in London. Henry also establishes courts in England.

And some research I have found during this project would suggest that society has not yet developed the answer to the problems caused by offenders being locked away for periods of their Life, I have endeavoured to show below some of the problems both the

offenders and the educational staff, come across in the prison environment that the offenders are either working or being held in:-

Organisational factors in Prison.

- Rigid, hierarchical structure within which education often has a low priority;
- Management structure and lines of responsibility dominated and determined by security priorities;
- Security routines and procedures controlling prisoners' availability and movement, and taking precedence over their commitments as learners;
- Geographical separation of education from the rest of the prison;
- Overcrowding and 'churn' affecting availability and ability of prisoner-learners to attend classes;
- In some cases, strong divisions between 'out-scope' and 'in-scope': education/training organised by the Prison Service and by OLASS (mostly FE);
- Managers hold responsibility for a wide curriculum area, often much wider than in FE colleges;
- Staff are employed on a range of contracts and conditions;
- Recruitment of teachers – lack of professional status and clear routes into employment for prison educators;
- Very variable availability of initial assessment data and ILPs as essential tools for tracking progress and establishing continuity in learning;
- The pivotal role of the prison governor in determining the extent to which a custodial setting can be managed to create positive conditions for learning.
- The prison officers who just do not care what happens to the offenders, or as they would say "I'm just doing my job".

Cultural factors in Prison.

- Confined, time-bound, physical environment – entirely different from other environments and making for an unsettled learning environment marked by disruption and discontinuity;
- Different cultures and attitudes towards education and learning in different custodial settings, some of them distinctly negative;
- Conflict between the prisoner-learner's relatively fragile identity as a learner and the dominant, legally imposed status as offender;
- Significant impact of external circumstances on prisoners' lives and feelings;

- High levels of 'emotional load' affecting dynamics of learning and teaching.

Pedagogical factors in Prison.

- Discontinuity in individual learning;
- Fluctuating attendance and composition of learning groups ('unsettled learning environment');
- Relatively fragile identity as learner (low self-esteem, lack of confidence, poor basic skills);
- Motivation of learners – generally low but with significant exceptions;
- Motivation of teachers – often positively influenced by rewards of helping prisoners overcome barriers to learning;
- Making teaching, materials and content relevant: e.g. employability, linking to prisoners' current situation and aspirations, embedding LLN and functional skills;
- Dealing with challenging students and situations;
- Dealing with 'emotional load' – prisoners' practical and emotional support needs;
- Attributes of experienced prison educators: flexibility, inventiveness, commitment, confidence;
- Teachers' training needs and their attitudes towards pedagogical skills, professional experience, and qualifications;
- Peer tutoring as a key strategy in some areas of work;
- Differentiation – learning groups characterised by extremely wide range of individual needs.

"It is envisaged that as the 'iterative process' of data analysis proceeds, the categories will be added to as new themes emerge, and also that some may collapse as more precise or comprehensive categories emerge. The categories and findings will also be used to inform the evaluation of the forthcoming pilot PTLLS training courses for OLASS teachers and for Prison Service teachers in the next phase of the research project. Below are salient themes that emerged from the analysis to date.

Strategies for teachers to cope with the 'emotional load' of learners.

One of the factors that differentiate prison education from the teaching and learning that takes place in mainstream FE and other learning and skills settings is the emotional state of the prisoner as a learner. The nature of the 'emotional labour' involved in managing offenders and their learning in settings which can be highly emotionally charged can usefully be explored and analysed by referring to Hochschild's original work in this area (1983), and to more recent studies examining 'emotional labour' in health care settings (Smith, 1999; Hunter and Smith, 2007). It is apparent from the initial research that this factor is of key importance in prison learning contexts.

Women offenders in particular are affected by the separation from their families and children; they are often uncertain about who is caring for their children and are faced with future uncertainty as to the realistic opportunities of being reunited with them on release. Findings from the interviews suggest that external circumstances weigh heavily on all prisoners' feelings and emotional state.

Overwhelmingly, all the teachers interviewed acknowledged the emotional load which prisoners present. All agreed that prisoners had emotional needs unique to this environment; no one questioned the basic premise. For example one interviewee commented:

'I have to deal with some heavy emotional issues that my students present.'

As part of their employment nine out of 13 teachers viewed dealing with the emotional load and being aware of prisoners,' emotional issues as integral to their role as teachers:

'I try to be aware of the students' state of mind...'

'You have to be sympathetic if students are upset.'

Four teachers said they were prepared to offer individual support and guidance and if necessary make referrals or interventions on behalf of the prisoner to improve their situation: 'You need to give them space and perhaps discreetly ask them if they want to speak to somebody or need to be referred. I mention it to the manager if a student seems to be very upset.'

'I direct students to the right person for that kind of support. I am told about ACTT form students who may be self-harming and need to be carefully monitored.'

(ACCT = Assessment, Care in Custody and Team Work)

Four teachers emphasised the importance of understanding the limits of support and the boundaries of their role in relation to emotional issues: 'I am aware of the boundaries of my role and that I must not become too familiar with students.'

Three of the prison teachers interviewed mentioned the impact upon themselves of having to deal with the 'emotional load' learners can often carry with them in a learning situation. Clearly the teachers benefited from being able to talk to other colleagues about what they had experienced, but one teacher felt that it would be preferable to have this instituted on a more formal basis:

'Sometimes it is difficult not to 'take it home', Ideally there would be a regular opportunity to off-load within your team and to your manager... At the moment, most debriefing is done on an informal basis with colleagues.'

Two instructors interviewed, who had both previously worked as prison officers, though acknowledging the 'emotional load', preferred not to get involved with prisoners on that level: 'I don't get involved, just help with the practicalities.'

'I'm used to it. A sense of humour helps.'

All the teachers interviewed acknowledged the significance of the emotional load that a prisoner may carry, most commented on contributing factors such as the stress of

overcrowding and isolation from family and friends, and the majority saw dealing with these issues as a fundamental part of their job.

However, prison teachers do not receive any specific training or support in this area apart from that which they receive informally from their colleagues and managers. It may be that lessons could be drawn from debates about the inclusion of emotion management awareness in the training of Nurses and Care Workers and the development of the 'emotionally intelligent practitioner'.

Motivation of learners.

Teachers regarded the motivation of the learners as an issue central to their teaching. Factors affecting individual learners' motivation are highly complex and variable; motivation can fluctuate significantly depending on circumstances, such as the type of prison and the stage at which the prisoner is (remand, pre-hearing, awaiting sentence, sentenced, pre-release), as well as on earlier experiences of education and the expectations raised by sitting in a classroom.

One manager commented that concentration span can be very limited and that some prisoners may find the fact of being confined in a small space with others generally unnerving, and may fear being the target of bullying and victimisation by other learners in the group. In addition, in many male prisons, the packed breakfast will have been eaten the previous evening and the learner may have to spend three hours in a classroom (with a short break) on an empty stomach.

Frequently education may appear attractive to prisoners quite simply because the alternative to attending an education class is to remain locked in the cell, or because it presents one of the few opportunities for a prisoner to interact with non-uniformed staff.

A prisoner, interviewed about his motivation for attending education courses, highlighted the lack of any alternative activities in this environment and deemed even attending a course below his level of skills and abilities as preferable to not participating at all.

'At first I was given a job in the paint shop in the prison, which was mundane and repetitive work. The only way I could get out was to apply for a low level course in the education department.'

The interviews revealed that teachers employ many different means to keep the learners interested in attending classes. One way of raising learners' motivation that several teachers identified was to relate learning to the 'real world' by making the subject relevant to prisoners' experience and providing a qualification or skill that would be useful to them on release. Teachers recounted positive feedback from prisoners about the 'real skills' they were developing such as: 'When I get out of here I'm going to re-tile the bathroom'.

Visual and performing arts projects were also highly valued for the sense of achievement they provided for both teachers and learners. Several teachers stressed the importance of making learning a positive and pleasurable experience, building rapport with learners and especially treating prisoners with respect as being prime motivating factors when teaching in this environment:

'By offering them a space in which they are treated with respect.'

'Having class debates, and a range of activities to make the learning fun.'

Another strategy that three teachers emphasised was the importance of providing one-to-one support and encouragement to keep learners motivated: 'Listening to their

worries about studying and offering constructive support to ensure they complete assignments.'

Strategies for dealing with learners' challenging behaviour.

