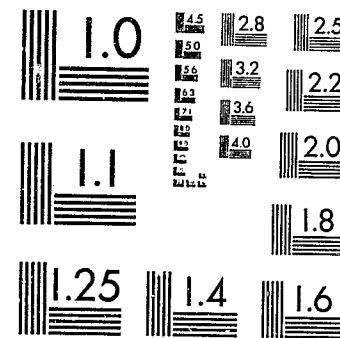


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THE FUNCTIONAL, ILLITERATE:
IS CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION DOING ITS JOB?

by
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April, 1982

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Crime in America is an embarrassment to the democracy that has allowed it to prosper. It continues to increase in disproportionate numbers. Between 1980 and 1981, crime has risen 11%, and in the last twenty years it has more than quadrupled.¹ It continues to thrive despite the efforts of the finest minds in the world with some of the most logical solutions to control it. On any given day over 500,000 people are incarcerated in jails and prisons across the nation. Some estimate that as many as 60% are not first time offenders.² Housing these people is costing over \$4 billion annually for the state correctional institutions alone³ and an additional "\$5 billion is presently being used for constructing new buildings."⁴ Most Americans,

¹Ted Gest, "Our Losing Battle Against Crime," U.S. News and World Report, October 12, 1981, p.39.

²Lane Murray and Richard Carlson, "Needed Revisions in Federal Legislation, Regulation and Guidelines to Serve More Effectively Adults and Juveniles Incarcerated in U.S. Correctional Facilities" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1981), p.4. (Mimeographed.)

³Diana Trivisono, ACA Directory, (College Park, Maryland, 1981), p. xiv.

⁴Anthony P. Trivisono, Report in Education: A Weapon Against Crime "A Forum on Prisoner Education, Summary Proceedings", (Corrections Program, U.S. Department of Education, March 26, 1981), p.20.

angered by both the violence that controls the country and what they perceive as impotence by the law enforcement agencies, do not realize the impact that literacy education might have in helping to control the increasing cycle of crime in America.

Most crimes today are committed by people who do not have high school diplomas. Estimates indicate that between 85-95% of today's inmates do not have their diplomas and many of them can neither read nor write. Yet, in today's society, which is dedicated to the technology it has so carefully developed, there are growing numbers of adults who have failed to learn even the most basic of skills. In the educational world they are termed "functional illiterates." They are those individuals who cannot communicate positively and successfully in their own adult world. Their self-esteem is lower than the normal population⁵ and they are individuals who respond and react without thinking first.

Researchers/educators tend to disagree on what constitutes functional illiteracy, but agree that it relates to the readability level of the individual. Wanda Cook

⁵Delight Champagne and Robert Young, "The Self-Concept of the Adult Basic Education Student," Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 4:3 (Fall, 1980), p. 185.

refers to functional illiteracy as holding jobs and functioning in the seventies:

Samples of state forms, application for drivers' licenses, bank loans, and medical aid show that the average reading level of such materials is tenth grade or higher. Income tax forms have a readability level of twelfth grade or better. It becomes clear, then, that a person who can function at a fifth or sixth grade level is severely handicapped in today's fast moving and technological world. A ninth grade education would come closer to meeting the functional reading needs of a person living in the seventies.

Edwin Smith claims that functional illiteracy falls below the readability level of a newspaper--about the seventh grade.⁷ While some can agree with either of these definitions, others suggest operational skills that fall below the fifth grade level.

Even the various state correctional education programs do not agree. Washington state claims that anyone with an educational achievement score below the seventh grade will receive basic skills instruction.⁸ South

⁶Wanda Cook, Adult Literacy Education in the United States (Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, 1977), p. 105.

⁷Edwin Smith, Literacy Education for Adolescents and Adults (San Francisco, California: Boyd and Fraser Publishing Co., 1970), p. 3.

⁸Washington State Department of Corrections, "Report to the Legislature--Academic and Vocational Training," (Olympia, 1981), p. 38. (Mimeographed.)

Dakota states that those who function below the ninth grade level receive Adult Basic Education⁹ since they are considered functional illiterates. But California and Texas claim that functional illiteracy is measured at or below the fifth grade level of achievement. This fifth grade definition is supported by correctional researchers. John Conrad accepts "the operational definition of a fifth grade achievement score as functional illiteracy,"¹⁰ and T.A. Ryan classifies the functionally illiterate as those individuals "whose basic communication and computational skills are at best no higher than a fifth grade level."¹¹

In her January, 1982, Phi Delta Kappan article entitled "Literacy for What?", Maxine Greene points out the difficulty of being able to think, "if one lacks appropriate words,"¹² and states that perhaps there are "connections between speechlessness and alienation and

⁹South Dakota State Penitentiary, personal correspondence between Lloyd E. Stivers, Principal of Coolidge High School, and the writers, September 29-October 10, 1981.

¹⁰John P. Conrad, Adult Offender Education Programs (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Development, Testing and Dissemination, March, 1981), p.4.

¹¹T. A. Ryan, and others, Model of Adult Basic Education in Corrections, (Honolulu, 1975), p. iii.

¹²Maxine Greene, "Literacy for What?", Phi Delta Kappan, 63:5 (January, 1982), p. 326.

violence."¹³ Where better do we see examples of these characteristics than in the prison setting, where alienation, violence, and certainly a lack of articulate communication abounds.

Statement of the Problem

Raymond Bell and associates conducted a survey that estimated "50% of adults in federal and state facilities can neither read nor write,"¹⁴ while Roberts states that "the average inmate functions 2-3 grades below the actual number of school years he has completed."¹⁵ Various studies of educational programs in federal and state correctional institutions indicate that the adult prison population, not unlike the population at large, is composed of roughly 20-30% who are considered functionally illiterate, while the state of Maryland claims 50% functional illiteracy of new inmates in its system.¹⁶

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Raymond Bell and others, "Correctional Education Programs for Inmates," National Evaluation Programs, Phase I Report, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, June, 1979), p. 1.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Maryland State Department of Education, Corrections Education Office, "Report of the Educational Coordinating Council for Correctional Education." (Baltimore, 1981), p. 23. (Mimeographed.)

Correctional education programs for the functionally illiterate are becoming a subject of national attention. Secretary of Education Terrell Bell's remarks to the March 26, 1981, Correction Seminar included a reference to the teaching of basic skills: reading, writing, arithmetic, and a "marketable job skill," as "tools for survival" that might be accomplished through correctional education programs. He states that "incarceration is a sentence of temporary loss of freedom; not a sentence of lifelong ignorance, unemployment, poverty, and crime."¹⁷

Chief Justice Warren Burger brought the functionally illiterate inmate to public attention when he advocated "that every inmate who cannot read, write, spell and do simple arithmetic. . . be given that training--not as an optional matter but as a mandatory requirement."¹⁸ Burger further stated that inmates might be helped to "learn their way out of prison"¹⁹ because the "offender has been viewed as an individual who needs to be changed in order to realize the goal of protecting society."²⁰ One method

¹⁷Terrell H. Bell, "Report to the Forum on Prisoner Education," (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Corrections Program, 1981), p. 6. (Mimeographed.)

