

National Evaluation Program Phase I

Correctional Education Programs For Inmates: A Design For A Phase II Study

National Correctional Education Evaluation Project

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
LEHIGH UNIVERSITY**

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NATIONAL CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION EVALUATION PROGRAM

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NATIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

PHASE I

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I. Introduction

"Institutional Education Programs for Inmates" was one of the topic areas selected for a Phase I study under the National Evaluation Program of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. Phase I projects assess current knowledge about the topic area and identify what additional information about the projects in the topic area could be provided by further evaluation research. Phase I projects also include the estimated cost and anticipated value of obtaining the additional information. In some cases a Phase I project will be followed by a Phase II evaluation study to collect this additional information. This paper presents an evaluation design for a Phase II study in the topic area of "Institutional Education Programs for Inmates".

All Federal and State Correctional Institutions with relatively large inmate populations (800 or more) provide education programs for inmates. The rudimentary origin of education in prison, which involved the attempts to teach inmates how to read the Bible, can be traced back almost to the beginning of the American penal system. Despite its long history, however, the role and purpose of education programs in prison was not assessed on a national scale until the current decade. The President's

Task Force on Prisoner Rehabilitation reported in 1970 that "little is known about the nature, scope, and effectiveness of education programs for the inmates of the adult correctional facilities of America" (U. S. President's Task Force on Prison Rehabilitation).

The Phase I study of education programs for inmates collected and assessed a substantial amount of information relating to the first two elements cited by the Task Force, viz, the "Nature" and "scope" of correctional education programs. The "effectiveness" of correctional education programs for inmates, however, remains, for the most part, an unknown quantity. There has not been any research on a national scale to determine the effectiveness of correctional education programs, and the evaluative studies that have been done on institutional, state, or regional levels are few in number and inconclusive in results.

This paper proposes an evaluation design for institutional education programs for inmates that would provide information regarding the effectiveness of these programs.

II. Need for Research

The need for education programs for inmates is usually explained by the following observations:

- The majority of inmates in adult prisons

have not completed their high school education, and a substantial minority have not achieved basic levels of academic or vocational competence.

- The lack of academic and vocational skills is a factor commonly associated with anti-social and criminal behavior, and the likelihood of a return to such behavior after release is that much greater if no academic or vocational skills have been acquired during incarceration.
- Most jobs--except those with marginal status and low pay--require at least minimal levels of academic and vocational competence; and many occupations dictate higher levels of academic or vocational skill.

In light of these observations education programs in prison are given as much, if not more, financial support than any other program or service provided for inmates. Each correctional institution provides an average of 8.7% of its total budget for education programs. This amounts to an annual expenditure of about \$260,000 per institution. The education programs supported by these funds provide services for approximately 40% of all inmates in Federal and State Correctional Institutions across the country. Those inmates participating in education programs are

enrolled in one or more of the following program areas:

1. Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs

Adult Basic Education programs include any organized effort to improve the basic literacy, linguistic, and computational skills of those inmates who are either functionally illiterate or for whom there is a large gap between the attained and potential achievement in such areas.

2. Secondary and General Education Development (GED) Programs

These programs are in the area of secondary education, where, for those inmates who have not completed high school, curricula and instruction are usually developed for the purpose of enabling an inmate to obtain a General Education Development credential. Such programs are primarily designed for those who are functioning at the secondary level of achievement, and who desire to take the High School Equivalency Examination which is periodically administered within the institution.

3. Post Secondary Education Programs

This group of programs includes any college courses available to inmates for which they can gain academic, transcribed credit. These courses and programs are usually made available as part of a cooperative effort between the institution and nearby two- and/or four-year colleges. These courses generally serve as an introduction for inmates to college-level disciplines. In some

institutions it is possible for the inmate to earn an associate or bachelors degree without ever leaving the prison.

4. Vocational Education Programs

The goal of these programs is the development of job-related skills through a combination of on-the-job training and classroom experience within the institution. Some of these programs may include the more specific goal of the acquisition of a trade or technical certification.