Although behaviour management was an issue for the prison teachers, all the experienced teachers interviewed appeared confident in dealing with challenging behaviour from their learners. As an effective method of establishing acceptable behaviour, some teachers mentioned the use of ground rules with learners or a group contract with which to enforce rules among themselves when necessary.

Such techniques are commonly used in mainstream FE teaching; however, their use in this particular environment may suggest a revealing point of reference for comparing and contrasting teaching and learning in different settings: custodial and mainstream.

Three teachers mentioned having to exclude learners from classes due to their misbehaviour, but this was a last resort that did not need to be employed very often. '...I find very few issues of behaviour management occur in class, possibly due to the fact that as this is a prison, many prisoners are aware of the limitations but also because I am very clear about what I will find acceptable. This is always done in a positive and an upbeat manner where praise and encouragement take precedence over criticism.'

The main areas of confusion and debate in which I have shown interest is given below but be aware this is not a definitive list:-

- Teachers not being trained in any way to deal with Prisoners.
- Rigid, hierarchical structure within which education often has a low priority.
- Recruitment of the right teachers – lack of professional status and clear routes into employment for prison educators.
- Very variable availability of initial assessment data and ILPs as essential tools for tracking progress and establishing continuity in learning.
- Different cultures and attitudes towards education and learning in different custodial settings, some of them distinctly negative, this is shown by prison officers far too often.
- High levels of 'emotional load' affecting dynamics of learning and teaching and the lack of a route to solve any problems that may arise.
- Discontinuity in individual learning due to security or personal problems.
- Relatively fragile identity as learner (low self-esteem, lack of confidence, poor basic skills).
- Fluctuating attendance and composition of learning groups ('unsettled learning environment').
- Motivation of learners – generally low but with significant exceptions.

The gaps that appear to still be showing in the educational system within prisons, are many and varied, but one that brings me to formulate an hypothesis, is the lack of joined up thinking which stops the problems shown above, becoming less prevalent :-

References:

The Internet

UCU warns LSC not to deliver prison education 'on the cheap'

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4118>

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Prison Education - A Gateway to Nowhere?

Charles Hanson ~HMP Cornhill ~August 27th 2004

<http://www.mojuk.org.uk/cahrlesaugust27.html>

The Internet

Initial teacher training project for teachers and instructors in prison and offender education

http://www.loncett.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_198.pdf

Chapter 3 Methodology

As my hypothesis is that there may be a simple solution to overcoming the reluctance of some offenders to taking up vocational training, this will be tested to ascertain what may be influencing prisoners, away from the vocational and academic training being offered.

In testing the hypothesis that there may be some obvious procedural factors that keep repeat and indeed new offenders from participating in vocational and academic training, one of the factors that I will be researching is the induction process that all offenders go through when entering a new prison.

We must also bear in mind that long term offenders may have been too many prisons during their prison term and may well have gone through the same type of procedure many times before. And one of the anomalies that this throws up is that the records from the previous inductions are either never read or if they are, they are never taken as a replacement for the information gained through the new induction process.

I have selected a range of methodologies which I have researched and have selected the appropriate method that will give the most accurate results bearing in mind the restrictions I have when working with offenders, that are still serving their sentences and these are as follows: -

Observation.

Types of Observation

"This section, on types of observation, is a useful starting point for those wishing to conduct their own small-scale study. Observation may take place in a clinical or laboratory setting, designed and planned by the researcher - or more likely in 'real-life' research will take place in the natural setting without intervention or planning by those doing the research. This, the author suggests, may be called the 'ecological approach,' although in my experience the presence of an observer always has an effect on what is being observed. A second distinction is between observation which is quantitative and that which is qualitative. She terms the former 'structured', although I am not sure that this is useful since qualitative observations may be equally structured and systematic.

Participant and Non-participant Observation

The third distinction, and probably most important for the practitioner-researcher, is between participant and non-participant observation. As the author points out, these two extremes are the poles of a continuum with various categories lying in between. Thus an observer may be a complete 'insider' or participant - for example, a member of the group actually being studied. This has happened in past social science, involving ethnographic research with football hooligans and gang membership. A slightly less participative approach (the 'participant observer') implies that the researcher spends considerable time with the group but is never fully part of it. Moving along the spectrum, there is next the 'observer as participant' and finally the 'complete observer' in which the researcher is very much an outsider looking in. These categories, in my experience, are in the part of the continuum at which classroom observation by teachers or students is most likely to lie.

Structured Observation and Classroom Research

Mukerhji goes on to give a useful account of three different types of structured

observation, all of which have great potential for classroom research. The first involves taking 'time samples' during a set period (of, say, a lesson or a seminar). The time samples could be as long as a few minutes or as short as (say) 30 seconds. They can be valuable in studying individual children but they could be equally well used in observing the nature, dynamics or behaviour of a whole class. The second means of using structure, according to this author, is the 'event sample'. This involves looking for and then observing certain events in the situation being studied. She uses the example of 'temper tantrums' by young children. Observers would study closely the antecedent, the tantrum itself and then the consequences of the 'event'. Mukherji also discusses checklists as a way of structuring observation, but rightly points out that this approach now looks somewhat dated.

Recording Observations

The author gives a useful account of different ways of recording observations, ranging from note taking (or box ticking if the above checklist approach were to be used) to audio and video recording. The discussion of the ethical issues involved in capturing and using digital images or audio is unfortunately too brief to be of practical value to the researcher in the 21st century.

'Observer Bias' and 'Objectivity'

Finally, this chapter discusses the issue of 'observer bias' and ways of increasing 'objectivity'. Personally, I find this section rather simplistic. The implication that any observation could be theory-free let alone value-free and therefore 'objective' is no longer tenable in the current context. Karl Popper is remembered for his key phrase (in 1963) that 'all observation is theory laden' - this was made over 40 years ago in the context of the sciences and holds even more true now and in the social sciences. The current view is that 'observer bias' can never be eliminated but should be recognised and reflected upon, and this is not well discussed here.

Mixed Method Research

'Methodological History'

Punch defines mixed methods research as "*empirical research which involves the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data*". He suggests that other terms with roughly the same meaning are 'blended, combined or integrated' methods. The chapter moves to a brief historical overview, and Punch suggests three waves in 'methodological history': wave 1 when quantitative methods dominated; wave two when qualitative methods emerged (post 1970 perhaps?) and wave three when the growth of mixed methods occurred (probably in the 1990s). Like any analysis of history in terms of waves (or generations, as with computers) this is a little simplistic, but for those who have lived through these eras it does have some currency. The move towards mixing methods came with the end of the 'paradigm wars', a now slightly hackneyed phrase often used glibly to sum up the supposed conflict between quantitative and qualitative approaches, as if the two had once been mutually exclusive. Punch argues that pragmatism now rules the roost - the research questions should dominate the design of a study and the methods chosen should be determined by the questions asked. This is the basic advice that any supervisor or mentor should give to a student undertaking research. In a way it seems too obvious to mention but in fact the converse (i.e. the methods taking precedence over the questions) is a common pitfall for practitioner researchers. It is therefore worth repeating several times and Punch does this (perhaps too often) in this chapter.

'Paradigm Wars'

Instead of moving on to the practicalities of mixing methods, Punch does briefly return to re-visit some of the debates of the 'paradigm wars' and gets into some deep and unnecessary water in talking about issues such as 'objectivity'. He suggests that quantitative methods are largely concerned with **variables** and connections between them and can bring 'objectivity' to a study; whilst qualitative methods are concerned with **cases** rather than variables, are more 'grounded' and more context dependent. I am not sure that this dichotomy holds true in every case. Many qualitative studies are concerned with the key factors, and therefore variables, involved in the situation being studied and do look at connections between them. The samples may be smaller but the in-depth study can lead up to a broader, more extensive inquiry into factors/ variables that may have been highlighted using qualitative methods.

In fairness to Punch, this is partly his argument when he discusses, in the most useful section of the chapter, different research designs for mixing methods. He categorises different designs in terms of three key dimensions: the timing, the weighting and the mixing. Of course, as stated earlier, the key determinant of the timing, weighting and mixing should be the research questions themselves and Punch goes to great lengths to keep reminding the reader of this.

These are actually very useful in considering the practicalities of a research project. The timing dimension involves considering whether to start with a quantitative or qualitative approach. For example, the first phase could involve gaining a general overview (a broad brush approach) to the situation, perhaps using a survey or questionnaire; then the second phase, qualitative, would look in-depth at certain cases to explore more deeply. In Punch's terms, this would be a move from variables to cases. The opposite design might be suited to other research questions: the first phase would involve the collection of qualitative data from a small number of cases and then move on to a broader, quantitative study, i.e. the first phase would identify the key variables and the second would seek to explore them - cases leading to variables. Both designs could be useful, and I have experience of working with both approaches (the former Punch calls the explanatory design, the latter the 'exploratory').