¹⁸Warren E. Burger, "Annual Report to the American Bar Association," (Houston, Texas, 1981), p. 6. (Mimeographed.)

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Generalized Planning Model for Corrections, (University of South Carolina: College of Criminal Justice, 1977), p. 7.

used to achieve this goal is education. However, for the functionally illiterate in a correctional institution, this may be an insurmountable task.

Although many correctional institutions are trying to comply with Chief Justice Burger's recommendations, many must limit school enrollment due to the size of the inmate population, budget difficulties, or space limitations. Consequently, they must prioritize which students may go to school, if all cannot. In some states, students whose educational achievement scores are fifth grade level or below are mandated, or at least given top priority, to go to school. Therefore, are the state institutions attempting to provide educational programming for the functionally illiterate population by basing the curricula on the concepts of Adult Basic Education?

Significance of the Problem

In recent times, the offender has been viewed as an individual who needs to be changed in order to realize the goal of protecting society. A variety of redirective programs, including education, . . . have been used. Most redirective programs, however, have been underfinanced and ill defined, while simultaneously being expected to perform a multitude of functions.

The public demands, at the same time, justice and humaneness in the corrections system and economy in the system operation. Economy is not simply a matter of cutting expenditures. Corrections must know what it is spending, and what it is producing. Systematic planning of correctional programs²¹ will result in meeting the demands of the public.

Even among the most avid critics of any educational program, literacy education for adults is supported and encouraged. Literacy education for incarcerated felons in correctional settings, however, may be another matter. If prisons are using the term "corrections" in a literal sense as "the art of pointing out errors, mistakes, or of setting right according to a just standard," then the terms "correctional" and "education" are correlative. However, if "corrections" is used in the more informal sense as "punishment,"²² then "correctional" and "education" are incongruent. Consequently, it appears that literacy programs in correctional institutions are encountering enormous obstacles, among them: lack of goal direction and planning, financial difficulties, as well as philosophical differences.

²¹Ibid.

Well-organized, properly implemented Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs would not only help the functional illiterate successfully learn the basic skills in reading, writing, spelling and simple arithmetic; but because of the correlation between education and crime, they could possibly reduce recidivism as well.

In view of the number of inmates considered functionally illiterate, the problem to be examined is whether State Departments of Corrections are offering education programs to this population.

Hypothesis

It is the intent of this research to consider the following hypothesis:

There does not exist, nationwide, established Adult Basic Education curricula for incarcerated adult inmate/students who are attending regular academic school in state correctional institutions.

Furthermore, by presenting data on adult inmate/students currently being served by state correctional education programs, this report intends to:

- a) specify the state of the art of educational programs and curricula in the various state institutions.
- b) determine whether the state curricula are aimed at the educational performance level of the inmate/students attending school in each respective state.
- c) ascertain the general structure of the academic programs for adult offenders in state institutions.

Definitions of Terms

Adult Basic Education (ABE) - educational programs that focus on basic skills instruction for educationally disadvantaged adults, using remedial and/or life-coping materials to increase proficiency in the language arts (reading, spelling, language, writing) and mathematics.

Correctional Education (CE) - educational programs offered within the confines of a correctional institution or facility (i.e. jail, youth center, state or federal penitentiary) to inmates in order to increase their academic and/or vocational knowledge.

Educational Achievement Level (E.A.) - the functioning level of a student as determined by the TABE or another standardized test for placement in a classroom suitable to the needs and abilities of the student.

Free World - a term commonly used in corrections meaning the work society outside the prison community.

General Educational Development (GED) Directed - educational program whose goal is the attainment of a GED certificate. Subjects include: Reading, Language (Grammar), Writing, Science, Social Studies and Mathematics. GED related materials are used.

High School (HS) Directed - educational programs that focus on the standard secondary curriculum, including such subjects as: English, Mathematics, Social Studies, History, Science; whose goal is the attainment of a recognized high school diploma.

Life Skills (LS) Directed - educational program specifically tailored to assist the adult student in understanding and applying functional knowledge to life-coping situations.

Vocational Education - educational program that focuses on job training and job-related activities and skills.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Nature of the Adult Inmate/Student

This study focuses specifically on the availability of ABE curricula for the functionally illiterate inmate/student. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the characteristics of the functionally illiterate student in the prison environment.

Studies of the "adult/learner" in correctional settings indicate that the inmate/student is not unlike his counterpart in the free world. George Ambury wonders whether inmate/students could be considered an "identifiable sub-population of adult learners."¹ Buxton, Fowler, and Kushner report that inmate/students are ill-prepared for and apprehensive about education programs, and see little relevance in these programs to their lives.² Where Roberts states that the average inmate operates two-three grades below school years completed, Gehring describes the inmate/student as a drop out, four to six grade levels behind his

¹George G. Ambury, "Basic Issues in the Education of Prisoners" (Paper presented for Annual Conference of the Ontario Educational Research Council, November, 1979), p. 13.

²Barry M. Buxton, David Fowler and Cathy Kushner, "Interest Centered Learning: An Approach to Curriculum Synthesis," The Journal of Correctional Education, 31:3 (September, 1980), p. 29.

peers, with few "saleable occupational skills," plenty of learning and/or drug-related problems, violently oriented with a poor self-concept.³ Frank Dell'Apa cites various learning handicaps as typical of the inmate/student: low intelligence, emotional problems, lack of motivation.⁴ Furthermore, the inmate/student who is operating below the fifth grade level generally has difficulty transferring new information from one situation to another.⁵

When the inmate/students walk into the classroom, they bring unlimited experiences, backgrounds and diverse attitudes with them. Since they have probably experienced little or no success in the traditional structure of formal, public education, their "academic repertoire" is restricted.⁶ They are not intrinsically motivated, so anything learned must have "immediate application, rather than deferred use."⁷

³Thom Gehring, "Correctional Education and the United States Department of Education," The Journal of Correctional Education, 31:3 (September, 1980), p. 4.

⁴Frank Dell'Apa, Educational Programs in Adult Correctional Institutions: A Survey, (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, U.S. Office of Education Grant, 1973), p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 35.

⁶Albert R. Roberts, ed., Readings in Prison Education (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1973), p. 119.

