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Educational Programs in Correctional Facilities: Are They Worth the Cost?

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES: ARE THEY WORTH
THE COST?

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors with Distinction

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EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES: ARE THEY WORTH THE COST?

There is a public concern that convicted criminals spending time in correctional facilities do not receive an adequate amount of educational training to enable them to find legitimate work rather than returning to a life of crime upon their parole. The idea is that as criminal offenders receive more education they will have more doors open to them, so they will not have to resort to criminal activities to support themselves and their families; however, there is concern that there are not enough educational opportunities available to inmates in correctional facilities. The public's apprehension is based on the idea that paroled offenders will choose legitimate work over criminal activities when both are equally available to the paroled individuals and both provide relatively comparable compensation to them. In other words, the public is concerned that parolees do not have as equal access to legitimate work opportunities as they do to criminal opportunities.

The examination of correctional facility education programs is important because it will identify whether or not the correctional system is going beyond just confining inmates and is actually attempting to help prevent inmates from returning to its facilities. This study will focus on Iowa's correctional facilities due to the fact that residents of Waterloo, Iowa voiced their concern about correctional facility education, which was then passed on to the principal investigator. If the correctional system is not providing educational programs to inmates, then this will verify local concerns. It will also show that the correctional system is not providing inmates with a vitally important opportunity to rehabilitate themselves, which inmates could use to obtain jobs and avoid criminal activities.

This study will attempt to answer four research questions regarding educational programs in Iowa's correctional facilities. The research questions this study is concerned with answering are as follows: What, if any, educational programs are available to inmates in Iowa correctional facilities? How are the educational programs run? Are all inmates given equal access to the educational programs offered in Iowa correctional facilities? How do Iowa's correctional facilities compare to other states' offerings of correctional facility education programs? The primary research of Iowa correctional facilities will be utilized for comparison to national data on correctional facilities' educational programs. Also, the research will be utilized to show how Iowa correctional facilities compare to each other. This research will provide policymakers with information about how effective the educational programs are that are currently operating in Iowa's correctional facilities. This information can then be utilized by policymakers to develop more informed funding decisions about Iowa's correctional facilities' education programs.

There is an assessment of scholarly literature to examine how correctional facility education programs operate throughout the United States. The scholarly literature can also be used to examine inmate characteristics, which may help explain why inmates became incarcerated. Inmate characteristics might also be used to clarify the reasons inmates participate in education programs in correctional facilities. This research is used as background information to supplement the primary research of Iowa's correctional facilities, but it is also used to see how Iowa's correctional facilities compare to correctional facilities throughout the entire nation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education Programs Lead to a Safer Society

Supporters of education programs for inmates argue that spending money on inmate education programs saves society money in the long run because educated inmates are less likely

to recidivate. Inmates that do not recidivate do not cost society money to re-process them through the court system or to re-incarcerate them in correctional facilities (Yarbro 1996). A study of New York found correctional facility education programs save the state nearly one million dollars per one hundred enrolled inmates every two years (Garmon 2002). This may not be a substantial sum of money for the state of New York, but the saved money could be used to expand education programs thus leading to more monetary savings. Supporters also posit victims benefit from lower recidivism rates because less crime means there will be fewer victims suffering from criminal encounters (Yarbro 1996). One study claims inmates who participate in education programs in correctional facilities recidivate less than ten percent of the time. In comparison, inmates who did not participate in education programs in correctional facilities recidivate approximately thirty percent of the time (Bartlett 2002). In other words, inmates participating in education programs in correctional facilities are four times less likely to recidivate than inmates who do not participate in education programs (Garmon 2002). These findings support the assertion that education programs in correctional facilities help to reduce recidivism rates.

Pell Grants and Support for Inmate Education

Inmates in correctional facilities are vilified by the media as evil people, but many inmates became incarcerated due to adverse social conditions that led them to criminal careers. For some inmates correctional facilities were the first places they could attempt to obtain an education that could help them move beyond the negative social conditions they faced in the real world. However, inmates do not receive free educational training; inmates have to pay for their own courses and materials or rely on grants and scholarships. A major source of funding for inmates' education came from the implementation of federal Pell Grants in 1972 because most

inmates qualified as need-based recipients of the financial aid. Inmates' ability to receive funding from Pell Grants was cut in 1994 due to a section of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act passed by Congress stating any inmate of a federal or state correctional facility was ineligible to receive Pell Grant funding (Erisman and Contardo 2005). Critics of the Congressional action to eliminate Pell Grant funding for inmates believe Congress acted hastily without considering the long-term ramifications of reducing inmates' abilities to obtain an education (Yarbro 1996).