The Weighting of Methods

This leads to the next dimension - what weighting should be placed on the methods being mixed? Possibilities are that one method will carry more 'weight' than another or that both have equal weighting. Again, a judgment on this will depend on the context of the study and the research questions. Finally, Punch discusses how the sets of data from different methods might be mixed - for example, should they be analysed and then presented separately or side by side?

All in all this is a valuable chapter for the researcher who is likely to be open minded and reflective about the methods they use to address questions that concern them and they wish to explore. As Punch points out, in our personal and professional lives we constantly combine quantitative data. He is right - how many followers of any sport (tennis, cricket, football...?) want to hear what a marvellous match it was but have no interest in the final scores?

The Literature Review

Build One's Work On The Studies Of Others

To build one's work on the studies of others is not only one of the most important academic virtues - it also makes good practical sense. Previous work can provide ideas for research design, research methods and not least, help to sharpen or focus one's own

research **questions**. The work that you build upon as in your own research may come from a totally different context in time or space, e.g. a UK teacher-researcher might find a study of Mathematics teaching conducted in Singapore in the 1990s of great value as a starting point. Hence a good literature review should trawl far and wide and not be afraid of going back in time over the odd decade or several.

Primary and Secondary Sources

Given the vital importance to any respectable study of building upon the work of others (as Newton put it, 'standing on the shoulders of giants'), this chapter by Thomas is an excellent, practical guide to the business of doing a Literature Review. Thomas' chapter discusses the nature and quality of different sources (primary and secondary), the 'storyboard' approach to writing a review, the concept of being critical, and some of the computer technology which can be used to good effect.

The Research Question

He starts by suggesting that the research questions of your study should shape your literature review. Equally, I feel, the review will help to focus and 'refine' (as he puts it) your research questions. This is always the perennial debate at the outset of any study: which comes first, the research questions or the Lit. Review? Should the questions **drive** the review- or should they be shaped by it? There is no easy answer to this chicken and egg type of question and Thomas acknowledges this - the two must go hand in hand.

What Counts as Literature?

The first job, he points out, is to decide what will count as the literature. Will it be mainly primary sources such as diaries, government documents, letters or minutes of meetings (if we can access these)? Or will it be the conventional secondary sources such as journal articles (paper or electronic), monographs and textbooks? Thomas produces a helpful table as a double page spread showing the full spectrum and the pluses and minuses of each. I would take issue with some of the statements here. For example, one cannot always be sure that 'only the best articles get published' - peer review is not perfect and the history of science is littered with examples of poor research which has been printed in some of the top journals (the story of 'cold fusion' being one of the best recent examples). Thomas also states that a drawback of using a past thesis/dissertation from a library is that it may be 'very weak'. In that case it should not have been passed and allowed into that library, surely? This all heightens the importance of the researcher in being **critical**. We need to make our own judgements about published work, whether peer reviewed or not.

The Duty of Doubt

Thomas' discussion of how we might do this is one of the main strengths of his chapter. He talks about our 'duty of doubt' when reading past literature (primary or secondary). He discusses the idea of critical awareness which involves the two key prongs of 'scepticism and suspicion'. He summarises this neatly by saying: 'Be your own Jeremy Paxman'. Perhaps this is going too far - I have seen Paxman being rude and aggressive

on a bad day. It is not advisable for any researcher to be opinionated, cynical, scathing or over-critical of previous work. However, the dispositions of being healthily sceptical without being cynical, and doubting respectfully without being deferent, are perhaps the key attitudes to take into a literature review.

MInd Maps and Storyboards

An equally useful section of Thomas' chapter gives guidance, right down to the type of 'linking words' that might be used, on writing and presenting a review. In many ways this is a practical illustration of how 'critical awareness' can be couched in appropriate language. He also discusses how to make a Literature Review hang together by using a kind of storyboard, perhaps visually in the form of a mind map or a spider's web.

Selecting, Filtering, Evaluating

The final sections discuss the practical and technical aspects of conducting a search, a review and then presenting it in an acceptable format (mainly the Harvard system here). This is all excellent, practical advice for the practitioner-researcher. Thomas, like me, is a great fan of Google. I may be seen as 'sad' for admitting it but it never ceases to impress me. I can type in anything and up comes a response (I don't even need 'Google Scholar'). Admittedly, after that point comes the real use of the brain - selecting, filtering, evaluating and making the difficult decisions about what to use and what to ignore (we cannot read, let alone review, everything). This is where the criticality discussed above comes in and that is part of the researcher's burden and responsibility. Without this critical edge, your own project - in your own context - will not be worth conducting.

Gathering Data

Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Before looking at specific methods of data 'collection', Koshy starts with an essential discussion of methodology by looking at the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data, the key terms of ontology and epistemology, and the importance of ethical considerations during fieldwork. Koshy's chapter is part of a book entitled *Action Research for Improving Educational Practice*, so the discussion should be considered in this context. In this discussion, Koshy does not raise the issue of whether data are collected (like picking apples from a tree) or produced, i.e. in a sense created by the researcher, her questions and the methods she uses. The latter view of data is the one I favour and ties in with current views of epistemology (i.e. how do we know things?) and ontology (i.e. what 'things' are there in the world?).

Koshy goes on, in the meat of this chapter, to examine, one by one, five different methods which might be used (which Koshy labels 'methods of instrumentation', a term I have not seen before and which does smack rather of a positivist approach to research).

Questionnaires

The first, questionnaires, is considered in some detail. Useful guidelines on using questionnaires and conducting surveys is given with a bullet point list including key advice such as 'keep it simple', use a mixture of open and closed questions, always do a pilot and avoid questions which are leading or ambiguous. This is fairly standard stuff, but taken as a checklist it will be useful for new researchers. Koshy goes on to consider

pros and cons of using questionnaires and then provides a useful illustration of her bullet point lists with a cameo/example of a study into students' interests and aspirations.

Other Methods

This format of useful guidelines followed by pros and cons, then an illustration, is followed for the other four methods considered. So with interviewing, the second method, we have a discussion of types of interview (for example, from structured to unstructured), the pluses and minuses of audio recording (which Koshy calls 'tape recording' making it sound slightly dated) and then a useful sample interview which was used as a follow up to the questionnaire on aspirations shown earlier. This helps to illustrate how methods can be mixed in a research project.

Koshy then considers the 'gathering' of documentary evidence as one tool for research. Again, the format is helpful as guidance, by providing a checklist and a list of pros and cons. This section is rather too brief though, and will need to be supplemented by further reading on documentary research, which Koshy does provide.

The next method considered is the use of field diaries and notes - I would not have termed this a 'method' so much as an adjunct to other tools and approaches, but Koshy does provide a useful summary of guidelines, and the pros and cons of using research diaries.

Observation

The most comprehensive and detailed discussion of a research method is the section on observation. Koshy looks at different styles of observation on the two usual continua: from structured to unstructured and from participant observer to non-participant. The author falls into the usual trap (in my view) of suggesting that one extreme is more 'objective' than another, which I can never accept. All observation is either experience-, theory- or value-laden. Koshy presents a useful cycle for observation which fits into the traditional cycles or spirals for action research (a sort of 'plan, carry out, evaluate, feedback and back to plan' cycle). There is a long section on observing pupils and a set of guidelines for classroom observation. The best section is a helpful debate on the use of video/ DVD recording and the capture of digital images. This relates well to the earlier section on ethical issues in research which is still always a matter for concern in school or college based research. "

All of the above have some bearing on the principles of action research and are all worthy research engines, however I have chosen to use data gathering while holding firm on the requirements, of both the quantitative and qualitative type of data collection.

Qualitative means a non-numerical data collection or explanation based on the attributes of the graph or source of data. And quantitative measurement is often regarded as being only a means by which observations are expressed numerically in order to investigate causal relations or associations.

I have broken the research down into 14 separate questions and I have gained permission to use feedback from 30 offenders, that are currently serving prison sentences for various crimes, the periods of time on their sentences are also varied, this should give the greatest range of overhaul feedback on the following questions posed within this research.

The Research Question.

To identify the problems that offenders (may or may not) have with the induction courses and gauge their responses to the prison educational courses offered in HMP service, and to find out how the courses themselves and the information about these courses can be improved.