⁷John P. Conrad, Adult Offender Education Programs (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Development, Testing and Dissemination, March, 1981), p. 16.

They have probably learned through a frustrating process of adapting any former learning to current life-coping situations. Consequently, inmate/students often feel a sense of powerlessness and apprehension about being back in a classroom environment that is reminiscent of former failures.

According to recent statistics cited by the United States Bureau of Prisons, the average age of offenders is twenty-five. Most come from a lower socio-economic population,⁸ where "poverty, by its production of a sense of powerlessness, alters goal striving and problem solving in those it affects."⁹ In his 1964 study, Haggstrom states that this powerlessness "leads the poor to be dependent on the organization, persons, and institutions which can meet these [individuals'] needs."¹⁰

⁸"The U.S. Prison Population (Some Basic Facts)," Information provided by Corrections Program, U.S. Dept. of Education, Washington, D.C., p. 1.

⁹Charles V. Carlsen, "Proposed Educational Programming for Southern Ohio Correctional Facility" (Ohio Law Enforcement Planning Agency, Interpersonal Communication, Part I-General, February, 1972), p. 90.

¹⁰Ibid.

Nature of the Educational Environment

The educational environment in the correctional setting is unique in that most educational environments result from institutions whose primary purpose is education. The emphasis of correctional institutions, which may or may not have educational programs, is on maintaining security, not necessarily on providing the best of conditions for educating the inmate/student population. Regardless of how important educators feel the education of the functional illiterate may be, the fact remains that the students are inmates who attend school in a physical environment that was not constructed for and is not oriented toward the academic education of its population.

John Conrad details some of the problems many educational programs must confront because of prison personnel. A warden's job is multi-faceted and frustrating at best, but Conrad states that often there are uncooperative wardens who view the education of inmates as a complicating factor in the daily routine of the prison facility.¹¹ Simultaneously, he reminds the reader that even well-intentioned wardens must prioritize their responsibilities so that education may fall at the bottom of the list. Maintaining the institution becomes a primary goal. Some wardens

¹¹Conrad, p. 54.

simply do not have the time and energy to devote to overseeing the logistics of an educational program, nor do they have the personnel to assist in the implementation of the program. Many appear hesitant to leave educational responsibilities to educational personnel because of the seeming "conflict of purpose of the correctional facility."¹²

What results is conflict that begins "with the gap between the philosophy of repressive control that too often characterizes the custodial personnel, and the belief in the importance of restorative programs,"¹³ in this case, the education of the functionally illiterate. Meanwhile, inmate/students may find that they have moved from one "aversive" environment in the free world schools to another "aversive" environment in the correctional setting.¹⁴

¹²Ibid., p. 54.

¹³Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁴Roberts, p. 147.

Problems and Restrictions Affecting Correctional Education

Although correctional education agencies might be doing an effective and reasonably efficient job of educating inmate/students, many restrictions must first be identified. According to Gehring, these restrictions include a general lack of standards for correctional education, financing, and curricular development.¹⁵ In an interview for U.S. News and World Report, Chief Justice Burger agrees with these restrictions by stating that a lack of money and a variety of restrictive laws are some of the reasons why so few inmates are getting into education and job-training classes.¹⁶

Correctional education agencies and the American Correctional Association (ACA) are working at eliminating some of these problems. In 1980, members of the ACA, including many correctional educators, drafted standards for academic and vocational education in a revision of the 1973 standards. These standards represent every phase of correctional education, from structuring the educational program so that every inmate can enter at any time, to counseling inmates for appropriate placement in vocational

¹⁵Thom Gehring, "The Correctional Education Professional Identity Issue," The Journal of Correctional Education, 32:3 (September, 1981), p. 20.

¹⁶Warren E. Burger, "Unclogging the Courts--Chief Justice Speaks Out", U.S. News and World Report, 92:7 (February 22, 1982), p. 39.

courses most suited to the students' abilities.¹⁷ They are designed to be followed by every institution, as are those related to treatment, recreation, medicine, et.al.

Financing is possibly the most important restriction for correctional education. Some correctional education agencies must write grants to the state legislature and/or the federal education departments for funding for the succeeding year. This procedure restricts planning because of the uncertainty of approved funding. Moreover, grant-writing personnel must divert precious time and talent to the task of funding a budget through a diversity of uncertain sources, rather than to developing much-needed curricula.

State Departments of Corrections often allocate monies to some states' budgets. Occasionally, this allocation is a generous sum that the education agency can function efficiently with. Frequently this allocation fluctuates annually, thus causing difficulty in planning the budget. In either the grants proposal process or the allocation of monies from the State Departments of Corrections, problems occur. Most importantly, the lack of a sufficient budget forces most correctional education agencies to contract with local free world high schools and/or community colleges,

¹⁷American Correctional Association, Standards for Adult Local Detention Facilities, Second Edition. (April, 1981), p. 109.

rather than hire their own staff for educational planning and programming.

Free world educational programs are very important to correctional education. Since these free world educational programs have established curricula, correctional education tends to rely heavily on them as they exist or as they may be easily modified. Since Standard 2-4424 specifies that a standardized performance-based curriculum be developed for the educational department in correctional settings, this readily accessible free world curricula repeatedly serves as the basis for the educational programs in prison.¹⁸ Since many contracted institutions are accredited, the correctional education programs are simultaneously accredited, thus meeting Standard 2-4423. What results is a readily adaptable, easily accessible and accredited program for the correctional institution. However, it may not necessarily be tailored to the needs of the functionally illiterate population who have previously failed in these "accredited" free world programs.

Another problem confronting correctional education is the federal laws. These laws were written for the public school systems, so any mention of correctional education is minimal. Consequently, adequate implementation of some federal laws must be subject to modification for the prison school systems. In many cases, correctional coordinators

¹⁸Ibid.

have had to seek assistance and permission to adapt federal guidelines so that their individual education programs could comply with federal laws.

The Adult Education Act of 1966, revised in 1978 under Public Law 95-581, has a direct bearing on the correctional education system. Its purpose is to offer educationally disadvantaged persons, sixteen years or older, "the opportunity to acquire basic skills necessary to function in society and to become more employable, productive, and responsible citizens."¹⁹ However, the problem with this law is that only 20% of the discretionary monies granted to the state are allowed to be utilized for the "education of institutionalized adults."²⁰ Since the term "institutionalized adults" encompasses a wide range of classifications, this 20% figure is further reduced.

The Omnibus Reconciliation Act (or The Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981), formerly Public Law 95-561, ESEA Title I, is another of the laws that restricts correctional education. This law states that any student who is educationally deprived and twenty-one years or younger, is eligible for this program as stipulated by Title I. According to the law, an educationally

¹⁹Federal Register, Part XVI 45:66 (Department of Health, Education and Welfare: Office of Education, Washington, D.C., April, 1980), p. 22776.