There were several arguments supporting the elimination of inmate eligibility to receive Pell Grant funding. One argument was inmates were taking money from law-abiding citizens, which forced the law-abiding citizens to go into debt to fund their college education or to miss out on obtaining a college education. Another argument was that social programs were being cut for law-abiding citizens, so they should also be cut for people that did not follow the law (The Institute [...] 1994). Education programs reward inmates for their criminal activities by providing them with upper level college degrees was another argument against Pell Grant funding for inmates (Erisman and Contardo 2005). In contrast, supporters of Pell Grant funding for inmates argued that educating prisoners led to reduced recidivism rates because inmates were better able to obtain jobs with an education, which provided them with an income without resorting to criminal activities. Supporters also pointed out that inmates constituted less than one percent of all Pell Grant expenditures for the 1993-1994 award year. Supporters claimed inmates were not affecting the maximum amount of Pell Grant awards because inmates constituted such a small number of Pell Grant recipients (The Institute [...] 1994). Finally, supporters also stated inmates' participation in the Pell Grant program did not ever exclude a law-abiding citizen from obtaining a Pell Grant (Erisman and Contardo 2005). The supporters of Pell Grant funding for

inmates in correctional facilities had supplied data to confirm their point of view; however, their viewpoint was ignored when Congress made the decision about inmates' Pell Grant eligibility.

The loss of inmate eligibility for Pell Grants had an instant affect on inmate post-secondary correctional education because Pell Grants were the major source of inmates' educational funding. Many state governments also followed the federal government's lead and dropped funding for correctional facility education programs (Schmidt 2002). Therefore, the number of education programs in correctional facilities dropped significantly. Prisoner enrollment in education programs also dropped drastically after Pell Grant funding was cut. Programs and enrollment continued to drop throughout the late 1990s. Then, the United States Congress created the Incarcerated Youthful Offender grants in 1998 in an effort to help educate young inmates. These grants are only available to inmates twenty-five years old or younger, and the grants must be renewed every year by Congress, which means they could be cut at any time (Erisman and Contardo 2005). It should be noted that many inmates are not twenty-five years old and younger. Therefore, a large proportion of inmates are not eligible to receive Incarcerated Youthful Offender grants, which means they still lack a funding source for their education. In other words, many inmates are unable to receive an education while incarcerated due to restrictions on funding or their lack of funding to pay for their own education costs. One positive aspect of the Incarcerated Youthful Offender grants is they have helped to increase correctional education programs and program enrollment in some states (Erisman and Contardo 2005). More correctional education programs and higher program enrollments are positive things based on the assumption that educated inmates are less likely to recidivate upon release from correctional facilities.

Educating Correctional Personnel

There is some concern that correctional facility guards may become jealous of inmates who receive a free or subsidized education because most guards had to pay for their own education if they obtained one. In fact, inmates may even use their educational opportunities to provoke guards. For example, inmates may flaunt their educational enrollment in front of guards they know desire educational training. If guards allow themselves to be provoked to violence against inmates, they can end up losing their jobs. As of 2003, inmates were not the only people in prison that qualified for educational training. The American Correctional Association developed its Online Corrections Academy to provide correctional staff with an opportunity to earn college credits and complete necessary training. The cost to correctional staff was not discussed except to mention that it was affordable for them to participate in the training and coursework (Brooks 2005). This new opportunity for correctional staff to obtain an affordable postsecondary education was probably developed in response to staff outcries about the lack of educational programming for them. Also, correctional staffs are receiving their postsecondary educations, which is likely to eliminate any jealousy issues caused by inmates' educational opportunities.

New Funding Sources...Unlikely

President Bush proposed funding for inmate education and training during his 2004 State of the Union address. He justified his proposal by stating inmates are more likely to commit crimes upon release if they do not have jobs (Weedon 2004). The president's proposal provided hope for increased funding for correctional facility education programs, but funding has not been allocated by Congress. It is unlikely that additional funding will be apportioned for correctional facility's education programs because many congressmen and women obtained their

congressional positions by taking a tough on crime stance. These congressmen and women do not want their constituents to think they are soft on crime by approving funding to help educate inmates in correctional facilities. Basically, members of Congress want to keep their positions, and they have found a tough on crime stance is a good way to keep their congressional seats. The American Correctional Association, corrections officials, and law enforcement members need to lobby Congress to secure the funding proposed by the president because these groups of people have the most contact with inmates, they have lobbying resources, and they can provide data about how education and training programs for inmates helps to reduce recidivism rates (Weedon 2004). The American Association of Community Colleges should also be used to influence Congress to appropriate the funding because community colleges play a key role in training and educating inmates in the United States (Garmon 2001). The groups mentioned above would benefit from the president's proposal. Community colleges would benefit from the funding by having more participants in their programs, corrections officials have the benefit of safer work environments, and law enforcement officers gain safer communities to patrol with fewer released inmates recidivating. The most important aspect is communities are safer when released inmates have skills that enable them to obtain legitimate work and thereby avoid the need to resort to criminal activities.

