WHAT WORKS, AND WHY? AND WHAT DOESN'T WORK, AND WHY? THE SEARCH FOR BEST PRACTICES IN CORRECTIONAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

Correctional educators frequently ask "What works?" because they have not had access to the literature of their field and the history of what has been proven to work. It has not been the subject of preservice courses or degree programs, or on the job inservice training; it has not been a requirement for qualification in correctional education jobs; it has not been a concern of leaders in the education and criminal or juvenile justice systems; it is not included in the standards that are applied for the accreditation of correctional education programs. Our literature is commonly discussed as the "hidden heritage." This essay outlines the four best documented versions of what has been proven to work, and the nine program elements that they all shared. The literature's answer to the "What works?" question is not mysterious. Indeed, there has been a program that has worked since the 1840s—one program that has repeatedly been successful.

Nine Shared Elements of the One Program

The elements of the one program have been stable over time and place—despite local emphases among those elements, terminology to describe them, and technologies that support them. In this essay most of the terminology used to describe the elements will be from MacCormick (1931); when other terms are required it will be because of social or legal changes that accrued in the decades since MacCormick's writings stabilized Brockway's original work (1969/1912). The nine elements follow.

The first element is the pedagogy/andragogy continuum. This is absolutely central to all forms of correctional education, including literacy, special education, English as a second language, and math instruction. In this context pedagogy relates to the conditions of education

for juveniles and andragogy to the education of adults. The terminology is important because there has been a general confusion about the issue. However, adult education principles do not always fit will with the needs of confined juveniles, and in adult prisons maturation is inconsistent. Some juveniles have experienced warlike hostility in their lives for years and often make decisions like adults; some adults are incarcerated because they behave emotionally like children. For a host of reasons successful correctional educators should respond to each student's needs individually. Choice and flexibility in this area are so salient that this element is prerequisite to all subsequent elements.

The second element is vocational education. Many correctional educators believe correctional education is vocational education. However, that situation applies to each of these nine elements—each element has advocates ready to reduce the entirety of the field to a particular part. Balance between the parts can be enhanced by access to the literature on best practices; without access reductionism dominates, an overemphasis on one or a few parts. Vocational education can be structured to include related theory, as in apprenticeships and whenever the links between academic and vocational learning are emphasized.

The third element is social education. Most correctional educators recognize that resources are distributed so unequally in society that some people are almost pushed into criminal activity. Some children grow up in neighborhoods where violence is evident daily, abuse in many forms is always expected and intermittently experienced, the accoutrements of learning are insufficient, and where poverty, racism, sexism, drugs, etc. define everyday life. These differences are not susceptible to being overcome by correctional educators' interventions or outreach. Therefore, correctional educators tend to focus on problems that individual students

face which can be mitigated though education—and especially on the attitudes which were often the causes of particular crimes.

MacCormick wrote of social education in unabashed terms. By this we mean that he recommended all institutional programs should bend to the purpose of social education: housing, security, prison industries, chaplaincy and counseling, as well as school, vocational shops, and library. MacCormick posited that nearly every prisoner needed education, and that attitudes and dispositions should be prioritized—indeed, he saw social education as the main purpose of the prison. Today we frequently refer to pre-release programs, life skills, or coping skills.

The fourth element is cultural education. In 1931 MacCormick wrote

> The term 'cultural education' is an unfortunate one; it is likely to be sniffed at by both prisoners and officials. It is difficult to think of a better term for education which is unrelated to vocational advancement, but which is entered into for intellectual or aesthetic satisfaction or for 'the enrichment of self.' (p. 189)

European prison education, with its emphasis on adult education, is noted for its success in this area. In the U.S. most correctional educators are not savvy about the difference between Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult education. Sometimes, if they hear the term adult education, their minds immediately shift to ABE, which is so prominent in their everyday work. This reductionist approach neglects the courses that have proven so useful in many European prison schools: drama, poetry, music, photography, and art, as well as handicrafts and, increasingly, computer applications and video production. By contrast, ABE focuses on basic academic skills only, and is often justified by its direct link to marketable skills. Nevertheless, cultural education is frequently important in the program aspirations of correctional educators in the U.S., despite the reductionist policies of institutional systems.