5. Social Education Programs

The programs in Social Education are the most difficult to describe or clarify. Essentially, they are those programs, almost unique to institutions, which prepare the inmate for reintegration into society after a lengthy period of incarceration. Such programs would typically include life skills, decision-making skills, job-interviewing skills, group and family-living skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, consumer education, and communication skills.

The need for these education programs was further substantiated in the Phase I assessment of this topic area. Of particular interest is the fact the Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents who were contacted in the Phase I study not only affirmed the present need, but they also predicted an even greater need for education

programs in the future, especially in the program areas of ABE, Vocational, and Social Education.

In light of the financial investment, the extensive inmate participation (approximately 42,600 inmates were enrolled in the education programs of the 163 institutions surveyed in the Phase I study), and the almost certain continuance and/or possible growth of the need for these education programs for inmates; an analysis of their effectiveness seems important, if not imperative. Thus far, most of the evaluative studies in correctional education have attended only to the internal aspects and immediate outcomes of education programs for inmates. There has not been any substantive effort made to compare the intermediate and long range outcomes of program participants and non-participants. The evaluation model presented in this paper is designed to measure the impact of education programs for inmates by providing a comparative analysis of the outcomes in the case of program participants and a similar group of non-participants.

The four principal issues to be explored are concerned with the impact of participation in a correctional education program upon an inmate's academic achievement, self-concept and social adjustment, employability, and recidivism. The examination of the issues could be undertaken to seek answers to the following questions:

- Does participation in an education program while incarcerated significantly raise academic achievement when compared to that of non-participants possessing similar characteristics?
- Does participation in education programs significantly affect self-concept and social adjustment when compared to non-participants?
- Does participation in such programs impact upon the acquisition and type of employment after release when compared to non-participants?
- Does participation in these programs reduce recidivism relative to similar non-participants?
- If differences in the above items do exist between participant and similar non-participant groups, what are the salient characteristics of the more successful types?

III. Comparison Groups

The nature of the correctional system and the complexity of the criminal justice process makes the use of a controlled experimental design impractical, if not impossible. The quasi-experimental method suggested here makes use of a participant group and a comparison group to measure

the effects of the participation in the correctional education program. This experience is to be evaluated by means of information gathered on both participant and comparison groups.

The latter is chosen in a way that makes it "similar" to the treatment group, especially on characteristics that are believed to be related to post-release performance in the community. The choice is not random selection. Rather, it consists of going to a file or records on persons in the correctional population and selecting cases that resemble, at least roughly the members of the treatment group. If the first selection is rough, the comparison group members may later be screened more carefully, by hand or by computer to insure close similarity to the treatment group on key characteristics. (Adams, 1975, p. 60)

The respective groups for this suggested Phase II study would be, therefore, selected from inmates in large maximum-and medium-security prisons who will than have been released for at least nine months. The participant group in each institution will include ten inmates chosen from those students enrolled in each of the four programs to be examined (ABE, SE/GED, PSE and VOC) from each of 16 institutions. Those selected must have either been in this program for at least nine months or have completed the program. In order that any problems which may be associated with the "newness" of a program may be

eliminated where possible, it is suggested that all programs under consideration should have been in existence for more than two calendar years.

The final comparison group would then consist of forty (40) inmates who could have enrolled in education but did not actually participate. It would be preferable to have subjects who had volunteered for or expressed interest in the educational program but who, for some reason, were unable to participate. This would insure that a reasonable assumption could be made regarding the existence of similar motivation in both groups. It is appreciated, however, that this may present difficulties in matching, nor, if done, will it guarantee compatibility regarding the intensity of motivation between the groups. It is suggested that an initial selection of sixty (60) comparison subjects be made in order that later refinements of choice regarding comparable characteristics can be made (Glaser, 1977, p. 175-177).