²⁰Ibid., p. 22778.

disadvantaged student in the public schools is one who functions at least two to three grades below the norm for his age group. Recalling both Roberts' statement that "the average inmate functions 2-3 grades below the actual number of school years he has completed," and Gehring's description that the inmate/student is four to six grade levels behind his peers, then this would qualify most of the inmate/student population for this program. However, the age restriction has decreased the efficiency of this necessary program because many inmates are not under the age of twenty-one, while many of those who are do not qualify for various reasons. Thus many inmate/students do not benefit from this program.

Public Law 94-142, or the Handicapped Act, has created the greatest difficulty for correctional education. The law requires that all school systems offer special services to their students between the ages of three and twenty-one, who are educationally handicapped due to physical, mental, emotional, learning, speech, autistic or multiple handicaps. These services must be offered by specially certified support personnel. Furthermore, Section 121 a 345 of the law states that parental participation is mandatory at the admission, review and dismissal (ARD) committee meeting where the student is considered for admission into the special education program. In an attempt to comply with the law in general, and Section 121 a 345 in particular, correctional education agencies

have had to request certain exceptions. Additionally, the correctional agencies have received permission to dispense with parental participation in the ARD meeting since the inmate/students have been convicted as adults and may act on their own behalf.

Perhaps Section 121 a 550 is the most difficult to implement for correctional education. It states that anyone in special education must be placed in the "least restrictive environment" possible. Even the suggestion of a "least restrictive environment" is diametrically opposed to the physical structure, nature and goals of the correctional institution. Therefore, many handicapped inmate/students may not be receiving the education they need due to the lack of available facilities (open concept rooms that may be distracting, lack of wheelchair ramps). However, correctional education programs are attempting to accomodate both this section of PL 94-142, as well as the individual's needs within the framework of the institution itself.

Ironically, where State Departments of Education could provide support and assistance with the federal laws, instead they present another restriction. In a report submitted to U.S. Department of Education Secretary Terrell H. Bell relating to current problems of funding and administration of federal legislation, regulation, and guidelines governing correctional education programs, Dr. Lane Murray of Windham School System and the Corrections

Program staff of the U.S. Department of Education requested assistance from the State Departments of Corrections and the State Departments of Education to identify problems concerning correctional education. Of the forty-three responses, only five were from the State Departments of Education. One State Department of Education even claimed that the State Department of Corrections had no educational program, therefore, no assistance was received from them.²¹

Scope and Limitations

The purpose of this study was to determine whether established ABE curricula exist in state institutions. Due to the scope of the study, several limitations emerged. Foremost was the possible semantic misunderstanding and subsequent misinterpretation of the terms used on the questionnaire: "basis," "focus," even the collective terms: "ABE," "GED," "Life Skills". When asked what the basis was for their curriculum, some states may have responded with what they perceived as the goal of their academic program; whereas others may have understood basis to refer to the way in which the curriculum was structured via materials, etc. For example, some states may have indicated

²¹Lane Murray and Richard Carlson, "Needed Revisions in Federal Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines to Serve More Effectively Adults and Juveniles Incarcerated in U.S. Correctional Facilities," (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education, 1981) pp. 2 and 8.

that their curriculum is high school directed, or GED directed, because the acquisition of a diploma or certificate is the goal of the program. Therefore, they may have perceived this as the basis, when in essence, they may be teaching ABE, which is the basis for the program.

Furthermore, some states' responses needed clarification via telephone or letter, since traveling to the various state correctional institutions was impossible on a national scale.

Another limitation of this study was the omission of the GED response in the question three (see Questionnaire, Appendix). Consequently, some states wrote in "GED" as the basis for their curriculum, instead of selecting any of the indicated alternatives.

The various state correctional education programs use different standardized tests (CAT, SORT, TABE, WRAT) for inmate placement. Since this survey is not comparing standardized test information and norms, but educational levels, the diversity of standardized tests being used for educational placement by the states may present a limitation.

Assumptions

Statistics indicate that a majority of the inmate/ students attending school in correctional institutions dropped out of free world public schools. Statistics also substantiate the claim that many of these individuals are considered "functional illiterates." The researchers have therefore made the following assumptions regarding this study:

- 1) That the states recognize the substantial number of functional illiterates in their educational programs.
- 2) That correctional education agencies should be interested in developing a curriculum directed toward literacy, if they have not already done so.
- 3) That state correctional education agencies will be interested in sharing information about their curricula, goals and objectives, as well as other pertinent educational program data.
- 4) That there are many restrictions correctional education must contend with in order to operate effectively and efficiently.

Chapter 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

To determine what types of educational programs exist, whether the various state institutions are implementing ABE programs for the adult functional illiterate, and if the educational program has a curriculum, the researchers contacted each state correctional institution to verify both the current educational director and the correct address. After compiling a directory of current coordinators, the researchers developed and mailed a one page questionnaire, along with a cover letter of explanation (see Appendix) to the designated sample of state coordinators in each of the fifty states, excluding Washington, D.C.. After examining the responses, the researchers telephoned those states not responding to the original questionnaire. A follow-up letter and duplicate questionnaire were then mailed. After the second contact, the total number of states responding was forty-four, or 88%.

States indicating unclear or incomplete responses to questions on the original questionnaire were sent letters of clarification, while those responding positively to item three (see Questionnaire, Appendix) were sent a second letter requesting a copy of their curricula or stated goals and objectives. Although nine states returned copies of their curricula and fifteen states returned copies of their stated goals and objectives, those states responding to the questionnaire and follow-up letter were cooperative and interested in sharing their information.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Since the purpose of this survey was to determine whether established ABE curricula exist in state institutions, all fifty states were surveyed by questionnaire with forty-four (88%) of them responding. Of these states, only one was unable to answer due to lack of personnel and resources.