Questions

1. What were your impressions of your induction into the education system in this prison, was it clear what vocational and academic courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course, and why?
2. Why have you decided to do a course?
3. Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?
4. What do you hope to gain from this training?
5. What other training did you consider, if any?
6. What do you see as the benefit of this training?
7. What might make you consider taking a place on another vocational course?
8. Would you continue the course when you get released from prison?
9. Do you think there is enough information given to you about how and where to continue, the course you are now doing after your release?
10. Has it been made clear to you what benefits you could gain from doing this vocational course?
11. Could more information be given to you at the induction stage about the course and any benefits you could gain by doing that course, and were you given any literature about the course content?
12. Do you feel enough is done to link you to employers who may be able to help you after your release from prison?
13. Have you been made aware of how much more information and training you will need after your release to find a position in training or with an employer?
14. Would you benefit from having more information available about training and finding work after your release, and would booklets or information sheets help if they were available in the library or on the wing for your use?

The offenders that have been selected to carry out this research have not been put under pressure in any way to do so, but a very revealing piece of feedback has already been noted and that is that before the research even started, the first 30 offenders that were asked if they would do the questionnaire all 30 said they would be more than

willing to do so, as long as they could use their own words and that their names and numbers were withheld from the published research, this keenness I found very revealing as I had feared there would be a lot more resistance to the research by the offenders.

I agreed to their request with only one proviso and that was that I did not want to have any swear words shown in the answers, and that was only because I did not know who would be reading the finished research paper, and I did not want the answers to offend anyone. And also I felt that if the tone and language used in the answers was not shown in a sensible and polite way it may not be looked upon as a serious piece of research work, and this would have wasted everyone's time which I did not want to happen.

Now the risk of bias is a much more complicated issue because in the prison environment we are researching in, there is always a fear of bias one way or another, the offenders think the establishment is against them and the establishment think the offenders are against it. This may be true in both cases as a whole, but I can safely say that I undertook this research with a completely open mind and I have shown no bias to either side of the discussion and I have shown all the results in an open and fair way, whatever the result was shown to be.

The timescale set on this research is based on the offenders having undertaken their induction training within a maximum period of 6 Months from the start of the research project, but as we are in a prison environment we must bear in mind that some of these offenders, will either be moved to other prisons or released during that time scale, I will try and get a copy of this research to as many of the offenders as I can upon its completion, and a copy will be sent to both the head of education and the governor of the prison.

As for recording and monitoring I have now finished collecting the questionnaires and have them filed and sorted ready to complete the research, the only thing I have done to the result sheets is to remove any names or numbers that cannot be taken out of the prison confines, other than that all the recording and monitoring has been straight forward and I am now ready to produce the findings of this research project.

References:

The Internet

Professor Jerry Wellington discuss :-

'Action Research for Improving Educational Practice' by Valsa Koshy.

<http://www.ttrb.ac.uk/browse2.aspx?anchorId=17746&selectedId=18390&menu=17833&expanded=False>

The basis of this research is formulated on the unproven assumption, that the induction programme used for entry into the education system in HMP service is both inadequate and is not fit for purpose, there has been many changes made to the prison education department over the years and they have all been undertaken with the best of intentions.

I have researched the main problem areas and found that there are indeed many areas that could be improved; the information shown below will reinforce this hypothesis.

Problems within Prison Education

THE BASIC SKILLS AGENDA—A BROADER CURRICULUM IS NEEDED

“230. There is little research available on what sort of education and training provision is most effective in enabling prisoners to gain secure employment on release (paragraphs 31 to 33). We have also established that the existing basic skills agenda in prisons was based on little more than a 'hunch' (paragraph 41). If it was working successfully against the defined purpose of prison education, this would not matter, but we have concluded that it is not (paragraph 213 and 214). Most of the evidence this Committee has received demonstrates that the current approach to prison education, with an almost exclusive focus on the achievement of basic skills qualifications, is not sufficient to enable prisoners to gain secure employment on release. Measured against the purpose of prison education, current provision is failing.

234. A broader curriculum was also seen as essential in terms of delivering the soft skills prisoners will need to gain employment. Anne Owers, Chief Inspector of Prisons said: 'What we need is to make people employable so that they can hold down employment, and that is about the whole area of self-esteem. It is not about being able to hang on to a job for a day or a week. It is about being able to engage fully and properly in the job market which people have never properly done before.'

235. Professor Andrew Coyle believed that a broader curriculum would enable prisons to engage with prisoners as individuals and therefore impact on the likelihood that they re-commit crime:

'I think for a period the pendulum swung too far to the purist approach. I think it is coming back now and that we do see more use of creative activities in prisons. If we helped to develop the prisoner as a person then I think we will reduce the likelihood of that person continuing to commit crime.'

236. Finally, for the 10,500 long-term prisoners in the system, basic skills and Key Performance Targets are wholly insufficient to meet their needs of purposeful activity over extended periods of imprisonment. Professor David Wilson told us: 'What we have also got to remember is that there are 6,000 prisoners currently serving ten years or longer in the prison population and there are some 4,500 lifers. So there is a core 10,500 people who quite clearly have gone through basic skills and should be doing something more with their time.'

237. An over-emphasis on basic skills driven by Key Performance Targets has narrowed the curriculum too far. Whilst aiming to meet the basic skills needs of prisoners the Government must endeavour to broaden out the prison education curriculum and increase flexibility of provision to meet the much wider range of educational needs that exists within the prison system”.

Prison education scheme 'failed'

"Schemes to improve prisoners' basic skills and qualifications in English jails have "failed in almost every respect", an MPs' committee has said.

They were of "little practical use" to those serving less than a year and those moving between prisons could find themselves unable to continue.

Only 20% of those who needed help the most had joined a course, MPs said.



Ministers hope to reduce re-offending rates by improving inmates' education

But ministers said there had been "significant progress" and the service was "far from failing".

In its report the Commons public accounts committee said helping prisoners improve basic and vocational skills was a major plank of the government's policy to cut reoffending.

Alcohol problems

Many prisoners had "severe" learning problems, nearly 40% had a reading age below that expected of an 11-year-old and half of people in custody had no qualifications, they said.

Since 2006, the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) has handled inmates' education provision in England.

But the committee said only about a fifth of those with "serious literacy or numeracy needs" enrol on a course that would help them and more could be done to motivate them.

It notes there are challenges as many prisoners have mental health, alcohol or drugs problems and the "operational requirements" of prisons had to take priority over learning.

But it says there appeared to be "confusion" over how funding should be prioritised, "tensions" over objectives and a risk that "performance incentives" for those providing the service did not encourage them to reach out to the hardest-to-reach prisoners.

“ The people who are responsible are those who actually run our prisons, they seem to want to have above all a quiet life, they want to have tame prisoners who are locked up ”

Edward Leigh
Committee chairman

"Payments are made to providers irrespective of offender take-up, attendance or achievement," the report said.

"The programmes currently on offer are likely to be of limited practical use to prisoners serving less than 12 months, and reconviction rates for these prisoners are not improving."

'Far from failing'

It also raised concerns about a lack of assessment of some prisoners, "frequently deficient" learning plans and the lack of a core curriculum, which meant if inmates moved prisons they could find it hard to continue their courses.

The committee's Conservative chairman, Edward Leigh, told the BBC: "The people who are responsible are those who actually run our prisons, they seem to want to have above all a quiet life, they want to have tame prisoners who are locked up.

He added: "I think you want to have a vigorous really committed service which believes in the power of resurrection of these people and says 'I'm going to give these people a life skill'."

“ OLASS has made significant progress since its creation with a solid growth in the number of offenders learning new skills ”

Ministers' statement

In a statement with the report, he added: "OLASS was set up to overcome long-standing problems in the delivery of skills and learning for offenders. In practice, it has failed in almost every respect."

Press Release - Meeting needs? The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

7 March 2008

Full report - Meeting needs? The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service

"Many of the long standing problems in providing offenders with effective and useful learning and skills training have yet to be overcome following the establishment of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS). Offenders who find employment upon their release are less likely to reoffend, which is why improving their training and skills could contribute to a reduction in crime levels.

The level of training provision at each prison is based on historical funding allocations which do not necessarily match current learning and skills needs. Contracts for providing courses do not reward outcomes and achievements; and there is insufficient data on the impact different sorts of training has on employment and re-offending rates, information which could be used to focus limited resources more effectively.

Offenders have severe learning and skills needs: half of offenders in custody have no qualifications and almost 40 per cent have a reading age beneath that expected of a competent 11 year old. Addressing this is challenging as offenders are likely to have negative experiences of education in the past – almost half of offenders were excluded from school.