A. Comparable Group Characteristics

The experience of other researchers in corrections (Adams, p. 62) indicates that there is some difficulty in gathering adequate information regarding all appropriate comparable individual characteristics. It is believed,

however, that the comparison group should have matching characteristics in the following categories:

- Age
- Race
- I. Q.
- Scholastic achievement test scores at entry
- Employment record prior to incarceration
- Prior juvenile commitments
- Prior adult arrests and commitments
- Institutional adjustment
- Length of sentence
- Type of crime

B. Basis for Comparison

After a minimum of nine months from time of release the two groups will be compared upon the basis of the following criteria:

- Academic Achievement (Difference in scores on Test of Adult Basic Education)
- Self Concept (Difference of scores on Tennessee Self Concept Scale)
- Personality Adjustment (Difference in scores on M.M.P.I.)
- Employment success including the pursuit of further study and/or vocational training. Consideration would be given but not limited to the following:

- a. The percentage of each group which obtained full-time employment
- b. The difference in the status of jobs acquired both between groups and before and after incarceration as measured by starting salaries and training or education required for position.
- c. The time required to obtain employment after release
- d. The amount of time employed during the nine months after release

Recidivism rate as determined by the following:

- a. The arrest, conviction and incarceration rates of the two groups during the first nine months after release
- b. The frequency, severity and type of crimes committed during this period

C. Program Characteristics

If, after initial comparison of the two groups, there is a significant difference in favor of the participant group it will be necessary to determine if certain program

characteristics are systematically associated with higher success levels. The two program types would be examined on the basis of the following illustrative questions which relate to such characteristics:

- Does participation in one specific program per se affect success?
- Was a specific social education course available in conjunction with the program?
- Was a pre-release program offered in conjunction with the specific program?
- Were programs integrated or "clustered"?
- Was a "needs assessment" conducted in association with the program?
- What was the staff-to-student ratio?
- Were counseling and support services available?
- Were students considered to be full-time or part-time?
- What was the level of training and experience of the teaching staff?
- What didactical methods were used?
- What was the availability and adequacy of materials and equipment?
- What were per-student expenditures?
- What was the source and degree of continuity of the program funding?

It is suggested that the data base collected during the NEP Phase I Study on Correctional Education Program for Inmates, available from the National Criminal Justice Referral Service, will greatly facilitate and expedite the identification of sample institutions and programs as well as providing information regarding the program characteristics listed above.

D. Scope of the Phase II Evaluation Study

The Phase I study identified 327 institutions which can be considered as being large enough to offer comprehensive educational programs and which have a general inmate population. Those institutions which were solely special function facilities, atypical or unusually small institutions, were eliminated from consideration. It is suggested that further refinement of the "universe" be made in a Phase II evaluation of correctional education programs. The scope of this study should be limited to those educational programs which are in maximum- or medium-security institutions with a total population in excess of 800 inmates. The experience of the NCEEP Phase I staff indicated that minimum security, female or co-educational institutions were essentially smaller, offered fewer programs, possessed a different "affective" atmosphere, were

not subject to the same management restrictions and were not susceptible to the same pressures, problems and contradictions that the larger male institutions exhibited. The number of sample institutions should be a manageable one (e.g. sixteen institutions) and should be geographically representative. It is suggested that two maximum and two medium security facilities be chosen from the four geographic quadrants used in the Phase I study. These institutions should also represent the national pattern in terms of geographic location (viz. twelve in rural setting and four in an urban location). As discussed earlier, forty inmates would comprise the participant group (ten from each program type) and forty inmates in the comparison group in each of the sample institutions.

Outcome data on each of the groups would be collected from the following three major sources:

- From inmate personal records held by the institution, the Court Systems, the Police and Parole Departments.
- From interviews with subjects and their parole office.
- From Tests administered to the subjects at

a time at least nine months after release.

While the researchers conducting the investigation should determine the most appropriate instruments to use it is suggested that the following instruments might be used in the respective areas to be examined:

- Academic Achievement - the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)
- Self Concept - The Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS).
- Personality Adjustment - The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)

These instruments are relatively widely used within correctional institutions and data collected during the diagnostic and classification period at entry could be used for purposes of temporal comparison.