Programs Offered

Prison education programs are offered to inmates, but only a very small number of inmates actually participate in the programs due to cost and space limitations (Schmidt 2002). A study by the Institute for Higher Education Policy found that only five percent of inmates nationwide in 2003 were enrolled in postsecondary education programs (Erisman and Contardo 2005). Correctional facility education programs have many benefits. Nonetheless, some states

do not even have state-financed education programs for inmates, while other states rely on donations or inmates to finance their own educational costs (Schmidt 2002). A study in Maryland found educating inmates saved the state \$17,000 a year when compared with incarcerating an inmate for a year (Edwards-Willey and Chivers 2005). Education programs save the state money, reduce recidivism rates, and help maintain order in correctional facilities because they give inmates something constructive to do with their time (Schmidt 2002). However, some inmates receive an education while they are incarcerated, but a vast majority of inmates do not receive any educational training while they are incarcerated.

Correctional Facilities

Men made-up ninety-three percent of inmates in the United States in 2003. Also, more than half of inmates were under the age of thirty-five years old in 2003 (Erisman and Contardo 2005). Therefore, young men are the predominant group inhabiting correctional facilities. This is a young portion of the United States' population that could benefit from rehabilitative efforts rather than the predominant emphasis on punishment. This younger segment of inmates in the United States is more likely to be motivated to obtain work after their release because they have more time to become established in a job and work their way up along a career path compared to older inmates. This argument partially supports the Incarcerated Youthful Offender grants mentioned above. This younger portion of the inmate population will also grow older, which can cost tax payers more money if they are still incarcerated or re-incarcerated because older inmates tend to get sick and need medical attention more often than younger inmates. Educating inmates at a young age can keep some of them from returning to prison, which saves tax payers money in the long run. Also, education helps inmates build self-esteem and develop employable skills they can use upon their release (Erisman and Contardo 2005).

John Garmon argues inmates' membership in society should necessitate education programs for inmates because well-educated people become productive, tax payers that contribute to the overall well being of society (2002). In other words, he is arguing providing inmates with education assists everyone in society. As more people become educated they can obtain jobs because of their education and positively contribute to their societies by paying taxes, obeying the law, and setting a positive example for youths.

Correctional Facility Education

The Institute for Higher Education Policy conducted a study on postsecondary education in correctional facilities throughout the United States. The survey was sent to all fifty state correctional education administrators and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Forty-five states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons responded to the survey. Forty-four of the forty-six respondents offer postsecondary education programs in their facilities; both of the respondents that do not offer postsecondary education programs were representatives of states. Fourteen states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons had 1,000 or more inmates enrolled in education programs. These fifteen correctional facility systems educate nearly ninety percent of inmates in the United States, mostly because they focus on short-term vocational training which allows them to move a large number of inmates through their education programs. However, none of these fifteen correctional facility systems educate a majority of their inmates; thirteen educate less than ten percent of their inmates, two (Texas, North Carolina) educate eleven percent, and one (Federal Bureau of Prisons) educates seventeen percent of its inmates. The fifteen correctional facility systems with 1,000 plus enrollments had education programs in fifty-four percent of their facilities, while the twenty-nine other correctional facilities only offered education programs in thirty-five percent of their facilities (Erisman and Contardo 2005).

Correctional facility education programs have eligibility requirements, which generally are a high school diploma or a G.E.D. Sixty percent of state inmates and seventy-three percent of federal inmates meet program requirements, but only eleven percent received educational training in their correctional facility (Erisman and Contardo 2005). This means that a vast number of inmates that could be receiving an education while they serve their time do not receive any educational training. Funding shortages make it impossible for correctional facility systems to provide educational training to all eligible inmates. Therefore, correctional facilities often impose other requirements on inmates before they can be accepted into education programs. For example, good behavior, age, length of sentence, test scores, reason for incarceration, and time until release can be taken into consideration to determine which inmates to admit into education programs (Erisman and Contardo 2005).

Most inmates enrolled in postsecondary correctional facility education programs are receiving vocational training rather than academic coursework. In contrast, inmates that were enrolled in postsecondary correctional facility education programs before Pell Grant funding was cut tended to take academic classes. However, these shifts appear to be a result of the types of programs offered rather than a change in inmates' learning interests (Erisman and Contardo 2005). In other words, inmates are offered more vocational training than they were before Pell Grant funding was terminated.

As stated above, there are some critics of correctional facility education programs that believe education programs reward inmates for their crimes by giving them upper level college degrees. This argument seems to have little basis because only three percent of inmates enrolled in education programs were in programs that would result in a bachelor's or a graduate degree. Also, most inmates enrolled in degree programs do not complete the coursework due to the

length of time it takes to complete those programs, or the lack of funding which makes continuing their studies impossible. Vocational training programs have a better completion rate, but only fifty-nine percent of inmates complete vocational training programs. Hindrances to both academic and vocational program completion included inmate transfers and release before program completion (Erisman and Contardo 2005). This shows that a very small number of inmates in the United States actually receive a degree or certificate while they are incarcerated because program completion data refers to the five percent of inmates nation-wide enrolled in education programs.