These issues impact on getting people to volunteer for courses from which they would benefit and, in addition, not all offenders are able to access the learning and skills they need. There are also

problems in getting offenders to complete a course once started. One of the main reasons for this is the disruption caused when they transfer between prisons. Training records are often not transferred with them and differences in the courses being run reduce the potential for continuity in learning.

The NAO estimates uncompleted courses could be costing the taxpayer £30 million a year. Offenders who do not complete a course they begin may get some benefit but will not achieve a qualification that could demonstrate to a potential employer the skills acquired.

The primary role of OLASS is to equip offenders with the skills they need for employment after their release. OLASS provision also aims to reduce re-offending by improving individuals' basic and life skills, increasing their ability to function in society. The Prison Service also relies on educational pursuits to give prisoners purposeful activity as part of a secure and orderly prison regime. These multiple objectives create tensions in targeting where OLASS resources are spent.

Tim Burr, head of the National Audit Office, said today:

"The Offenders' Learning and Skills Service has made less progress than it might have done in helping offenders to get back into work after they are released, one of the most important factors in reducing reoffending. Some of the fundamentals, which departments have known about for years, are still not in place – matters like identifying which courses most help offenders to get a job, identifying which offenders need which skills, and helping more of them to finish a course they start. The Departments' action plan, to be issued shortly, must make it crystal clear how these problems will be addressed effectively."

The education situation for offenders is not looking very bright as we now have Manchester University who are a major player in supplying education services in prisons around the Country that they are unlikely to be able to fore fill their contractual obligations - details below:-

PRISON EDUCATION

Posted on | March 16, 2010 |

"Jonathan Wells of Guroo Functional Skills is quoted in a Guardian article by Andrew Mourant about prison education.

What price a decent education for those in jail, one that could help offenders to go straight? The government says prison education is a priority. But prison reformers are worried about the future as it has emerged that the country's biggest provider of prison education plans to cut 300 jobs around the country.

Contracts to deliver education in more than 90 – around 60% – of the country's penal institutions are run by The Manchester College. Last year, the college extended its prison teaching empire after successful bids for new contracts. But some months after the deals were done it discovered, according to a letter to staff from Peter Tavernor, the principal, that the contracts were "financially challenging ... due to unforeseen hidden costs that could not have been reasonably anticipated".

In December, TMC imposed a pay freeze on prison education staff. The college now says it needs to save £5m across the service. In a letter to staff, Tavernor said that redundancies would be necessary. This would be a "managed process", focusing primarily on management and higher-paid staff; and also those approaching retirement or of post-retirement age.

Consultation over the proposed redundancies has begun. The University and College Union, which represents lecturers, says prolonged uncertainty means that many classroom lecturers have lost heart and says it fears problems could be caused by the loss of more senior managers who support less experienced colleagues in the service. "They play a crucial role in mentoring and helping them handle difficult learners," one official says.

Someone who has already seen the impact on morale is Jonathan Wells, who runs software development company Guroo and trains lecturers in prisons and young offender institutions in the north-east, where prison education is now run by TMC. "I have been in a dozen [institutions] and what I'm hearing from people is 'we have absolutely no idea if we will have a job in two months' time, so we don't know why we should bother planning for curriculum change'. They say they can't plan anything beyond the next month." Wells says lecturers fear bigger classes. "In a room of eight, you have eight different problems and you need eyes in the back of your head. You could end up with having 10 to keep an eye on, so things will be at least 20% worse, and exponentially it could be even more serious."

In December 2008, the standard of prison education delivered by Olass, the offender learning and skills service, was condemned by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee. However, last December, prisons minister Maria Eagle told the Guardian: "If you look at offender learning ... there is a good story to tell." That was a month before TMC announced its redundancies. Eagle's office has declined to discuss the possible consequences. "The Learning and Skills Council [LSC] are responsible for Manchester College and are therefore better able to assist," a spokeswoman said.

The LSC said in a statement: "The college is contractually obliged, in accordance within the agreed service requirements, to ensure it meets the needs of both young people and adults in custody." A spokesperson said the LSC was not able to comment on the college's staffing arrangements. "It's responsible for decisions necessary to ensure delivery of the service. The LSC will, through its contract management, monitor this."

Juliet Lyon, director of the Prison Reform Trust, feels any cutbacks are short-sighted amid reoffending rates of around two-thirds. "The prisoners' perception of education, learning and skills is as a kind of oasis," she says.

Pat Jones, director of the Prison Education Trust, says the prospect of redundancies raises questions about the contracting process. "Why did things go wrong so quickly?" she asks.

The Conservatives' shadow prisons minister, Alan Duncan, says: "If I were prisons minister I would want to see how the contracts are worked out, how they were drawn up, what Manchester's obligations are and whether the prisons service has been left in the lurch. This looks as if it will need a serious post mortem."

The LSC said that in December TMC decided to withdraw from offender learning contracts in the south-east and north-east. "LSC entered into these in good faith, with every confidence that the college would be able to deliver, given their extensive experience in delivery of offender learning and the opportunity they had to conduct due diligence," a spokeswoman said. However, TMC later withdrew the threat after the LSC made £2m available to cushion the cost of redundancies.

TMC declined to elaborate on what "unforeseen hidden costs" caused problems with the contracts won last year.

However, the college, which formed in 2008 when Manchester College of Arts and Technology (Mancat) and City College merged, was "in a strong position" to tender, as the latter college had been "a high-quality provider of offender learning," a spokeswoman said "Its experience and successful track record presented an unprecedented opportunity to influence quality and policy around the education of offender learners. The college achieved the first ever Ofsted grade 1 for its provision at Askham Grange [prison and young offenders institution]."

She said college finances were "currently robust, although with major funding cuts it needs to protect its financial health and avoid destabilisation in the future". Additional savings and efficiencies were needed that could result in up to 250 staffing reductions within offender learning, less than 7% of the workforce.

"Much work is being undertaken to ensure the long-term viability of an effective learner-focused service, and there will be no compromise on quality," she said. The college was recently awarded Investors in People accreditation, which covered offender learning. Moreover, there had been "an excellent response" to registering interest in voluntary severance, which would help to cut compulsory redundancies, she added."

I have research the educational induction system in an active and offender populated prison to determine if the proposed hypothesis is proven or not.

"Study Outline

To identify three groups of prisoners and gauge their responses to prison induction and to the educational courses offered in prison:

Group One:

Ten prisoners who have welcomed the chance to take up motivational training will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course, and why?

Why have you decided to do a course?

Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

What do you hope to gain from this training?

What other training did you consider if any?

Group Two:

Ten prisoners who are on the course but seem half hearted about it will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course and why?

Why have you decided to do a course?

Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

What do you hope to gain from this training?

What other training did you consider, if any?

Group Three:

Ten prisoners who were offered places on the course which they have turned down will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course and why?

Why have you decided not to do a course?

What might make you consider taking a place on a vocational course?

There are many factors that have been explored and documented to explain why people turn to crime. Many of these early criminology theories had at their core, the premise that crime is more prevalent in sectors of society that are deprived and where young people have little education.

In prisons in the UK today education and the attempt to offer skills to a previously unskilled and uneducated prison population has proved successful in part. This work will attempt to discover what factors might put a prisoner off taking up vocational training offered and what measures could be taken to encourage more prisoners to enrol in further education or vocational training.

The initial induction of prisoners to a new prison is a time when those who are habitual offenders customarily show resistance to what they see as going over the same ground that they have been over maybe dozens of times before.

Following on from this induction period is the placement of prisoners on vocational and academic courses designed to give them useful skills with which to make a future for themselves when they are released. This paper will seek to discover to what extent frustration at the initial induction period puts repeat prisoners in the 'wrong frame of mind' to look at the educational opportunities being offered to them.

It will also seek to understand the motivation of those who readily take up vocational and academic training and those who appear to have come to training reluctantly as well as those who refuse to undertake any training at all. This work will seek to answer the question; How do we reach prisoners who are reluctant or completely against the idea of vocational and academic training?"

"I will judge the results against the results found in the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee report (**Prison Education Seventh Report of Session 2004–05**) this report gave direct comparison of the Education attainment of the prison population against the general population."

I must stress the following answers are given in the words and language of the offenders and no changes have been made to the layout of the answers or the spellings, the number of relies may vary in each group this is because some offenders did not answer every question posed. I also asked the offenders to score the standard of induction offered on a scale of 1-10 so we could easily work out the overall rating.