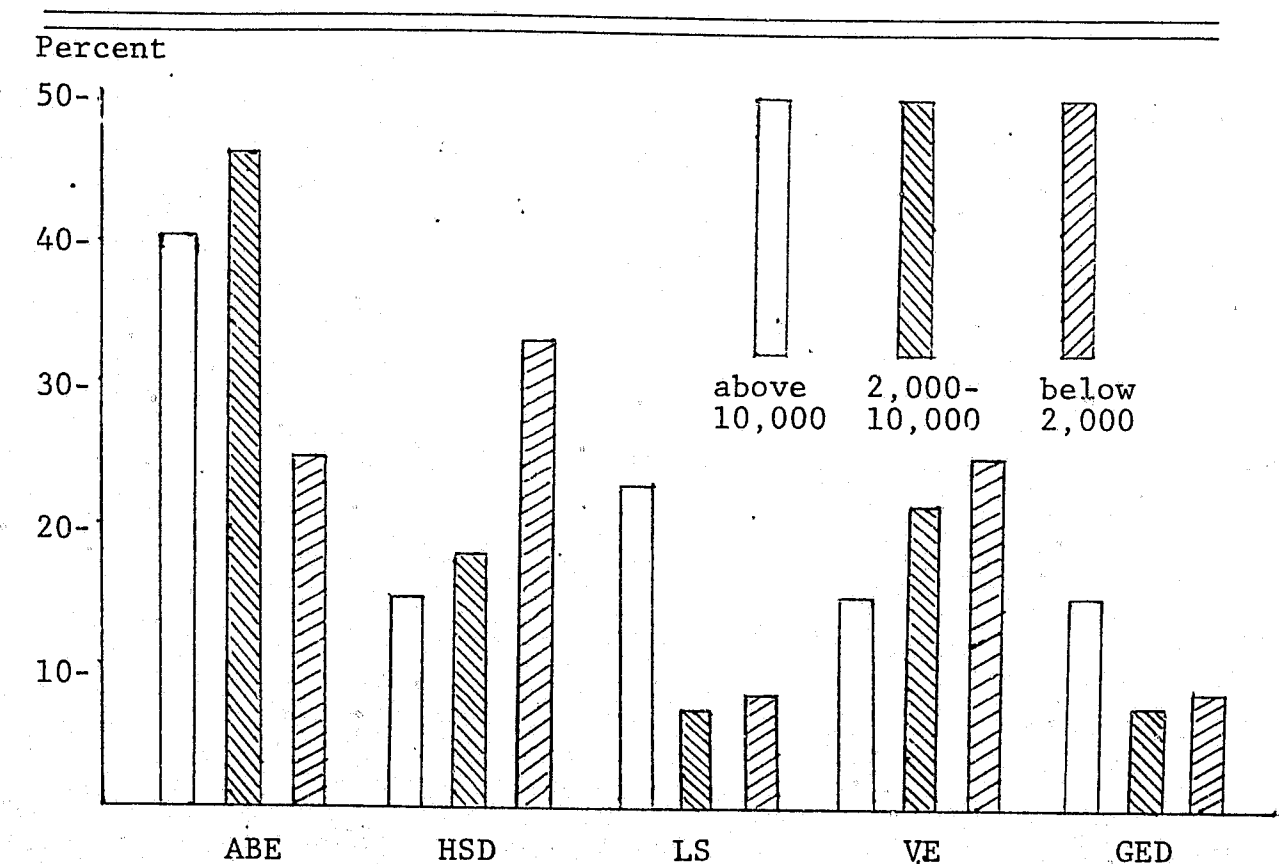
The states were asked if they had an established curriculum, or stated goals and objectives; if so, what was the basis for their curriculum. Of the forty-three states responding, four indicated that they had no curriculum, with one of them explaining that it was currently developing one. Only one state having a curriculum did not answer, but indicated that its curriculum was dependent upon the needs of the individual student. The remaining thirty-eight states gave a total of sixty-nine responses (seventeen states gave multiple answers to "the basis for the curriculum" question). Of these seventeen states, six selected dual responses, eight listed three responses, and three named four responses.

The six states selecting dual responses were: two indicating both ABE and vocational education; one stating ABE and high school directed; one indicating ABE and life skills; one naming ABE and GED; and one listing high school and vocational education. The eight states listing three responses were: three with ABE, high school and

vocational education; one with ABE, high school and life skills; one naming ABE, GED and life skills; one stating ABE, GED and vocational education; one indicating ABE, life skills and vocational education; and one answering ABE, high school and GED. The three states naming four responses each were: two with ABE, high school, life skills and vocational education; and one with ABE, GED, life skills and vocational education.

The remaining twenty-one states gave single answer responses. Ten states claimed that ABE was the basis for their curriculum; six states answered high school directed; three states named vocational education; one state indicated life skills; and one state wrote in GED as the basis for its curriculum. In total, of the sixty-nine responses given, 37.6% of the states answered that the basis for their curricula content was ABE or a combination of ABE with other curricular modes. High school directed was named in 21.6% of the responses; life skills was stated in 11.6%; vocational education was claimed in 20.2%; and GED was named in 8.6%.

Table 1
A Percentage Distribution of Curricular
Bases with State Inmate
Population



After comparing prison population with the curricula content of the states' educational programs, the researchers found that prisons with populations over 10,000 inmates named ABE 41.2% of the time as a basis for curricula content; named high school directed, 11.8%; listed life skills, 23.5%; named vocational education, 11.8%; and indicated GED, 11.8%. Adult Basic Education (ABE) was listed in seven out of eight states' responses as the primary basis for the curriculum, or as being incorporated into

the content of the curriculum. The lone exception claimed that life skills was the basis for its curriculum.

In the eighteen states where the prison population is between 2,000-10,000, ABE was the primary basis, or incorporated into the curriculum of fourteen of them. This constitutes 45.2% of the curricula named. High school directed was named 19.4% of the time; life skills, 6.5%; vocational education, 22.6%; and GED, 6.5%. The four states that did not have ABE were: three with high school directed curriculum and one with vocational education.

In the twelve states with less than 2,000 inmates, five states have incorporated ABE into their curricular content. This is only 23.8% of the content listed in this group. Four of the seven states that did not have ABE had high school directed programs; two had vocational education directed programs; one had GED; and one had both high school directed and vocational education directed programs. High school directed was listed 33.3% of the time; life skills, 9.5%; vocational education, 23.8%; and GED, 9.5%. This is the only group of states where ABE was not prevalent. Table 1 indicates this percentage distribution which represents the differing bases for curriculum in relation to the total inmate population.

Of the twelve states with less than 2,000 inmates, only four have a budget of \$1 million or more, while only one of these states has more than \$1.1 million. The one state budget above \$1.1 million has a curriculum that

consists of both ABE and high school directed. However, fifteen of the nineteen states having budgets of \$1 million or more with over 2,000 inmates designated ABE curricula or ABE incorporated into the curricula content. The four exceptions have two with high school directed, one with life skills directed curricula, and one with vocational education curricula as the basis for the curriculum. The budgets of these fifteen states comprise \$85 million of the over \$110 million budgeted for correctional education in state institutions for the fiscal year 1981.