Community colleges provide a vast majority of education programs inmates enroll in while they are incarcerated. Most programs were administered at correctional facilities, but some courses were taught through video and satellite instruction. The internet was also used to teach a small portion of education programs; however, most facilities did not utilize internet technology due to security concerns. Incarcerated Youth Offender grants were the most frequently cited source of program funding. Other key funding sources were inmates payment of their educational expenses, state funding, private funding, and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act (Erisman and Contardo 2005).

HYPOTHESES

The United States is currently experiencing funding shortages for many different social services. Unsurprisingly, funding shortages have also affected correctional facility education programs. The loss of Pell Grant funding for inmates was a devastating blow to correctional facility education programs because Pell Grants provided most education programs' funding. In other words, correctional facilities relied on Pell Grants to keep inmates in the education programs they provided. Without Pell Grant funding many education programs ended because

there were not readily available sources to provide the necessary funding to keep the education programs running. Some correctional facilities have adapted and have found new funding sources for their education programs. However, only a small fraction of inmates are able to participate in education programs due to insufficient resources. Correctional facilities increasingly rely on community colleges to run education programs because community colleges tend to be closer to correctional facilities than four year institutions. It was predicted that Iowa has adapted to the loss of Pell Grant funding by obtaining new funding sources for education programs. However, funding is most likely in short supply, which means few inmates can take part in education programs and programs are constantly in danger of being cut. Also, Iowa's correctional facility education programs are likely to be run by community colleges. It is probable that Iowa's correctional facility education programs have fewer participants than states with larger populations because states with larger populations have bigger budgets that can dedicate more funding to education programs. Only education program participants will be comparable due to the lack of data collected on state budgets.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is concerned with education programs in Iowa's correctional facilities. There are only nine correctional facilities in Iowa, so each facility was sent an open-ended questionnaire by mail with a cover letter explaining the study (a copy of the questionnaire and cover letter are attached in the appendix). Analyzing nine facilities was determined to be a feasible task due to the small number of respondents and relatively short questionnaire. Questions focused on the existence of education programs, program participation, program completion, program staffing, and program funding. The questionnaires were addressed to the warden of each facility, and the wardens were asked to return completed questionnaires in the

enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Electronic mail was used to follow-up on the mailed questionnaires. All nine correctional facilities returned questionnaires, which should provide an accurate view of the educational programs in Iowa's correctional facilities.

DATA ANALYSIS

The state of Iowa has approximately 8,800 inmates housed in its nine correctional facilities. These inmate figures are approximations because some facilities provided exact figures while other facilities provided approximate figures. The figures were totaled and rounded to the nearest hundred for simplicity. Also, inmate figures include both men and women; women make-up about 700 of the 8,800 inmates in Iowa.

Programming Offered

All nine correctional facilities offer some form of education programming. They all work with community colleges to administer their programs. Des Moines Area Community College, Kirkwood Community College, Iowa Central Community College, and Southeastern Community College each provide educational programming at two different correctional facilities. Iowa Western Community College supplies programming at the ninth correctional facility. Six of the facilities also work with Area Education Agencies to provide some of their education programs. Literacy and G.E.D. programs are offered at all nine facilities. College courses are offered at six facilities; however, some facilities count these programs even though they are strictly correspondence courses. Special education classes and English as a second language courses are offered at five facilities. Title 1 programs are provided at four facilities. Vocational training programs were only offered at two correctional facilities. Work readiness, life skills, career preparation, basic education, and phonics programs were offered by three or fewer correctional facilities. Some education programs were established as early as 1949; other programs were

instituted during the 1960s and 1970s. However, most programs seem to have been established in the 1990s or early 2000s.

Program Availability

Survey respondents were asked if education programs in their facilities were made available to all inmates. Five of the nine correctional facilities make education programs available to all inmates. The four facilities that do not make education programs available to all inmates cite budgetary constraints, facility procedures, and inmate statuses that preclude some inmates from partaking in education programs. These are interesting findings because all of the facilities are from the same state, but there are many possible factors that can explain why some facilities make education programs available to all inmates and others do not. For example, some facilities may have a stronger emphasis on education, some may have more funding, and others may have more violent offenders that are too dangerous to leave with non-correctional staff.

Qualifications

Respondents were asked about qualifications inmates had to meet before they could participate in educational programming in the correctional facilities. Eight of the nine facilities provided qualifications/standards inmates had to satisfy before they could enroll in education programs. Therefore, inmates that do not meet a facility's education program qualifications can not participate in the facility's education programs. Some of the qualifications were: academic ability, possession of a G.E.D. or high school diploma (or lack thereof), age, available time to attend classes, reading level, completion of facility procedures, time until release, parole board approval, placement test scores, and ability to pay for courses (college courses only).

Awareness

Survey respondents were asked if and how inmates were made aware of educational programs available to them in the correctional facilities. All of the correctional facilities reported that they make inmates aware of the educational programs that are available in each facility. Facility orientation sessions, posted notices, meetings with staff, and informational handouts were the methods used by facilities to inform inmates of educational programs. The most frequently cited method of providing educational program information to inmates was through orientation sessions.