The problems of locating and gaining the cooperation of inmates after release have plagued such research in the past. It is, therefore, suggested that a "cooperation" and testing fee of \$10.00 paid to the inmate may well ameliorate some of these difficulties. Information regarding program characteristics can be gained initially from the NCEEP Phase I data base. Further information

required for analysis can be gained by site visits to the institution where interviews with the Director of Education and his staff can be conducted.

In order to conduct such an evaluation, a relatively long period of time is necessary, probably three years. A suggested schedule of activities can be found on pages 20-22.

E. Problems in Implementation

The following areas may cause problems in implementation of the evaluation model presented above. Unless these problem areas are recognized and pre-empted wherever possible the results of the study will be seriously limited with respect to their meaning and application. The main problems associated with the implementation of this design cluster in five areas are as follows:

1. Accessibility of inmates, i.e., subjects
2. Accessibility and reliability of data
3. Cooperation necessary to complete the project
4. Staff resources necessary
5. Project timetable

A major obstacle in the implementation of this evaluation design will be the difficulty in maintaining

and finalizing contact with inmate subjects after release. The "retrieval" process is a difficult aspect of any research effort, but it is especially complex when it involves post release studies of inmates. It is, therefore, expedient that the followup contacts with inmates be given adequate consideration and planning. Environmental controls that can be included in the project's methodology to enhance the possibility of subject "retrieval" without creating bias in the outcomes of the study will be necessary. Two samples of such control that will be utilized in this design are the following: (1) the selection of a large enough pool of subjects to cushion the study for a possible 50% attrition rate, and (2) the provision of a financial incentive to enhance subject participation.

The accessibility and reliability of the data necessary for project implementation will also present problems. Data available from the Phase I study will provide comprehensive information on the nature of the educational programs and types of educational and other entry level tests given in selected institutions. Most information, however, relating to specific programs will have to be gathered, and the quality of available testing data will have to be carefully examined and assessed

at each of the selected sites.

The accessibility and reliability of employment and recidivism data will be an even more complex matter. The quality of the sources and methods used to collect those data will be a critical factor in the analysis of outcomes. Also some identification and measurement of environmental conditions in the community that affect past release outcomes will be necessary. Research in the classification and measurement of community environmental impacts is in its early stages of development, but some rough assessment of Familial and Community environment would be important. The importance of this environmental measurement lies not only in its contribution in outcome analysis but also in its potential "pay off" for participating institutions. Rudot Moos points out the need for correctional practioners "to know more about the overall structure and dynamics of the community settings in which they work" (Moos, R. H., 1975, p. 285). Those who work in correctional institutions have this need to a greater degree than most practioners in the criminal justicesystem because of their separation from the community setting to which inmates eventually return. Consequently, a substantive amount of the project's resources and time will have to be expended in determining

the most feasible and appropriate methods of collecting reliable post release data in each community setting.

The collection of these data will require that a network of communication be established based in the institution and extending into the surrounding post release agencies, supportive services, and parole offices. Liaison with the research components of state correctional agencies and with the state planning should help in the initial planning and eventual determination of what sources and methods of obtaining post release data are the most effective for their respective areas.

Extensive energy will be required to develop this kind of communications network and to maintain the cooperative effort of the many external parties upon whom the study will rely. One encouraging factor is that the degree of cooperation and support for the Phase I study was quite high. An 80% response rate was achieved on a lengthy questionnaire sent to 200 correctional institutions, and the two day site visits at 20 institutions were carried out with little difficulty. The Phase I project staff felt that the reason for the success of the site visit process was due in large part to the staff's prior experience and background in correctional education.

In light of the above observation it is important that

the staff recruited for this evaluation have both a pragmatic and theoretical knowledge base of the criminal justice system. The staff should have both knowledge of and experience in the education programs in a prison setting. This balance of theory and practice allows for greater sensitivity to the complex factors influencing institutional programs, and minimizes problems related to obtaining support from those in the field. It will also be necessary for project staff to have research background in the social sciences--especially in the areas of educational and psychological tests and measurement.

The tasks necessary to complete this evaluation design will require a project timetable of 36 months. An outline of these tasks is given below with an estimation of the amount of time required for each task. This overlap in time phasing of the project is depicted in the "Time and Task" schedule.