Table 2

A Percentage Comparison of State Inmate Population and Educational Achievement Level

	Under 2,000	2-10,000	Over 10,000	Total
Under 3.0	2.6			2.6
3.0-4.0				
4.0-5.0	2.6	5.3		7.9
5.0-6.0	7.9	21.1	13.2	42.2
6.0-7.0	10.5	15.8	5.3	31.6
Above 7.0	7.9	5.3	2.6	15.8
Total	31.5	47.5	21.1	100.1
(N=38)				

Table 2 presents a comparison population and educational achievement level. When asked what the average

educational achievement level (not last grade completed) was for their population, twenty-eight of the thirty-eight states specifying a basis for their curricula listed their average between 5.0-7.0. One state (2.6%) answered that it was under 3.0; three states (7.9%) indicated 4.0-5.0; sixteen states (42.2%) claimed 5.0-6.0; twelve states (31.6%) named 6.0-7.0; and six states (15.8%) responded that their average educational achievement level was above 7.0.

Table 3

Percentage Distribution of Different Bases
for Curricula Related to Educational
Achievement Level

E.A. Level	ABE	HS	LS	VE	GED	Total
Under 3.0		1.4				1.4
3.0-4.0						
4.0-5.0	2.9	1.4		1.4	1.4	7.1
5.0-6.0	17.4	4.3	2.9	7.2	1.4	33.2
6.0-7.0	10.1	8.7	5.8	5.8	2.9	33.3
Above 7.0	7.2	5.8	2.9	5.8	2.9	24.6
Total	37.6	21.6	11.6	20.2	8.6	99.6
(N=69 responses)						

In comparing the responses to the educational achievement level with those responses for the basis for curriculum, Table 3 presents an analysis of the sixty-nine

total responses as they relate to the educational achievement level indicated.

Upon request, twenty-four states sent copies of their curricula or stated goals and objectives: nine sent their curricula and fifteen sent their system's goals and objectives. Many of these states approach the content of their Adult Basic Education curricula in a similar manner. They concur on such overall objectives as improving the reading level of the inmate/student, individualizing instruction, and diagnosing needs and abilities via standardized tests. California and Texas place such emphasis on literacy that they assign the inmate/student to a level or phase based upon reading scores. Florida and Maryland not only emphasize reading in their curricula, but acknowledge improvement by incorporating the number of certificates issued for basic skills knowledge in their annual statistics. Furthermore, New Mexico, Connecticut, Arkansas, and South Dakota indicate a thorough commitment to teaching basic skills to the functionally illiterate population in their goals and objectives.

Most states approach teaching functional illiterates by beginning with basic skills instruction: learning the alphabet and writing it in cursive. However, New York has taken the Adult Performance Level (APL) format and modified it for the non-reader, thereby placing emphasis both on learning to read, as well as understanding the concepts of the survival skills. This approach has just been incor-

porated in New York, so any information on its effectiveness is unavailable.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Although some research has been conducted with the various educational programs in correctional settings, little has been documented regarding correctional education programs and curricula for functionally illiterate adult offenders in state institutions. Recent statistics indicate that a minimum of 20-30% of all incarcerated individuals are functional illiterates, and that as many as 85-95% do not have a high school diploma or GED. Despite some disagreement in the educational community about what constitutes functional illiteracy, the authors attempted to define the various concepts of functional illiteracy as they pertain to education.

In order to gather current information and to determine the basis for programs and curricula in correctional education, the authors conducted a nationwide survey. A brief questionnaire was sent to all State Departments of Corrections. Forty-four states (88%) responded. Adult Basic Education (ABE) was a basis for curricula according to 37.6% of the states' responses.

Prison population tended to be a factor in the frequency of ABE curricula. In states where the prison population was greater than 10,000, ABE was the basis, or was incorporated as a basis in seven of eight states. In

the eighteen states where the population was 2,000-10,000. fourteen of them incorporated ABE as part of the curriculum or had ABE as the primary basis for it. Where the prison population was below 2,000, only five of the twelve states incorporated ABE into their curricula.

The data further indicates that twenty-eight of the thirty-eight states with a curriculum listed the average educational achievement score range between the fifth and seventh grade level, while a total of thirty-two states specified below the seventh grade level. This signifies that a majority of the states can classify a large portion of their prison population within the "bounds" of the definition for functional illiteracy.

The data may also indicate that the academic budget appropriated by each respective state may have a direct bearing on the basis for the curriculum. Apparently, a majority of the states with budgets of \$1 million or more are able to develop ABE based curricula. This is evidenced in eighteen of twenty-three states which have budgets of \$1 million or more and have ABE as their primary basis for, or an integral part of, their curricula.

Functionally illiterate inmate/students need to be taught both communication and computational basic skills in order to function successfully in society. From the twenty-four states that sent copies of either their curricula or stated goals and objectives, it appears that the states are acknowledging the needs and abilities of their function-

ally illiterate population by developing Adult Basic Education directed programs that incorporate these basic skills.

Although correctional education appears to be emphasizing programs for the functional illiterate population, it is confronted with many limitations. These limitations include finances, federal laws, acknowledgement of standards, and recognition of correctional education by many State Departments of Education.

Conclusions

The results of this study support the null hypothesis that there does not exist, nationwide, established ABE curricula for the functionally illiterate adult inmate/students who are attending regular academic school in state correctional institutions.

Furthermore, by presenting data on adult inmate/students currently being served by state correctional education programs, this report intended to:

- a) specify the state of the art of educational programs and curricula in the various state institutions.

The research findings suggest that not all state correctional education agencies are directing and implementing their curricula toward the needs of the functionally illiterate inmate/students. Furthermore, many correctional education agencies are apparently not teaching to the needs of their functionally illiterate inmate/student population.

Many states indicate that they have curricula that are directed to the GED or high school level student--too high a level for the functionally illiterate student. Moreover, it appears that many state institutions are relying heavily on federally subsidized programs, such as Special Education, to formulate the groundwork for their basic literacy education programs.

- b) determine whether the state curricula are aimed at the educational performance level of the inmate/students attending school in each respective state.

It is widely acknowledged that functionally illiterate inmate/students have shown a tendency toward failure in free world schools. For many of them school was boring and lacked any practical application to their lives. Although some completed the intermediate grades through social promotion, many found that they could not read or understand even a third grade reader. For many, social promotion was not the only deterrent to academic success, but often was coupled with drug or alcohol abuse.¹ Nonetheless, all have failed, whether in society or in school. To return them to an educational environment similar to one where they have already experienced failure could have devastating consequences.

¹Thom Gehring, "Correctional Education and the United States Department of Education," The Journal of Correctional Education, 31:3 (September, 1980), p. 4.

Experiencing success, particularly in an academic setting, is crucial for the functionally illiterate population. They need to know that they can learn to read that third grade reader just like their free-world counterparts. They need to know that time may be on their side by allowing them days, weeks, months, perhaps even years to master objectives in a curriculum. They need to understand that in a correctional school environment, academic competition with oneself is necessary, while comparison with one's peers is not. Consequently, individualized instruction with open-entry/open-exit options appears to be the most successful strategy for correctional education. It encourages increased self-esteem with results from continued, successful accomplishment of clearly-defined goals.