Inmate Enrollment

The questionnaire asked respondents about the number of inmates enrolled in the education programs. Ascertaining an accurate number of inmates enrolled in education programs was difficult because the facilities responded in different manners. A couple facilities provided inmate enrollment per program for the previous year. Other facilities gave inmate enrollment per program at the time the questionnaire was being filled out. Facilities also offered enrollment figures as a whole instead of breaking them down like other facilities. Some numbers were given in ranges and other figures were portrayed exactly. Therefore, all provided figures were summed to get an estimate of the number of inmates in Iowa that participate in education programs in correctional facilities; the lowest figure in a range was utilized so that it could not be argued that the figures were overestimated. The total number of inmates reported to participate in education programs in correctional facilities was 1,947, which is approximately twenty-two percent of the total inmates housed in Iowa's correctional facilities. Another problem with this figure is that it does not take into consideration that some inmates may be enrolled in more than one program at a time, which would skew the numbers. What can be determined by enrollment

data is that inmates do participate in education programs, but a vast majority of inmates do not participate in the education programs.

Respondents were asked if education programs have capacity limitations. Educational program capacity seems to affect most of the correctional facilities in Iowa. One respondent's answers did not make sense based on the question, and another respondent said capacity was not an issue due to multiple classes provided throughout a day; therefore, these two facilities were excluded from the discussion below. The other seven facilities have various program capacity issues. One facility had to limit program size based on classroom size and another due to a lack of instructors. The other five facilities did not specify reasons for capacity limits on their programs, but capacity limits are likely due to the aforementioned reasons as well as insufficient funding to hold large classes. Some program's capacity was specified by respondents while other program's capacity was not specified.

Program Completion

The questionnaire asked respondents about the percentage of inmates that complete education programs. Data regarding inmate's completion of education programs was provided, but not for all programs. Again, one respondent's answers did not make sense based on the question; therefore, the respondent's answers were excluded from the discussion below. Also, one facility does not track inmate completion due to inmate turnover in its facility, so this facility is also excluded from any program completion discussion. Different programs seem to be more successful at different facilities. This may be due to inmates' willingness to complete programs, instructors teaching effectiveness, or presence of an atmosphere conducive to learning. However, a number of other factors may also affect program success rates. Some facilities had high G.E.D. and literacy course completion rates while others had low G.E.D. and literacy course

completion rates. In general college courses, vocational training, and work readiness programs had high completion rates. Other programs tended to have low completion rates or no data provided about completion rates.

The survey respondents were asked to identify why inmates do not complete education programs. All nine facilities provided reasons that inmates do not complete the education programs they begin. All nine facilities cited release from the facility as one reason inmates do not complete education programs. This suggests that inmates need to be enrolled in programs further in advance of their release dates so that they can complete the education programs they begin. Five facilities state that some inmates do not complete education programs because they incur disciplinary sanctions for misbehavior that prohibits them from continuing to participate in the education programs. Five facilities also said that some inmates do not have the intellectual capacity to finish the programs they begin. Three facilities said some inmates do not care about the education programs enough to complete the programs. Two facilities discussed inmate transfers to other facilities that make it impossible for inmates to complete their education programs. Inmates have a difficult time completing educational training when they are transferred because their new facility may not have the same educational programming as their previous facility. Another possibility is that their new facility does not have any openings in its courses the inmates had been enrolled in at their previous facility.

Respondents were asked if inmates had a time limit imposed on them for completing the education programs. Six of the nine facilities said that a time limit did not exist for completing their education programs. However, two of these six said that inmates were highly encouraged to complete G.E.D. courses within two years, but they could take longer than two years to complete the G.E.D. courses with approval from the program's administrators. The three

facilities that do have time limits for completing education programs specified course set-up and age as the reasons for the time limits. In order to address limited capacity issues, some courses only last for a specific time period. As a result, inmates are expected to complete the program within that time frame, so other inmates can partake in the program. The time limits based on age just moved inmates from one program to another; specifically, Title I and special education courses move inmates to G.E.D. courses when inmates reach the age of twenty-one.

Improvements

The questionnaire asked respondents to make suggestions about how to change education programs to increase the number of inmates that complete those programs. Eight of the nine respondents made suggestions about how to change the educational programs in their facilities so that inmates would be more likely to complete the programs (one respondent did not answer this question). More staff, more funding, more classroom time, more teacher availability, and more programs were suggested. These suggestions would be likely to help more inmates complete education programs because they seem to be things that would give inmates more contact with course materials and instructors. It is assumed that more time with course materials and instructors would increase understanding, which would then lead to more inmates completing the programs. Nonetheless, these suggestions do not address the reasons inmates do not complete education programs. For example, more funding, instructors, and classroom time will not eliminate inmate apathy, nor will it solve the problem that occurs when inmates are transferred to another correctional facility.