Meaning of words used.

Adjudication = Prison punishment system
Wing = The accommodation block
On the out = After release from prison
Orderly = Offender with extra privileges

Group One

Offenders who have welcomed the chance to take up motivational training will be asked:

Q1) What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course, and why?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. I found the induction too long but this has now changed. It was not clear which courses were available. Rating 0 -10 = 3

2. It was clear-ish what courses were on offer in the main. But the special courses like Fork Lift Driving were not mentioned. The induction did not take account of peoples level of education and at some times we were told to play scrabble or we would get an "adjudication", this made most people less inclined to do education. Rating 0 -10 = 4
3. Very clear what was on offer i.e. training skills. We were told the significance of the education exams and was not impressed being forced on education. And wasn't impressed when told how long the training skill courses were. Too short of time. Rating 0 -10 = 3
4. Yes everything was made clear and easy to understand and the courses I have chosen will assist me in future employment. Rating 0 -10 = 7
5. The induction programme was far too long (2 days). The areas covered could have been restricted to fit into a day easily. We were told that courses were on offer but I feel that the person holding our group could not answer all of our questions and when Head of Education was called over she too was not very helpful. Rating 0 -10 = 2
6. Yes, it was made clear what was on offer and what would be on offer when this person fully appears so more inclined to enrol. Rating 0 -10 = 6
7. I have had told to me in a clear way which could understand. I could not find any wrong with any of my induction. Rating 0 -10 = 8
8. Education is solely focused on basic skills (L1 & L2) Further advancement is deemed unnecessary and education opportunities very limited. I feel that there is no useful education/courses to assist career opportunities/openings upon release from prison. Rating 0 -10 = 3
9. I felt that the education explained quite well what was on offer. Rating 0 -10 = 6
10. As one of the first people to enter the establishment I found the entire education induction a little erratic and it appeared poorly organised. Although disconcerting, I felt that one up and running courses would not suffer problems so enrolled anyway. Rating 0 -10 = 5

Q2) Why have you decided to do a course?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. To improve my life and to have an important skill which will be beneficial after my release.
2. To improve my knowledge.
3. I was told I had to do something, so was forced to do this.
4. I am not on a training skill course but forced on education.
5. I decided to take up a offer of a course, it is on my sentence plan and I was one of the 1st to arrive at this prison. I was put in the kitchen instead and now the gardens. They said that prolific offenders, dangerous offenders are priority for courses here. That is not happening here. I have now decided not to take up a training skill because of what is happening at this prison.

6. To increase my knowledge and enter areas of self employment.
7. Yes well to improve my learning ability.
8. To use my time constructively. However, courses of higher levels would be useful.
9. To gain a qualification to become more employable when I leave prison.
10. As I have only a few months to do, anything I undertake now is fresh in my mind and as there is not much work in this prison it gets me out of my wing.
11. The course I am doing will help me better myself and give me a better chance of getting work when I get out. Plumbing, electrical and kitchen course I am doing.
12. I feel that it will be beneficial for me to do it as it will give me a general idea of Electrical and Plumbing. Plus on the positive side I can continue it at University.
13. To pass the time and give me some skills I did not have before.
14. I have not really decided to do a course more been forced to do one. I am more than happy with the course i am doing, I just had little choice.
15. Because I've always been interested in Electrics and when I was on the out, I didn't really have the chance or time to get involved in any course, also it will help me when I'm released and i can continue when I am out.
16. Multi Skills course I hoped at the start would benefit me career wise upon release, but I am disappointed that the level I am being offered of achieving is not high enough.
17. To help me to develop more skills so I can help more in the community when I get released.
18. Because I want to get an education.
19. To improve my employability on release from prison and to increase my knowledge of Plumbing/Electrics so that I can do more in my own home.
20. I like doing things like plumbing and electrical. I just did not know how to do it so that's why I came on this course and it will also help me when I get out as well.
21. To have more choices when I get out and not be stuck on one line of work.

Q3) Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. Never had the chance to learn these skills.
2. Because it would cost me a lot of money.
3. Lack of time, lack of money, not fitting career goals.

4. Because there has never been a goal where I have had the opportunity to undertake training like this.
5. I did a City & Guilds in 1983, but have also been in and out of prison since 1986.
6. I could not afford to re-train, or had time to do any courses around full time employment.
7. Never really thought about it.
8. Why do you assume I have not?
9. Too busy earning a living for me and my family.
10. I would have never considered it but now I would. I didn't consider it because I was looking at doing a Multi Media Degree.
11. Because has not been there for me to do.
12. This is the first prison I have been to, with all these courses as "Another Prison" don't.
13. Because it is not been on offer.
14. I am a Company Director of a number of companies and have all the training i require to complete my job. I am doing Multi-skills to fill my time.
15. Because I was a HGV Driver.
16. Was not a consideration as already in full-time employment.
17. Don,t know where to go and I presume it is expensive outside.
18. I have been in prison 14 years and don loads of education – "I do not need this".
19. I have done IT courses before.
20. The idea of taking this course only came to light to me since I have been incarcerated.

Q4) What do you hope to gain from this training.

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. Qualifications – to better myself on the outside.
2. More IT knowledge.
3. Wages.
4. I did hope to gain some training to help me in my employment opportunity when released. As I have never been impressed being forced on education as all education are showing prisoners here is that forcing people to do things works which is not a good situation.
5. A qualification and experience to run a profitable self employed business.

6. More knowledge of ware housing and get my fork lift driving licence.
7. Possibly a qualification if the course goes to a high enough level.
8. A good knowledge of electrics.
9. Sharpen my mind up ready for when i do go home and help me with my future life.
10. Skills in all courses – pass in all levels of the courses – pride in myself.
11. The essentials of Plumbing & Electrical.
12. To continue to level 3 and beyond in Electrics.
13. To further my skills and maybe gain employment using my new skills.
14. Enough information that I can go and continue and find a job as an Electricians mate.
15. Had hoped to gain enough qualifications to work self-employed. Would now completely attempt minor plumbing/electrical tasks around my own home.
16. To help gain employment upon my release and to add to what, I do know and maybe do some maintenance work on release.
17. Self Employment.
18. Knowledge of areas I have no experience of.
19. To be an Electrician.
20. Level 3 in Electrics.

Q5) What other training did you consider, if any?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. Painting and Decorating
2. Multi Skills
3. Most of the training and educational courses
4. Bricklaying and plastering also any further education
5. Barbering and forklift driving
6. Mechanics course but they don't run this here
7. None
8. Fork lift driving and logistics

9. I am happy with what I am doing now which is Electrical and plumbing as well as Maths
10. The only other learning I would like to have done would have been IT but I have already done that
11. None
12. None
13. Painting and Decorating
14. None
15. Wanted bricklaying and Tiling or plastering, I have applied to do barbering and forklift driving as well as decorating
16. IT
17. IT
18. Forklift driving, Catering and Gardening Course
19. Anything that will help me on the out
20. Forklift Course
21. Forklift driving to obtain an HGV Licence

Group Two

Offenders who are on the course but seem half hearted about it will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course and why?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. I found the induction too long and a waste of my time **Rating 0 -10 = 2**

2. The induction did not take account of peoples level of education and at some times we were told to play scrabble or we would get an "adjudication", this made most people less inclined to do education. Rating 0 -10 = 3
3. I wasn't impressed when told how long the training skill courses were. Too short of time. Rating 0 -10 = 3
4. Yes everything was made clear and easy to understand and the courses I have chosen will assist me in future employment. Rating 0 -10 = 6
5. The areas covered could have been restricted to fit into a day easily. We were told that courses were on offer but I feel that the person holding our group could not answer all of our questions. Rating 0 -10 = 2
6. Yes. Rating 0 -10 = 5
7. I could not find any wrong with any of my induction. Rating 0 -10 = 7
8. I feel that there is no useful education/courses to assist career opportunities/openings upon release from prison. Rating 0 -10 = 4
9. I felt that the education explained quite well what was on offer. Rating 0 -10 = 7
10. A little erratic and it appeared poorly organised. Rating 0 -10 = 2

Q6) Why have you decided to do a course?