TIME AND TASK SCHEDULE

1. Planning and organization (3 months)

This includes a review of the Phase I data, the selection and orientation of staff, and initial contacts with state and regional agencies and institutions.

2. Development of Methodology (4 months)

This includes assessment and refinement of Phase I evaluation design, the selection and/or development of instruments necessary to collect, process, and analyze data.

3. Identification of comparison groups (5 months)

This includes a review and assessment of institutional and educational records, the selection of a pool of subjects in education program(s) and in the control group, initial contacts and interviews with subjects and the obtaining of waivers when necessary.

4. Identification and contact with criminal justice agencies, institutional support services, and other community agencies (2 months)

5. Collection of Institutional Data (3 months)

This includes the development of data base on research subjects, institutional environment, and program components.

6. Interview and Test Subjects (9 months)

This task would require an extensive amount of time because of the lack of control over an inmate's actual release date. This will be done 9 months after subjects have been released.

7-

8. Interviews and data collection on subjects from communal justice and community agencies (2 months)

9. Analysis of the Data (6 months)

This includes comparison of the two groups on test data and a statistical analysis of the outcomes of two groups in employment and recidivism.

10. Institutional site visits and interviews (3 months)

This includes gathering further information on educational programs for purposes of analysis and giving feedback to institutional administrators and educational staff on anticipated outcomes of study.

11. Draft of Final Report (4 months)

This includes disseminating drafts of final report for discussion, review, and criticism, and making final revisions.

12. Utilization of Research (4 months)

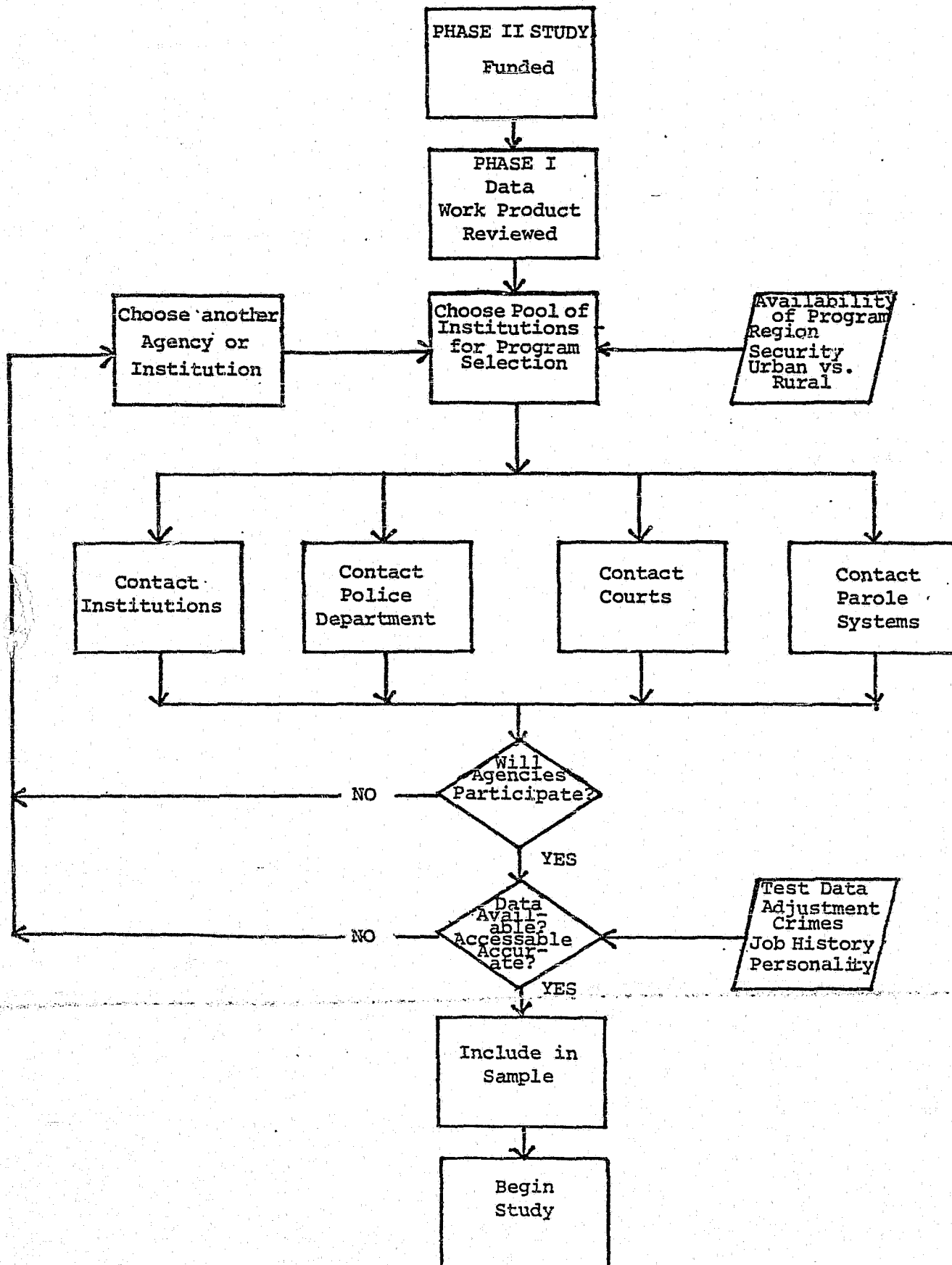
This includes efforts to disseminate the results of the evaluation study to those in the field. National and regional conferences of the Correctional Education Association and other such Forums could be used to publicize the results and recommendations of the study.