Staffing

Survey respondents were asked about educational program staff and the staff's qualifications. All nine respondents have licensed teachers administering their educational

courses. However, one facility allows its life skills class to be taught by an individual with a Bachelor of Arts degree in a field related to the course. All teachers are qualified to teach the courses they teach, and they are all monetarily compensated for their time and efforts. This shows that education programs in correctional facilities are legitimate programs. Legitimate program status can be used to show legislative officials that these programs are important and vital to correctional facilities in Iowa.

Funding Sources

The questionnaire asked respondents about funding sources, variability in funding, and education program cutbacks due to funding shortages. The correctional facilities in Iowa receive their funding for education programs from a number of sources including: the state government, the federal government, grants, Department of Corrections supplemental funds, public school systems inmates were in before they were incarcerated, and Area Education Agencies. Six facilities said these funds vary from year to year, and the funds can vary by more than \$1,000 per year. Two facilities said funding does not vary from year to year, and one facility said funding stays the same unless a significant budget reduction occurs. All nine of the facilities said that education programs do get cut when funding decreases.

DISCUSSION

Iowa seems to be doing a very good job providing education programs to inmates in its correctional facilities because national data showed that only about five percent of inmates receive educational training while Iowa has about twenty-two percent of its inmates receiving educational training. However, the national data was an average of all prisoners, so a comparison to other states would provide a more accurate comparison. According to Erisman and Contardo, Texas and North Carolina each have eleven percent of their inmate populations

enrolled in education programs, but over 7,000 more inmates enrolled in each state's education programs than Iowa has in its education programs (2005). So, Iowa has a higher percentage of inmates that receive educational training, but other states educate more inmates than Iowa. One problem with these comparisons is that Iowa's data was collected four years after data from the Erisman and Contardo study, so other states may be educating a similar percentage of inmates as Iowa. Unfortunately, data from the same time period is unavailable to make comparisons between Iowa and other states. What is known is that Iowa provides education programs at all of its facilities, and a large number of inmates partake in those programs. Also, one of the study's hypotheses was confirmed because Iowa does have fewer inmates enrolled in its education programs than states with larger populations.

Iowa's correctional facility education programs are likely to reduce recidivism rates according to most scholarly research. The scholarly research states that inmates who complete educational training are much less likely to recidivate than inmates that do not complete educational training. Approximately, twenty-two percent of Iowa's inmates participate in education programs, but the percentage of inmates that complete the programs is unclear. Also, this study did not attempt to assess recidivism rates in Iowa. Therefore, a connection between lower recidivism rates and education program completion can be assumed based on previous research, but it can not be substantiated by this study.

All of Iowa's correctional facilities relied on community colleges to administer their education programs. This aligns with research that showed community colleges are the main provider of educational programming in correctional facilities in the United States. In Iowa, the community colleges that were partnered with correctional facilities tended to be located relatively close to the correctional facilities. This coincides with research that suggested

community colleges were better situated to serve the needs of correctional facility education programs. The finding that Iowa's correctional facilities rely on community colleges to administer their education programs also confirms one of the study's initial hypotheses about the administration of education programs in Iowa's correctional facilities.

Most scholarly literature focused on the importance and prevalence of vocational training in correctional facilities because of the short-term nature of vocational training that allowed correctional facilities to enroll large numbers of inmates in those types of programs. Interestingly, Iowa's correctional facilities did not identify vocational training programs as a key component of their educational programming repertoire. Literacy, G.E.D., special education, and English as a second language courses appeared to be the most prevalent educational programming offered in Iowa's correctional facilities (college courses were excluded because several facilities claim them as education programs even though they are strictly correspondence courses, which means the facilities do not administer the programs). In other words, Iowa differs from the national trend toward vocational training. This may mean that Iowa is more concerned with providing educational programming for inmates rather than shuffling as many inmates through its education programs as possible. Another possibility is that Iowa's correctional facilities have deemed vocational training programs as safety risks, which would explain why vocational training programs are not present in most of Iowa's correctional facilities. Many vocational training programs involve the use of tools that can be used as weapons, which could be viewed as a safety risk by correctional facility administrators. Nevertheless, safety risks can be minimized by utilizing metal detectors as inmates leave the vocational training area to locate dangerous materials or tools. Also, strict policies and close supervision of inmates in vocational

training programs can reduce the potential risks posed by vocational training programs in correctional facilities.

As mentioned above, the loss of Pell Grant funding for inmates was devastating to correctional facility education programs, resulting in the termination of many programs. Iowa appears to have overcome the loss of Pell Grant funding so that it can provide education programs to its inmates. However, funding is still an issue as many of Iowa's correctional facilities pointed out. Their funding can vary from year to year by large amounts of money. Unfortunately, the funding variations tend to be decreases in funding, which can lead to programs being dropped from correctional facilities educational programming array. Also, due to inadequate funding most inmates in Iowa do not get to participate in educational training. This shows that the hypotheses concerning insufficient program funding were correct.