1. I don't want to do a course
2. The skills on offer are not suiting me
3. To get a qualification
4. Increase confidence / self esteem by achieving
5. I just want to pass the time
6. To gain more skills and to learn something new
7. I am just attending courses too fill my time.
8. Ill be able to use my knowledge at home around the house also Ill be able 2 start at a more advanced stage when Im out/released
9. Helps with future employment I hope anyway
10. I want my future employment options will improve
11. None
12. It makes me see a future
13. Extra skills that I may use personally at home

14. Improve credibility and self esteem
15. Have not got much interest in what I am doing as it is not of my own free will
16. No level 3 so its no help to me
17. For personal use on release at home

Why have you not taken up this type of training before you were in prison?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. I have done these courses before in other prisons
2. It is expensive outside
3. Was not a consideration as already in full time employment
4. I was doing other things
5. I am a company director
6. I have never been offered this on the out
7. This is the first prison I have been to, with all these courses as others don't
8. Because they have not been there for me to
9. I didn't consider it because I was looking at working for a living
10. To busy earning a living for my family
11. I have never really thought about it
12. Could not afford to re-train
13. I have been in and out of prison since 1986.
14. Did not fit in with other goals
15. Because it would cost me a lot of money
16. Never had the chance to learn these skills

What do you hope to gain from this training?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. More knowledge.
2. Bigger Wages.
3. A qualification
4. More knowledge I suppose

5. Possibly a qualification if the course goes to a high enough level.
6. A good knowledge of electrics.
7. Pride in myself but that is hard in here
8. Plumbing and Electrical certs
9. level 3 in Electrics.
10. Get useful new skills.
11. Electricians mate.
12. Had hoped to gain enough qualifications to work self-employed. Would now completely attempt minor plumbing/electrical tasks around my own home.
13. I do know and maybe do some maintenance work on release.
14. Self Employment.
15. To be an Electrician.

What other training did you consider, if any?

1. Forklift driving
2. Forklift driving
3. Anything that will help me when I get out
4. Forklift driving, gardening and catering
5. IT
6. IT
7. tiling and plastering
8. None
9. Painting and decorating and anything else going
10. IT
11. I have not got much time left to start anymore.
12. Forklift driving
13. Barbering
14. literacy classes
15. Any education courses

16. Multi Skills

17. Painting and decorating

Group Three:

Offenders who were offered places on the courses in the prison, which they have turned down will be asked:

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course and why?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. Far too long Rating 0 -10 = 1
2. I was made to play games and to waste time Rating 0 -10 = 0
3. We are forced to take education so its crap Rating 0 -10 = 0
4. Rubbish Rating 0 -10 = 0
5. None Rating 0 -10 = 3
6. None Rating 0 -10 = 1
7. It was not clear which courses were available. Rating 0 -10 = 3
8. The induction did not take account of peoples level of education and at some times we were told to play scrabble or we would get an "adjudication", this made most people less inclined to do education. Rating 0 -10 = 3
9. Yes, but then I was told that I would be put on education whether I liked it or not. Rating 0 -10 = 2
10. The induction was pretty comprehensive Rating 0 -10 = 3
11. The induction at this prison was over 5 x 3 hour groups. It was far too long and dragged out. Ran fast over things that I needed to know – not to much detail about courses. Too many people in groups. It needed to be more to the point. Did not help me pick my courses. Rating 0 -10 = 3
12. I found the course to be very long (4 ½ Days) When I took my English and Lit test it told me that I was entry level. But took it again and more questions appeared that weren't there to start with and I got to L2. Rating 0 -10 = 2
13. We are made to do as we are told anyway Rating 0 -10 = 0
14. No information was received only from via other offenders. Rating 0 -10 = 1

15. I found the induction process in this prison very long and drawn out and the educational side seemed to ask a lot of psychological questions that did not need asking. Rating 0 -10 = 3
16. I was not told about any of the course here and my impression of the education system is that they need to think about it and sort it out. Rating 0 -10 = 0
17. I was not happy with my induction into this prison, but was happy that I was going to learn a new trade in multi-skills. Rating 0 -10 = 2
18. The induction was very long and boring I got put on a course that I didn't even wanna go on, which I know that they like to do to people. Rating 0 -10 = 1

Why have you decided not to do a course?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. I am not on a training skill course but I am forced on education
2. Have not got much interest in what I am doing because its not at my own free will
3. I would like to make my own choices
4. They don't do what I need
5. Because they force you to do education
6. More info would be helpful

What might make you consider taking a place on a vocational course?

(The following responses are from offenders in their own words)

1. If I could make my own mind up
2. Nothing would
3. Better help from education
4. They keep messing me about so why should I do the xxxxx courses
5. Get better help in
6. Stop doing crap inductions that don't help
7. Dont make me do lessons when I don't want to do them
8. Stop forcing me

There were 38 responses in the way of a score, so the maximum score would be 380.

The actual score from the offenders was 115.

This gives an overall contentment percentage of 30.3%.

I have also taken on board all the other negative feedback shown in the other questions asked about both the induction and the educational system offered by HMP Service, and it can only be viewed as very poor indeed, this result allows me now to move forward with the remainder of this research to ascertain what can be done to improve this situation.

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Assignment Part 1

David Pallas

March - 21 - 2010

Action Research Project

Internet

(Prison Education Seventh Report of Session 2004–05)

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Chapter 5

1) Summarising the content.

This dissertation has investigated the induction programme used for entry into the education system in HMP service, researching if indeed it is inadequate and is not fit for purpose, there has been many changes made to the prison education department over the years and they have all been undertaken with the best of intentions.

HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) is responsible for inspecting all other parts of the prison regime that impact on prison education. In what it calls its 'expectations' for inspection, HMIP includes, as regards education, the following:

- a) Learning plans are integrated into individual sentence and custody plans
- b) Prisoners do not lose the opportunity for other activities because of an inflexible education programme
- c) Prisoner pay structure does not financially disadvantage those who participate in education
- d) Prisoners are transferred to another prison that can meet their individual education needs if necessary.
- e) Prisoners on education / training programmes are helped to continue their courses on release, and are not transferred while undertaking a course if this can be arranged.

I paid attention to the above information when researching the main problem areas and found that there are indeed many areas, that could be improved, the information given in this research project will reinforce this hypothesis.

There are many agencies trying very hard to get the education system working properly within the prison community and one of them is the Council of Europe who made the following statement:-

"The [Council of Europe](#) and 42 member states accepted the Recommendation R(89)12 that have set the standard for European prison education.

1. All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities;
2. Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age groups in the outside world, and the range of learning opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible;
3. Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context;

4. All those involved in the administration of the prison system and the management of prisons should facilitate and support education as much as possible;
5. Education should have no less a status than work within the prison regime and prisoners should not lose out financially or otherwise by taking part in education;
6. Every effort should be made to encourage the prisoner to participate actively in all aspects of education;
7. Development programmes should be provided to ensure that prison educators adopt appropriate adult education methods;
8. Special attention should be given to those prisoners with particular difficulties and especially those with reading or writing problems;
9. Vocational education should aim at the wider development of the individual, as well as being sensitive to trends in the labour market;
10. Prisoners should have direct access to a well-stocked library at least once per week;
11. Physical education and sports for prisoners should be emphasised and encouraged;
12. Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role because these activities have particular potential to enable prisoners to develop and express themselves;
13. Social education should include practical elements that enable the prisoner to manage daily life within the prison, with a view to facilitating the return to society;
14. Wherever possible, prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside prison;
15. Where education has to take place within the prison, the outside community should be involved as fully as possible;
16. Measures should be taken to enable prisoners to continue their education after release;
17. The funds, equipment and teaching staff needed to enable prisoners to receive appropriate education should be made available."

2) Restatement of aims (research).

Returning to the hypothesis/question posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the induction programme used by HMP Service is falling in its main aim, that is to get the offenders that are using this programme onto training courses in either vocational or academic studies.

From the very earliest thoughts about criminology to the most up-to-date studies conducted around education, it is apparent that education has a significant role to play in the outcome for individuals in society, although in some studies this is seen as to be of little relevance. The premise of educating prisoners to rehabilitate them and give them an alternative to crime is actively pursued in prisons in the UK.

But the question remains, how do we persuade those who are resistant to education to give it a chance? Is the induction process affecting the general demeanor of repeat offenders to the extent that they are just too annoyed by what they see as a waste of time, to give training a chance? Are they in fact cutting off their noses to spite their faces, or is there another reason behind the reluctance of any prisoner to take up the offer of vocational or academic training?

The hypothesis that there may be a simple solution to overcoming the reluctance of some prisoners to taking up vocational training will be tested as well as any other factors that may be influencing prisoners away from the vocational training being offered.

3) Summarising the findings of the (research Project).

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that most of the offenders took exception to the fact, that as they perceived it they were being forced onto educational courses, if they wanted to do them or not, and the amount of problems and inadequacies caused by the induction system was only making this perception even worse.