What has apparently resulted in some states is the continued utilization of administering teacher-prepared tests for assessment and grading. This approach seems to counter the spirit of both correctional and adult basic education. Frequently, students are able to master certain objectives in a relatively short time, while they realize the difficulty of mastering all objectives for a full scale test. What often results is a sense of frustration, followed by resignation. Lengthy, comprehensive examinations administered to an entire class can only create confusion at best, while possibly contributing to a continued sense of failure, at worst. Consequently, the utilization of many clearly-defined, short term objectives, administered individually as

needed, rather than comprehensive exams, appears to be more beneficial.

- c) ascertain the general structure of the academic programs for adult offenders in state institutions.

Education in the prison setting is unlike traditional, formal education in society. Yet, some institutions attempt to pattern and therefore, emulate, the format of the free world school. These institutions use the traditional classroom practices of having group instruction for the various disciplines, giving teacher-prepared tests for assessment, assigning grades, and prescribing nine to ten month school years. These approaches to developing an effective and efficient system of educating inmate/students are both unrealistic and impractical for the functionally illiterate population who compose a considerable percentage of the inmate/student population in the various state institutions.

Academic school years operate nine to ten months a year. However, State Departments of Corrections function year around. Inmates arrive at and leave the system daily, while the average length of "stay" is 22-36 months.² This relatively short period of "time served" may not allow an inmate/student sufficient time to complete literacy train-

²"The U.S. Prison Population (Some Basic Facts)," Information provided by Corrections Program, U.S. Dept. of Education, Washington, D. C., p. 1.

ing, receive a GED, and/or complete a high school diploma program. Correctional institutions do not exist solely for the academic education (i.e. literacy training) of the inmate population. Correctional schools are only one facet of a larger system and therefore, must operate twelve months a year. They cannot be restricted to six week quarters, eighty-seven day semesters, or 175 day school years. What may result is a lack of retention of knowledge and an inability of some students to take the GED exam. By not operating a full year educational program in the correctional setting, the system is doing a disservice to the population who could profit from the educational opportunities.

Recommendations

In spite of the limitations, the differing bases for curricula, the varying educational achievement score range of the inmate/students, and the unsystematic definition for functional illiteracy, many feel that correctional education is educating the inmate population. However, this may not be the case. Information received as a result of this study indicates that nearly 60,000 inmates, or 20% of the entire state prison population, are enrolled in academic school. With as many as 95% not having a high school diploma or equivalent, then 75% of the educationally deficient population are not attending school. For correctional education to find a solution for this lack of enrollment,

it must overcome the incongruities that plague it.

Foremost is the need for financial support. Many institutions do not or cannot offer a variety of educational programs due to limited budgets. This restriction forces some institutions to operate a "school within the correctional institution," rather than a "correctional education school." These institutions must be financed in the same manner as the public schools or by a system that pays a set amount for each student enrolled. Grant writing should only supplement existing budgets, not be the major source of them. Furthermore, budgets for correctional agencies should be clarified two to three months prior to a new fiscal year so that the institution can plan in advance.

In addition to financial support, the need for well-established curricula is critical. However, what these curricula should include is subject to various opinions. The humanists claim curricula should provide personal satisfying experiences for individual learners. The social reconstructionists stress social needs over individual needs. The technologists encourage results, according to the mandates of the "policymakers". The academicians clarify the worth of a curriculum as a means "by which learners are introduced to subject matter disciplines and organized fields of study."³ Whatever the orientation, established

³ John D. McNeil, Curriculum A Comprehensive Introduction, (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1977), p. 1.

curricula should provide direction for both the teaching staff and the inmate/students.

Besides providing this direction, effective curricula unifies the educational system. This is particularly important in corrections since these systems tend to be geographically vast, as opposed to public school systems, which are generally more geographically concise. In the state correctional systems, inmates are frequently transferred from one facility to another. If there is not an established curricula for the system, academic instruction may be haphazard at best. For the functional illiterate who needs continuity and accomplishment in his ABE curriculum, the erratic learning that may result may only create confusion.

In the development of well-rounded curricula, two areas of major importance include the manner of instruction and the method of assessment used. For correctional education, individualization is the most appropriate instructional technique. Inmate/students can enter a program at any time and not be considered "behind." Inmate/students can work on subjects in which they are deficient, while not being compared with others. Furthermore, individualization, as an instructional technique, is supported by the American Correctional Association (ACA) Standards 2-4422 and 2-4435.

Standardized tests, like the California Achievement Test (CAT), Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT), and others, appear to be

both widely used by the various states and may even be the most appropriate method of assessment and placement. According to ACA Standard 2-4422, student record-keeping should not include academic marks or scores. Standardized tests eliminate the need for, and subjectivity of, teacher-prepared tests as a means of regular assessment. Thus, to properly evaluate the overall progress of students in correctional settings, standardized tests may be the most appropriate method.

Each correctional education agency should compare its present programs with the standards drafted by the American Correctional Association. These standards were developed by members representing differing institutions to give direction and provide holistic educational programs. Any existing discrepancies between the present programs and the standards should be corrected.

Through availability and financial assistance, federal programs could be most beneficial to correctional education as it attempts to cope with functional illiteracy. Yet, correctional education agencies are spending excessive time and energy to conform with federal guidelines. Some states have even created departments within the education agency to oversee these programs. Correctional education must be recognized by Congress and placed under guidelines which acknowledge its unusual conditions for education before these federal laws, and ultimately, educational programs in prison, can be advantageous to the functionally

illiterate inmate/students.

Some states may feel that the education of inmates should be the responsibility of the State Department of Corrections and not the State Department of Education, since the Department of Corrections knows the circumstances involved with the prison environment. These states may feel that the Department of Education may place regulations on them that are similar to free-world schools, possibly inappropriate for correctional education. For whatever reasons the correctional educational agencies do not fall under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education, cooperation between correctional and educational agencies is mandatory if the inmate/student is to receive a comprehensive education.

Robert Merton has conducted research on the effects of the "self-fulfilling prophecy." If state directors, administrators and educational practitioners see little real advantage in developing and implementing effective correctional education programs for the functionally illiterate population, then correctional education programs are destined to plod along without direction, support and eventual success. However, if these same directors, administrators and practitioners believe that they can develop and implement purposeful, creative programs that suit the needs of the population, then correctional education and the inmate population it serves can look to a brighter future.