LIMITATIONS

A flaw with this study was not enough data was collected to make adequate comparisons to other states and previous scholarly research. Data on recidivism rates in Iowa would have enhanced the study because that data could have been used to show if Iowa aligns with scholarly research that suggests recidivism rates are reduced by inmates' completion of education programs while incarcerated. Unfortunately, recidivism rates were not considered an essential element to include in the questionnaire at the beginning of the study. Therefore, in future research it would be beneficial to collect data on recidivism rates and how they relate to inmates who complete education programs while incarcerated. Collecting data on recidivism rates for this study was not possible because most studies concerning recidivism rates take several years and large amounts of money to complete, which was not feasible based on the time constraints and funding available to the researcher.

After receipt of the completed questionnaires the researcher realized that an open-ended questionnaire may not have been the best choice for the present study. The open-ended questionnaire provided respondents with an opportunity to respond in their own words, which was deemed beneficial during the development of the questionnaire. However, some questions were not answered and others may have had confusing wording based on responses that differed significantly from what the researcher intended. Both problems could potentially have been avoided if the researcher had been present to clarify questions and to ensure all questions were answered. Closed-ended questions would have been likely to provide the researcher with uniform answers, but they may not have provided the researcher with adequate data if all possible answers were not anticipated by the researcher. Future research should consist of an open-ended survey conducted in person or over the telephone to ensure accuracy and clarity of answers. Another possibility for future research would be to use a closed-ended mail questionnaire that is developed with the help of an administrator of a correctional facility's education program.

CONCLUSION

This study found that all of Iowa's correctional facilities have educational programs available to inmates, which vary from high school equivalency to work training to college to special education courses. This is different than many states because most states do not have education programs at all of their facilities. Also, most other states seem to emphasize vocational training while Iowa does not offer many vocational training programs in its correctional facilities (Erisman and Contardo 2005). However, like every other state, Iowa does not enroll all of its inmates in education programs, nor does it have continuously sufficient funding to ensure that programs exist from year to year. Iowa does have a good percentage of its

inmates enrolled in its education programs, but it is unclear how many inmates complete those programs. It is also uncertain how Iowa's education programs affect recidivism rates in Iowa, but it is assumed that education programs reduce recidivism rates in Iowa because several scholarly reports have found a connection between education programs and lower recidivism rates.

Correctional facility education programs do encounter funding problems because most funding must come from the government. Regrettably, education programs in correctional facilities tend to be cut when funding is short. Therefore, some of the correctional facilities have found grants and other public funding to help administer their education programs. Fortunately, education program administrators know that funding can be cut at any time, which means they can be prepared when it does get reduced. In other words, education program administrators are more prepared for funding reductions than they were when Pell Grant funding was taken away from inmates in 1994. Iowa appears to have recovered from the initial shock that occurred throughout the country when Pell Grant funding was lost. This assumption is based on the presence of numerous education programs at each correctional facility in Iowa.

Community colleges run all of Iowa's correctional facility education programs. These programs are all taught by professional teachers that are qualified to teach in the areas they teach to inmates. This reliance on community colleges to administer correctional facility education programs is not something that is unique to Iowa. Many correctional facilities throughout the country rely on community colleges to administer their education programs because community colleges are likely to be located near correctional facilities. This reason appears to be the case in Iowa as well because the community colleges that run Iowa's correctional facility education programs are located near the correctional facilities they serve.

Education programs do exist in Iowa's correctional facilities, but they do not serve all inmates. Providing educational programming to all inmates is an unrealistic goal because not all inmates will want to participate in educational training, and correctional facilities do not have the resources to provide educational training to all of their inmates. Nonetheless, the devotion of greater resources to education programs in correctional facilities will help more inmates that want to participate have a chance at participating in educational training. Also, more resources could eliminate some of the restrictions on when inmates can partake in education programming, which could mean that more inmates complete educational training. Therefore, more inmates would be likely to obtain jobs upon their release. As previous research has shown, inmates would also be less likely to recidivate due to their successful completion of educational training. This in turn would save states and the federal government hundreds of thousands of dollars because there would be less court costs and incarceration costs for inmates that recidivate due to fewer inmates recidivating. This study suggests that inmates in Iowa's correctional facilities do have many opportunities to partake in educational training, but more resources would ensure that all inmates that desire to participate would receive the chance to do so. State legislatures and the federal government are not likely to increase funding to educational programs in correctional facilities because these public officials desire to get re-elected. Public officials reduce funding to educational programs in correctional facilities to appear tough on crime so that their constituents can feel good. Besides more resources, more programs that help inmates re-integrate back into conventional society should be developed because these programs can help inmates find conventional activities to pursue rather than illegal activities. Iowa and the respondents to the study conducted by Erisman and Contardo seem to have recovered from the loss of inmates'

eligibility to receive Pell Grants, but more resources are needed for correctional facility education programs to enroll more inmates, which should help reduce recidivism rates.