The fifth element is shared responsibility, and it is the one that may appear most anomalous to correctional educators, especially those employed in harsh confinement systems. Shared responsibility is a euphemism for democracy; it has alternatively been called the principle of community organization or participatory management. Through the history and literature of prison reform and correctional education it is easy to document at least 22 democratic prison programs. Most were at the institutional level, but a few were in school enclaves. Of the 22 known programs, the overwhelming majority were successful by any standard: educational achievements; industrial production; reduction of drug offenses, escapes, and homosexual rapes; and in most cases, improved and more regularized relations between prisons and the outside communities. These programs were implemented with administrative support in at least seven nations over the last 200 years; there may be additional examples in other times and places about which the current authors are ignorant. The point is that the evidence has not been and cannot be refuted. Democracy happened in prisons, over and over again, in a wide range of situations, security levels, and places; it does not need to be defended, or even justified; it is a fact.

The sixth element is inclusion, an area in which our understanding has changed over the decades. Today the term usually means special education for disabled learners, and language courses typically (but not only) for persons whose native language was different from the language spoken in the place where they reside. The inclusion element can be used to help equalize educational opportunities for the oppressed, as well as to promote multiculturalism, tolerance, and diversity. The element of inclusion designates recognition of the need to desegregate. As in other fields, correctional education needs to move toward shared multicultural aspirations, to contribute to the evolving movement to phase out such restrictions.

The seventh element of the one program is technology, or the application of technology to help facilitate teaching and learning—but not because instruction is impossible without the newest, high technology accoutrements. Sometimes it is pursued simply because many students find technological applications motivational. Properly used, these applications foster learning by individuals and groups. They can also bring outside communities inside; their impact can be analogous to "breaking down the walls," a step which is aligned to the European aspiration for normalization and the North American aspiration for equal access to educational opportunity.

The eighth element is library. Savvy observers of correctional education often recommend that, if there are resources sufficient for only one program element, it should be the library. This is because when prisoners are ready to learn they can always seek out the library. However, it would be a mistake to reduce the entire program to library services and exclude the other eight identified elements of the one program. Each of the four one program versions had a strong, though slightly different, library component.

The ninth element of the one program is the configuration of administrative services. In another manuscript one of the current authors wrote

> Historically, five systems have existed [in North America] for the delivery of correctional education: Sabbath schools, the traditional or decentralized pattern, correctional education bureaus, correctional school districts (CSDs), and integral education. Of these, the first (Sabbath schools) are officially defunct because they violate the Constitutional aspiration to separate church and state. The last (integral education) is personality based; it cannot be implemented throughout an entire jurisdiction (county, state, etc.). The middle three delivery patterns (traditional or decentralized, bureaus, and CSDs) . . .are the three modern, generic models of jurisdictionwide organizations that

> deliver correctional education services to confined students.... They emerged historically to increase educator authority over educational decisions.... (Gehring, 2007, pp. 2-3)

There is a universe of useful information about the administrative configuration of correctional education services, though most correctional educators do not have information about how correctional education is structured, sometimes even in nearby institutions within their own system. This dimension of our field directly impacts all the other dimensions. For example, it is entirely possible for a system to be staffed by good teachers who are also good people, with students who are willing and able to learn—but with a terrible education program in which very little teaching and learning actually takes place—simply because of a flawed administrative configuration. The historical trend toward having educators assigned to make educational decisions (in the areas of education curriculum, budget, and personnel) has proceeded from minimal authority to maximal authority in the following order: Sabbath school, traditional or decentralized, bureau, CSD, and integral. This ninth element helps regulate all the others, and it will be defined with greater clarity in the subsequent sections of the essay.

Four Historical Versions of the One Program

From a big picture perspective historical episodes coalesce into at least four discernable versions, all slight variations on the one program that works. These can be attributed to the following: (a) Brockway and MacCormick (about 1880-1941, with important antecedents), (b) Ayers; Duguid; Ross and Fabiano (1970s to the 1990s), (c) the Council of Europe's Prison Recommendations, especially as expressed by the Nordic Council of Ministers (1989-present), and (d) what has been identified as the integral education model (intermittently since the mid 19th century). This section introduces the versions of this one program and puts them in context.

The Brockway/MacCormick Model

Zebulon Brockway is most famous for his application of Reformatory Prison Discipline (RPD) at New York's Elmira Reformatory during his superintendency there, 1876-1900. In his 1912 autobiography, *Fifty Years of Prison Service,* he wrote of the Elmira education program in ways that correspond to eight of the nine elements discussed above. The one program element that Brockway never implemented was shared responsibility, although one might make a case that the RPD parole system encouraged inmates to take control of their own behavior if they wanted to be released.