The findings of this research can be found to be proven in two ways, the first is that the overall answers to all of the questions posed was very negative, especially when the offenders were asked about the Education they were being offered, they said over and over again, that they were being forced into Education if they wanted it or not, this must be wrong and against their Human Rights.

And secondly the actual statistics of the research project again proved beyond reasonable doubt, that the hypothesis has been proven correct:-

There were 38 responses in the way of a recordable score to the following question:-

What were your impressions of your induction, was it clear what vocational courses were on offer, and did it make you more or less inclined to enrol on a course, and why?

So the maximum score would have been 380 if the offenders were happy with the system.

The actual score from the offenders was 115.

This gives an overall contentment value on the induction process of 30.3%.

I have also taken on board all the other negative feedback shown in the other questions asked about both the induction and the educational system offered by HMP Service, and it can only be viewed as overall very poor indeed.

4) Suggesting implications.

Taken as a whole, these results suggest that there are many things that can be done to improve this situation, and none of them would involve any great cost, for instance we could make sure that all the teachers are trained in handling these courses, and that there are no silly or irrelevant questions asked of the offenders.

Also the time given to these sessions is controlled in such a way that the offenders do not become agitated or stressed by either the questions or by the time taken to deliver the programme.

5) Significance of the findings (research contribution).

This research will serve as a base for future studies and should be looked upon as a starting point, after all there are many problems within the educational system in prisons and this will never disappear completely, as there will always be a degree of the us and them mentality.

What we do need to do is limit these problems as much as we can, hopefully this research does show one way of improving at least the induction system, which would be a good place to start, after all its the first thing a new offender comes into contact with when undertaking education or in fact even if he does not want education he or she will always have some form of induction process.

6) Limitations of the current study (research).

A number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study.

The number of offenders asked to take part in this research was only 30, I do believe a much larger research project needs to be carried out.

This research was done at only one prison, the same research could be done at other prisons, so results could be compared enabling a general picture of the problem to be developed.

And we must remember that the answers were given by serving offenders, who may be bias against HMP Service for their own reasons.

7) Recommendations for further work (research).

If the debate is to be moved forward a better understanding of offenders needs, has to be developed. We cannot just keep using the same system as this research clearly shows it is not working and only cause's resentment and confusion which could lead to an even worse situation.

The number of offenders asked to take part in this research was only 30, I do believe a much larger research project needs to be carried out, if this was done Nation Wide I feel the results would be the same, but then being a Nation Wide research project it would bring HMP Service into the situation, where they would have to make changes.

8) Implications/recommendations for practice or policy.

The implications of this research on the induction programme will be seen mainly in the way the offenders react to be treated in a much fairer and sympathetic manner, this will increase the number of offenders who take up either vocational or academic courses.

We must make sure that we are not changing systems just for the sake of change it must be proven to work, so with this problem in mind I have developed the suggested ideas into a questionnaire and have asked Lecturers/Teacher who have been involved in this process if these ideas will work, the results of this questionnaire are shown below.

9) Analyzing other Results

"Information collected by the Forum on Prisoner Education suggests that, on average, 31.5% of prisoners have access to education. Across the adult population an average of 28% of prisoners have access to education?"

Prison Type	Total Educ. Places	Total Population	% Access to Educ.	% on Waiting List
Adult Male - Cat A	1507	3622	41.6%	4.3%
Adult Male - Cat B	1370	4722	29.0%	5.1%
Adult Male - Cat C	3451	19370	17.8%	4.6%
Adult Male - Cat D	1548	4807	32.2%	6.8%
Adult Male - Local	7496	25009	30.0%	4.7%
Female - Open	310	552	56.2%	0.0%
Female - Closed	1785	3523	50.7%	4.1%
YOI Male	2839	5942	47.8%	2.7%
Juvenile YOI Male	1480	1624	91.1%	0.7%
Total	21786	69171	Average 31.5%	Average 4.5%

Source: Form on Prisoner Education (FPE). Statistics collected in preparation of the Directory of Offender Education in August and September 2004. Statistics were collated for the Committee by the FPE.

Note: Prison population statistics are based on the most recent edition of Prison Statistics, published by TSO. Some prisons did not supply this information, and these prisons have been excluded from the above statistics. The omitted prisons are Dovegate, Feltham, Lindholme and Swinfen Hall”.

10) Suggested Improvements and Research on reaction to those improvements.

There are a number of important improvements to the induction programme, which need carrying out as soon as possible, a selection of which are shown below :-

1. Teacher Training in induction practises needs improving
2. Better understanding of offenders educational requirements
3. Reduction of pressure on offenders to take up training
4. Understanding and knowledge of offenders past activities and employment
5. Offenders records from other prisons to be used in the induction process
6. A better understanding of what is needed to obtain work, when the offenders are released
7. More contact for the offenders with employers from the workplace ie:- Lectures or Seminars and even recruitment workshops
8. At the induction period the offenders need more concise information on the courses, on offer in each prison
9. More help for the offenders when they are released to find suitable work and training

After researching all the areas needed to form an opinion on this complicated subject, I am now convinced that there needs to be a root and branch change in the induction process used in HMP Service, and that there are also many other areas of the educational service that are showing signs of failure.

This research project has been focused mainly on the Educational Induction process which is undertaken by newly arrived offenders into any new jail, the results I believe prove the un-satisfaction of the offenders in this process. I have shown in this research

that there are several ways in which the system can be improved; I hope now to prove that the changes I have put forward would indeed improve this system.

To do this I have arranged for (6) Lecturers/Teachers who carry out these inductions to answer a questionnaire as shown below, the questions are based on the research done with the offenders and my own evaluation of that research.

As I suggested in section (8) of this report I am aware that we must prove these changes will not only work, but will be such a major step forward, that they could become the bases of the induction process in all prisons, not just the one I am using for this research project.

So I have taken the suggested changes above and developed them into a questionnaire, which I have sent out to the (6) Lecturers/Teachers who have worked with the old induction programme, and asked them what their thoughts were on the new ideas.

"I circulated the following questions to the selected Lecturers/Teachers ie;-

Dear -----

Thank you for taking part in my research project, I am in the process of developing my hypothesis based on the assumption that improvements need to be made, to the educational induction programme which is being used in HMP service at this time.

I am of the opinion that I have within the research so far carried out, proven that there is indeed a need for such changes. To clarify this research I now have to take on board other opinions to help prove or disprove my hypothesis.

To help keep clarity and to get concise results, I have only asked for (Yes and No) answers and not opinions. (The opinions can come in later research)

Questions

1. Do you believe that Teacher Training on induction practises needs improving?
2. Would a better understanding of offenders educational requirements help with deciding, what courses they could take?
3. Should there be a reduction in the pressure on offenders to take up training?
4. Would a better understanding and knowledge of offenders past activities and employment, be helpful within the induction process?
5. Should offender's records from other prisons to be used in the induction process?
6. Should there be a better understanding of what is needed to obtain work, when the offenders are released?
7. Would more contact with the offenders from employers from the workplace ie:- Lectures or Seminars and even recruitment workshops be of benefit?
8. At the induction period, do the offenders need more concise information on the courses, on offer in each prison?
9. Should there be more help, for the offenders when they are released, to find suitable work and more training?

I hope you will take time to compare the above ideas with the system you are being asked to deliver now and base your replies on what you feel is the better system.

I thank you for your input and would like to confirm that no names or personal information, will be used in the making of this research project".

The results shown below were received from the (6) Lecturers/Teachers who are working at this time within the prison service education department, using the excising induction process.

	Negative Answer	Positive Answer	Percentage in Favour
Question 1	3	3	50%
Question 2	0	6	100%
Question 3	3	3	50%
Question 4	0	6	100%
Question 5	0	6	100%
Question 6	3	3	50%
Question 7	0	6	100%
Question 8	0	6	100%
Question 9	0	6	100%

Questionnaire results.

Questions 9 x 6 = 54

Negative answers = 9 = 16.66 %

Positive answer = 45 = 83.33 %

The answers that were received indicate that the (6) Lecturers/Teachers were in favour of the changes by a large margin, I believe this now confirms my hypothesis that the educational induction system would benefit from the changes suggested in this research project.

11) Conclusion

Within this research project I believe I have proven that the satisfaction level shown by offenders and Lecturers/Teachers in the induction programme used by HMP Service, is indeed very low and is not fit for purpose, and this is proved beyond reasonable doubt by the results shown within this research project.

I therefore commend the results of this research to the reader.

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