According to scholarly research, correctional facility education programs are worth their cost because they reduce recidivism rates, which save states and the federal government money through reduced court proceedings and fewer inmates to incarcerate. Reduced recidivism rates also mean society is a safer place because there are fewer released inmates out committing new crimes. Correctional facility education programs are also worth their cost because they can provide inmates with vital training to help them succeed upon their release. Success would be obtaining a full-time job that pays a living wage. Additionally, correctional facility education programs can build inmate self-esteem, encourage good behavior, and provide an outlet for inmates so that they can avoid the harshness and brutality that often is present in correctional facilities. In the end, providing inmates with educational programs has positive benefits for many segments of society. Specifically, inmates gain educational training, correctional facilities with education programs tend to be safer for inmates and staff than those without education programs, and societies tend to experience less crime when inmates return with an education.

Inmates are in correctional facilities to be punished for an offense they committed against society or a member of society. However, many people forget incarceration in a correctional facility is an inmate's punishment. Inmates do not deserve to be treated like animals; they should be treated with decency and respect. They should also not be deprived of all of their rights because they are already being punished for an offense they committed. Therefore, inmates should have the right to earn an education while they are incarcerated because educational training can lead them away from criminal careers and educational training does not pose a big security risk to correctional facility staff. Education is one of the most basic methods

for advancing in life, and inmates deserve to have access to education because they are still members of society despite their incarceration.

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APPENDIX

(Date)

(Recipient Address)

Adam R. Baggett
818 W. Seerley Blvd.
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Warden (fill-in name):

I am a student at the University of Northern Iowa, and I am conducting research on educational opportunities available to inmates in Iowa's correctional facilities under the direction of my faculty advisor, Dr. Keith Crew. This research is part of my honors thesis, which is a requirement for me to complete the University's Honors Program.

I am conducting this research because it was brought to my attention that members of the local Cedar Falls/Waterloo community have expressed concern that the members of our community who are sent to prison return without any skills or educational training that could be used to help them obtain gainful employment and therefore reduce the likelihood that they will recidivate and return to prison. This concern has prompted me to undertake this research to establish what types of educational programs, if any, exist in Iowa's correctional facilities. The purpose is to examine educational programs and opportunities that are available to inmates in correctional facilities in Iowa. This research of Iowa correctional facilities will be utilized for comparison to national data on correctional facilities' educational programs. Also, the research will be utilized to show how Iowa correctional facilities compare to each other and how they compare to national data on correctional facility education programs.

The information you provide will be incorporated into a thesis paper that will then be presented to the University's Honors Program at the end of April 2007.

I have enclosed a questionnaire that addresses the questions I feel are relevant to my research topic. I would greatly appreciate it if you or one of your qualified staff members would take the time to fill-out the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at any time by phone: 515-249-5256 or by email: abaggett@uni.edu.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Adam R. Baggett

Below is a questionnaire designed to provide information for a research project that is interested in examining education programs that exist in correctional facilities in Iowa. Please answer each question completely in the space provided and use the back or additional sheets of paper if needed.

1. What is the name of your correctional facility?
2. How many inmates are housed in your facility?
3. Does your facility have an education program (high school, GED, or college courses offered) for inmates?

If you answered “no” to question 3 you do not need to answer the rest of the questions. Please return the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope.

4. Is there one education program or multiple education programs? If there is more than one program please specify how many programs there are. Please also list the names of each of the education programs.
5. What organization(s) or individual(s) runs/oversees the education programs? Please match up organizations/individuals to the program they correspond to.
6. When were the current education programs established at your facility? Please identify the date for each program.
7. Are the education programs available to every inmate in your facility? If not, please specify why they are not available to every inmate.
8. Do inmates have to meet some standards or qualifications to be able to participate in the education programs? If so, what are those standards/qualifications?
9. Are inmates made aware of the education programs? If so, how are inmates made aware of the education programs?
10. How many inmates are in the current education programs? Please specify for each education program.
11. Do the education programs have a limited capacity? If so, please specify what the limit is for each education program.
12. What percentage of inmates complete the education programs? Please specify for each education program.
13. If known, please identify the reasons for inmates not completing the education programs?
14. What changes would you make to the current education programs to increase the number of inmates that complete the programs?

15. Do inmates have a time limit for completing the education programs?

If you answered “no” to question 15 please skip to question 18.

16. What is the time limit inmates are given to complete the education programs? Please specify for each education program.

17. Why do time limits exist on the education programs?

18. Who teaches in the education programs (correctional staff, teachers, professors, etc.)? Please specify for each program if different people teach in different programs.

19. Are the people that teach in the education programs qualified to teach the courses they teach? If not, please specify why not (for example, no expertise in the subject matter they are responsible for teaching).

20. Are the people that teach in the education programs monetarily compensated?

21. How are the education programs funded (donations, grants, public funding, etc.)?

22. Does the funding for the education programs vary from year to year? If so, does it vary by more than \$1000 per year?

23. Do education programs get cut when funding is short?