MacCormick's later work relied heavily on Brockway's, however he wrote about shared responsibility using the principle of community organization. It was his readiness for the correctional education bureau configuration that is most revealing about MacCormick's approach—he was ahead of his time. His influence in New York State led governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt to implement the first statewide correctional education bureau. It consisted of a cadre of education consultants in the department of corrections central office, with authority to recommend on issues related to curriculum, the education budget, and educational personnel matters. In sum, MacCormick accepted Brockway's good ideas and also improved that model to make it more effective.

The Ayers/Duguid/Ross and Fabiano Model

The Canadian model began under Doug Ayers' leadership at the University of Victoria in the early 1970s and was continued by Stephen Duguid at Simon Fraser University in the early 1980s. Robert Ross and Elizabeth Fabiano's definitive correctional education book *Time to Think* (1985) was largely rooted in this tradition of British Columbia, university based, postsecondary education programs, funded by the Canadian Government. It can be referred to as

the "Ayers/ Duguid/Ross and Fabiano" version of the one program. With political changes in the Ottawa government in 1993, this exemplary program was phased out. Nevertheless, this Canadian model was a beacon to informed correctional educators all over the world, and its descriptive literature continues to be received enthusiastically.

In addition, Ayers anticipated the correctional school district (CSD) model, much as MacCormick before him anticipated the bureau model. A CSD exists when the state department of education recognizes schools "inside" as having all the rights and obligations of the local K-12 schools. With an exemplary reputation based on positive results, news of the British Columbia model spread throughout North America and Europe and helped to influence subsequent developments.

The Council of Europe/Nordic Model

The Council of Europe's Recommendations on Prison Education have been closely allied with the European Prison Education Association (EPEA). These recommendations do not carry the force of law—they are recommendations—but most European nations seek to diminish the gap between current correctional education capabilities and the Council's Recommendations. Some nations have further to go in this than others. It appears those which have been most successful in applying the Recommendations have been the Nordic nations, Ireland, and the Netherlands.

Two of the nine elements warrant special recognition because they are on the leading edge of European correctional education: shared responsibility and administrative configuration. The European aspiration for normalization is central with regard to shared responsibility.

> ...the Nordic countries are united in the aspiration of 'normalizing' prison education—by that they mean consistency between services 'inside' and 'outside.' They believe inmates

> should participate in community education programs that are not in the prison, and they frequently make good on that belief. (Gehring, 2005, p. 1)

The Council of Europe's Recommendations do not advocate specifically for any particular system of administrative configuration. However, Recommendation 4 states explicitly all prison administrators "should facilitate and support education as much as possible." The same provisions have been addressed sporadically in North America, as shown in the next section.

Integral Correctional Education Models

> [Integral] organizations overcome institutional constraints not by implementing a more advanced, efficacious, or powerful administrative structure, but through personal intervention by the leader.... The effect is much like when teachers use an interdisciplinary approach to help students learn simultaneously in several academic disciplines, but even more profound. Integral denotes a deep system of confluence (subjective, objective, social, and cultural), a synthesis that transcends constraints.... (Gehring, 2007, p. 10)

Integral correctional education has been experienced in the great democratic experiments in our field. For example, it was operational at William George's Junior Republic (beginning in 1895); at Thomas Mott Osborne's Mutual Welfare League in the U.S. (1913-1926); at Anton Makarenko's Gorky Colonies in the Soviet Union (1922-1938); it was also part of the institutional milieu in Herr Von Obermaier's jail in Bavaria, Germany, in Colonel Montesino's Valencia Prison in Spain (1850s), and at Frederick A. Demetz's famous Mettray juvenile facility in France (1840-1937), as well as at other institutions (Gehring & Eggleston, 2006).

Administrative configuration has not been controversial since integral leaders operate on a higher or deeper threshold than suggested by many of the routine dimensions of everyday

management. The role of personality is emphasized to the point that integral education cannot—or has not—been implemented systematically throughout a system. Close study of the 22 integral education versions indicates that the personality who led each version overcame, negotiated, or transcended the obstacles normally experienced in anti-education institutions.

Conclusion

The stark alignment of these nine elements is especially interesting, despite minor situational differences that accrued as a result of space and time. All nine elements apply over and over again, in each of the one program's versions or models. Once correctional educators feel confident about what works we should focus on implementing what works where we work, and on obtaining adequate resources. A bit of confidence might help us shift our professional paths from simple curiosity to a more secure focus on feasibility and planning. It would be timely for the communities we represent if the field of correctional education could shed off the old hidden heritage vulnerability, to live up to our noble calling, to help students who are ready to improve their lives.

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