The scope and nature of the evaluation design proposed

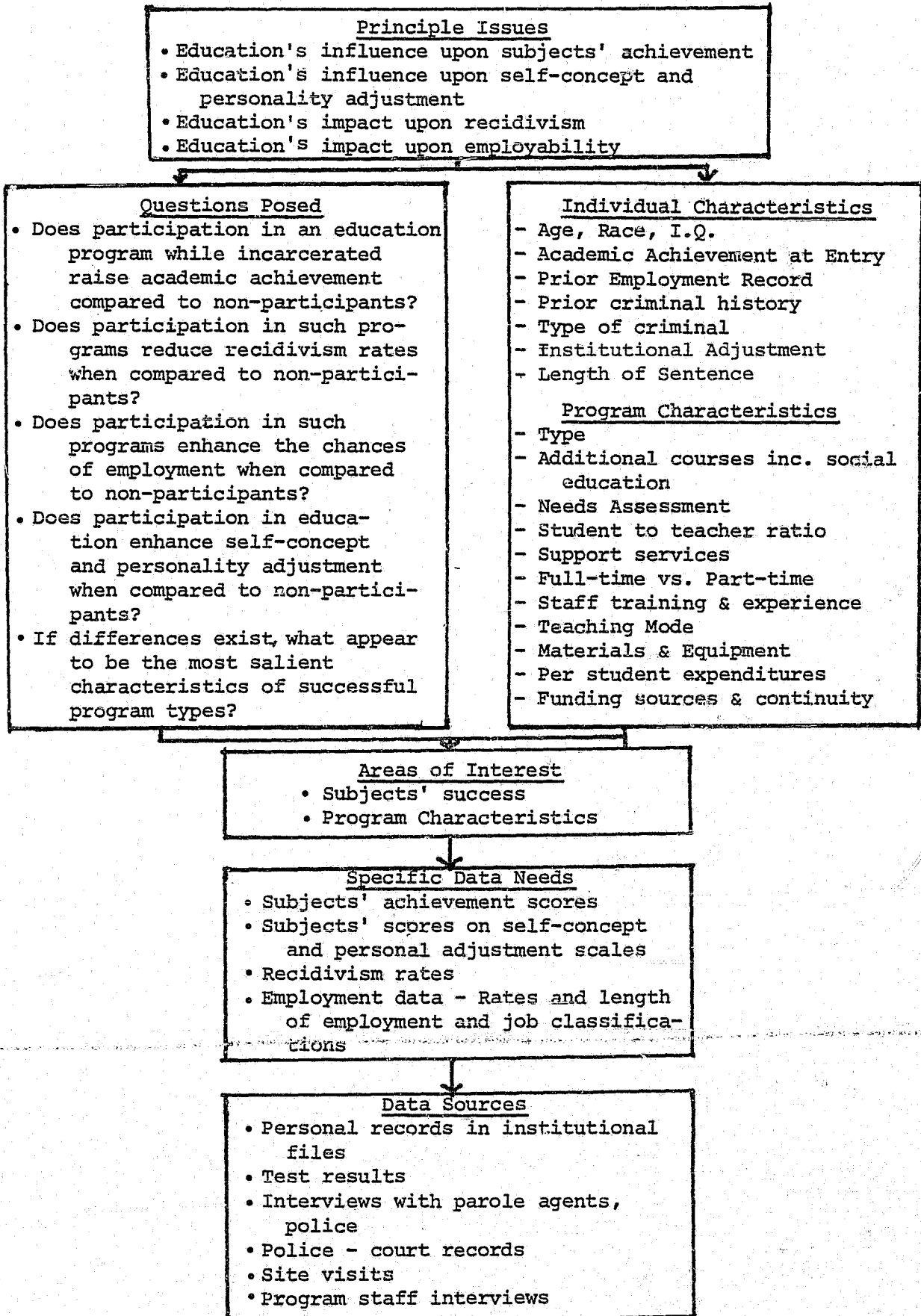
in this paper give rise to the following two recommendations:

1. In order to limit the scope of the study, and subsequently its economic and strategic manageability, one program type could be chosen for comparative outcome analysis. This program--preferably Adult Basic Education programs because of recognized need--could then be evaluated as a "pilot" study.
2. Since the nature of this evaluation model involves a post release analysis of outcomes, and since it includes such variables as employment and recidivism outcomes, this evaluation design might possibly be done as a part of, or in cooperation with, other Phase II studies dealing with related topic areas.

INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES



PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING DATA



TIME x TASK SCHEDULE FOR PHASE II STUDY

Task	Month From Start																																						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36			
1. Planning and Organization	3 months																																						
2. Development of Methodology			4 months																																				
3. Identification & Treatment of Comparison Groups								5 months																															
4. Contact Police, Parole & Courts													2 months																										
5. Collect Institutional Data														3 months																									
6. Interview Test Subjects													9 months																										
7. Interview Parole Officers																						2 months																	
8. Collect Agency Data																						2 months																	
9. Analysis of Data																							6 months																
10. Site Visits & Interviews																															3 months								
11. Draft & Write Final Report																																		4 months					
12. Utilization of Research																																			4 months				

PROPOSED BUDGET

1.0	Wages and Salaries (Including Fringe Benefits)		
1.1	One Project Director & Principal Investigator		
	100% AY at \$25,000	\$	25,000.00
1.2	Two x Associate Investigators		
	100% AY at \$15,000		30,000.00
1.3	One Secretary		
	100% AY at \$ 8,000		8,000.00
1.4	One Statistical Consultant		
	33-1/3% AY at \$24,000		8,000.00
1.5	Eight x Graduate Assistants		
	50% AY at \$11,600		46,400.00
	TOTAL (1.1-1.5)	\$	117,400.00
	X three years		\$ 352,000.00
2.0	Supplies, Materials, Mailing, purchase of		
	test forms, scoring \$6,000 x three years		18,000.00
3.0	Travel		
3.1	30 flights at \$200.00		6,000.00
3.2	Per Diem 8 persons at \$40.00 x 120 days		51,200.00
3.3	Car rental including gasoline		
	2 teams x 120 days x \$40.00		9,600.00
	TOTAL (3.1-3.3)	\$	66,800.00
4.0	Telephone, 36 months at \$100.00		3,600.00
5.0	Computer time and Key punching		2,500.00
6.0	Interviewing and testing fee		
	1280 subjects x \$10.00		12,800.00
	TOTAL DIRECT COSTS (1.0-6.0)	\$	455,900.00

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