What Works in Correctional Education?

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Outline

• Correctional education in USA

• Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of correctional education

• What works in corrections: overview of findings

• Implications for correctional education
Correctional Education

• Originally Religious Instruction

• Reformatory Era

• Mainstay of Rehabilitation
  – Various goals
  – Benefit in its own right
  – Correlation between education and criminal activity
Correctional Education In USA

- Legally Mandated for Juveniles and Youthful Adults
- Offered in Many Facilities
  - 91.2% of state prisons
  - All federal prisons
  - 87.6% private prisons
- Many Participate while Incarcerated
- Programs Available Differ by Facility
Reasons for Emphasis on Education

• Education and criminal activity relationship

• Convicted offenders
  – Less educated
  – Fewer marketable job skills

• Incarcerated adults
  – High illiteracy
  – Less than half have completed high school
Types of Educational Programs

• Basic Education
  – ESL, special ed, literacy

• GED or high school

• Vocational Education

• Postsecondary/College

• Life Skills
Sometimes Included as Education

- Drug Treatment and Education
- Parenting
- Cognitive Skills
Theoretical Rationales: Association Between Education and Recidivism

- **Cognitive Changes**
  - Problem solving, self-efficacy
  - Executive cognitive functioning
  - Maturity/moral development
  - Mitigate pains of imprisonment

- **Employability**
  - Skills need for specific jobs
  - Credentials
Correctional Education and Impact on Recidivism

- Systematic reviews and meta-analyses
- Theoretical meta-analyses
- Meta-analyses of correctional education
Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses

- Summary of best available research
- Specific question
- Synthesizing the results of several studies
- Clear inclusion/exclusion criteria
- Explicit search strategy
- Systematic coding and analysis of included studies
- Meta-analysis (where possible)
Theoretical Meta-Analyses

• Ineffective programs
  – Retribution
  – Deterrence

• Effectiveness differs
  – Implementation/ integrity
  – Design
  – Type of participant

• Principles of effective programs
Principles of Effective Rehabilitation

• Skill Oriented
• Multi-modal
• Behavioral or Cognitive-Behavioral Theory
• Integrity
  – Identified rationale consistent with human service literature
  – Qualified and trained staff
  – Proved methods
  – Sufficient dosage
Educational Programs and Principles of Effective Rehabilitation

• Educators credentials and training

• No Focus on Reentry

• Dosage/time-in-program problems
  – Teacher vacancies
  – Prison lockdowns
  – Transfers
  – Incentives

• Target dynamic, criminogenic needs
  – Problematic circumstances at school or work, antisocial attitudes
  – Not self-esteem
Meta-analysis of Correctional Education, Vocation and Work Program

- Outcome – recidivism
- Study has comparison group
- Published after 1975
- English language
Search Strategy

- Intensive search -- 771 documents
- Identify potentially relevant -- 152 studies
- Locate and evaluate – 144
- Eligible studies – 28
- Independent samples -- 33 studies
### Academic Education Treatment Programs

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Favors Control  Favors Treatment
Studies

- 6 Adult Basic Education
- 3 GED
- 5 Combined ABE/GED
- 13 Post Secondary Education
- 17 Vocational Education
- 3 Life skills
<table>
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<th>Education Program</th>
<th>Effect on Recidivism</th>
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<td>ABE, GED</td>
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<td>Vocational</td>
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<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>Does not reduce recidivism</td>
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Recidivism Rate Estimates

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<td>Comparison</td>
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<td>ABE/GED</td>
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<td>Post Secondary</td>
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<td>Vocational</td>
<td>38%</td>
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Understanding the Impact

• Details of Characteristics of Programs Unknown

• Details of What Works for Whom Unknown

• Research Relatively Poor in Design (Poor Science)
Issues with Types of Programs

• PSE – Many giving vocational training certificates not opening for future college

• New Life Skills programs often part of a holistic program

• Vocational Education – may help with reentry, may be comprehensive/holistic
The Blackbox of Correctional Education

• ABE, GED, PSE and Voc Ed programs appear to work

• Limited Quality of the Research

• Consistent with Principles of Effective Programs (Cognitive Transformations)
What Works in Corrections: Reducing the Criminal Activities of Offenders and Delinquents

What Works in Corrections

Doris Layton MacKenzie

Cambridge University Press

2006
Evidence-Based Corrections

- Use of science
  - Evaluate quality of science

- Identify effective correctional programs
  - Use only studies of sufficient quality

- Presented in form usable by decision/policy makers
What Works in Corrections

• Search 1000s of studies

• Reviewed 284 research studies of sufficient scientific rigor

• Effective programs focused on individual-level change/cognitive transformations

• Ineffective programs
  – Little Theoretical basis
  – Poorly implemented
  – Emphasize developing opportunities, forming ties or bonds
Examining What Works

• Maryland Scoring Method
  • Quality of design/science
  • Significance

• Systematic reviews and meta-analysis
Maryland Scoring Method

• Report to U.S. Congress

• Evaluation of prevention programs

• Developed assessment method
  – 2 stage assessment
2 Stage Assessment

1. Assess each study
   - Science quality – score 1 (lowest) to 5 (gold standard)
   - Significance

• Examine groups of studies for what works
  - What works
  - What promising
  - What doesn’t work
  - What we don’t know
## Stage 1: Quality and Significance

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<th>Methods Score</th>
<th>Recidivism Treated Group</th>
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## Stage 2

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Decision Making Rules for “What Works”

• Two (2) studies with
  – Research methods scores of “3” or above
  – Showing the experimental group having significantly lower recidivism rates
Decisions about What Works

- Maryland scoring method
- Meta-analyses
What Works?

- Strategies for reducing crime
- Rehabilitation/human service programs
- Types of offenders
- Substance abusers
- Control and discipline
What Works

- Adult education
- Voc education
- Cog/behavior therapy
- Sex offender treatment
- Drug courts
- Drug treatment
- Multi-Systemic Therapy
Life skills
Correctional industries
Multi-component work
Psychosocial sex offender treatment
Domestic violence
Victim awareness
Juvenile programs (community supervision and facility)
Scared straight
Boot camps
Intensive supervision
Electronic monitoring
Monetary penalties
Ineffective Interventions: Poor or No Theoretical Basis

• Psychosocial sex offender treatment
  – Psychodynamic model of treatment

• Community supervision

• Residential facilities for juveniles
Ineffective Interventions: Punishment, Deterrence or Control Only

• Boot camps
• Scared Straight
• Arrest for domestic violence
• Intensive supervision
• Electronic monitoring
Criminological Theory

• Environmental opportunities
  – Attachments, ties or bonds to social institutions
  – Sampson and Laub’s life course theory

• What is mechanism for change?
  – Social environment conducive
  – Fortuitious
Effective Programs: Individual Transformation

Changes within individual

Environmental opportunity
Implication for Education

• Cognitive change important

• Employability secondary
Individual transformation must occur first

• Giordano et al. 2002

• Cullen and Gendreau and Canadian Researchers

• Maruna’s interviews with offenders
What Works: Future Research

• More details about program components

• More details about participants
  – Gender, ethnic sensitivity

• Improve quality of research
  – 14% randomized trials
  – Large % education studies scored “2”
Questions

• What works for whom, when, why, what circumstances

• Gender, race-ethnicity sensitive programming

• Cognitive change or combination of cognitive change and increased opportunities

• How to combine with reentry (holistic, multi-modal programs that take participants from institution to community)

• Structural problems in facilities (lockdowns, transfers, movement)

• Internet Use
Summary: What Works

• Reject “Nothing Works”

• Educational programs are effective

• Need cognitive transformations
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