Only through public awareness, continued program support--both financial and academic, and further extensive research in curriculum effectiveness in correctional settings, can correctional education continue to strive for a consolidated literacy training program for its functionally illiterate population.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Marloe Research

Route 6 Box 780
Huntsville, Texas 77340

August 24, 1981

Telephone: 295-0290

291-1693

Area Code 713

Dear

We are conducting a nation-wide survey in correctional education of adult offenders in state institutions. This research focuses on "regular" academic programs. Special programs, such as Title I, special education, Adult Performance Level (APL), and vocational education are not included in this study unless they are the basis of the educational program.

This survey attempts to ascertain the structure of the academic programs, the educational performance level of the students attending such programs and the cost of correctional education.

Since correctional education is a relatively "new" field, any pertinent information may prove beneficial. We therefore ask your assistance in responding to the enclosed questionnaire as accurately and as promptly as possible. Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 15 minutes. The return envelope is provided for your convenience.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Cynthia A. Loeffler

enc.

Thomas C. Martin

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please circle the letter or fill in the blank with the most appropriate response. (Adult Basic Education is abbreviated as ABE and General Education Development is abbreviated as GED.)

1. Which of the following is the primary focus of the educational program?
 - a) Vocational Education
 - b) ABE
 - c) GED
 - d) High School Education
2. Does the academic program have a curriculum or stated goals and objectives?
 - a) yes
 - b) no
3. If so, what is the basis for the curriculum?
 - a) ABE
 - b) High School Diploma directed
 - c) Life Skills directed
 - d) Vocational oriented
 - e) n/a
4. What is the major source of instructional materials being used in the academic program?
 - a) State-adopted textbooks
 - b) Teacher-prepared materials
 - c) GED form books
 - d) ABE published materials
 - e) Life Skills/Vocational materials
5. What is the average educational performance level (not last grade completed) of the school population?
 - a) under 3.0
 - b) 3.0-4.0
 - c) 4.0-5.0
 - d) 5.0-6.0
 - e) 6.0-7.0
 - f) above 7.0
6. How many days per week do the academic students attend school?
 - a) less than 1
 - b) 1 or 2 days
 - c) 3 or 4 days
 - d) 5 days
 - e) frequency is a function of number of courses taken

7. What factor(s) determine(s) which individuals attend the academic program?
- a) educational performance
b) mandatory requirement
c) voluntary
d) job-related and job-required
8. How is the student's educational progress evaluated?
- a) Standardized tests
b) GED form tests
c) Teacher-prepared tests
d) Criterion-referenced tests
9. How many inmates are in the entire state system?
10. What is the average number of students per academic and per vocational class?
11. What are the number of classes in progress during a typical academic day?
12. How many teachers are employed in the educational program?
13. What percent of the academic teachers are accredited by the state?
14. How much money was allocated during the 1980-81 school year for the entire educational program?
15. What percent of the total academic budget is appropriated for instructional materials?
16. Specify the principle source of funding for the entire educational program?

COMMENTS: Please feel free to elaborate on any question.

APPENDIX C

State Data Grid

State	Number Inmates	Money Budgeted	E.A. Level	Basis For Curriculum
Alabama	5,600	\$ 166,742	5.0-6.0	ABE
Arizona	4,000	\$ 2,000,000	5.0-6.0	ABE/VE
Arkansas	3,000	\$ 587,275	6.0-7.0	ABE
California	26,939	\$ 7,269,345	7.0	ABE/HSD VE/LS
Colorado	2,700	\$ 1,025,598	8.3	ABE/GED VE/LS
Connecticut	4,300	\$ 3,000,000	4.0-5.0	ABE/HSD VE
Delaware	1,200	\$ 500,000	4.0-5.0	GED
Florida	20,000	\$ 8,000,000	6.0-7.0	ABE/GED LS
Hawaii	982	\$ 200,000	5.0-6.0	VE
Idaho	850	\$ 209,000	7.0	N/A
Illinois	13,000	\$ 9,200,000	5.0-6.0	ABE/HSD LS
Iowa	2,650	\$ 314,000	6.0-7.0	HSD
Louisiana	8,131	\$ 400,000	4.0-5.0	N/A
Maine	850	\$ 341,500	6.0-7.0	N/A
Maryland	8,000	\$ 1,800,000	5.0-6.0	ABE
Massachusetts	3,500	\$ 1,200,000	6.0-7.0	HSD
Michigan	14,000	\$ 9,000,000	6.0-7.0	ABE/GED VE
Minnesota	1,800	\$ 3,000,000	7.0	ABE/HSD
Mississippi	3,391	\$ 337,636	4.0-5.0	ABE

APPENDIX C (continued)

State	Number Inmates	Money Budgeted	E.A. Level	Basis For Curriculum
Missouri	6,000	\$ 850,000	5.0-6.0	ABE/GED
Montana	700	\$ 233,819	7.2-8.2	VE
Nebraska	1,500	\$ 1,000,000	5.0-6.0	ABE/VE
Nevada	N/R	N/R	N/R	N/R
New Hampshire	350	\$ 17,000	5.0-6.0	HSD
New Jersey	7,200	\$ 7,800,000	5.0-6.0	ABE
New Mexico	1,172	\$ 1,065,000	6.0-7.0	ABE/LS
New York	24,500	\$15,000,000	5.0-6.0	ABE
North Carolina	16,500	\$ 3,000,000	5.0-6.0	ABE
North Dakota	350	\$ 122,000	6.0-7.0	N/A
Ohio	14,000	\$ 3,500,000	5.0-6.0	LS
Oklahoma	5,093	\$ 889,546	6.0-7.0	N/A
Oregon	3,400	\$ 115,000	6.0-7.0	ABE/LS VE
Pennsylvania	9,000	\$ 4,320,000	6.0-7.0	ABE
Rhode Island	1,050	\$ 500,000	6.0-7.0	HSD
South Carolina	7,800	\$ 2,400,000	5.0-6.0	ABE
South Dakota	640	\$ 130,000 (aca. only)	7.0	ABE/HSD GED
Tennessee	7,871	\$ 1,622,100	6.0-7.0	HSD
Texas	30,000	\$ 9,000,000	5.0-6.0	ABE
Utah	9,000	\$ 684,000	7.0	ABE/HSD VE
Vermont	441	\$ 118,830	6.0-7.0	ABE/HSD VE/LS
Virginia	8,500	\$ 2,367,754	5.0-6.0	ABE/HSD VE

APPENDIX C (continued)

State	Number Inmates	Money Budgeted	E.A. Level	Basis For Curriculum
West Virginia	1,520	\$ 1,050,000	-3.0	HSD
Wisconsin	4,100	\$ 5,700,000	5.0-6.0	VE
Wyoming	419		6.0-7.0	VE/HSD

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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