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AUTHOR Gold, Patricia Cohen
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ABSTRACT

Most presently existing literacy training programs for inmates in America's prisons are inadequate. Before program planners and developers can remedy this situation, they must be able to obtain accurate information on the numbers of illiterate inmates and the numbers of inmates currently receiving literacy instruction in America's prisons. The establishment of an information clearinghouse and the development of standard definitions and measures to facilitate the collection and dissemination of such information would be important first steps in the effort to improve literacy instruction for inmates. Included among the many issues that must be addressed by planners of prison literacy programs are the lack of consistent federal and state policies toward rehabilitation; the lack of adequate funds, facilities, and equipment; the lack of trained professionals in the field; and the lack of comprehensive, integrated literacy programs. On the positive side, a number of exemplary prison literacy training programs do exist. Some of the key components of these exemplary programs are development of a coordinated structure; provision of staff training in literacy; utilization of competency-based, integrated curricula; the offering of incentives for inmates; coordination between correctional and community education programs; and increased use of technology. On a daily basis, program developers and implementers must also contend with a number of problems that interfere with their operation, including disregard for the educational needs of inmates, lack of adequate referral and support services, and lack of coordination of penal programs within and among institutions, as well as overcrowded and substandard living conditions. (MN)

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Literacy Training in Penal Institutions

Patricia Cohen Gold, Ed.D.
Associate Professor of Education
The Johns Hopkins University

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Reprint requests should be sent to: Dr. Patricia Gold, 100 Whitehead Hall, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
OVERVIEW OF THE NEED.	5
Number of Illiterate Inmates	5
Number of Inmates Receiving Literacy Training.	6
The Need for a Clearinghouse of Information.	7
The Need for Standard Definitions and Measures	8
MAJOR ISSUES.	9
Lack of Federal Policy	9
Lack of Consistent State Policy Toward Rehabilitation.	10
Lack of Sufficient Funds	11
Lack of Adequate Facilities and Equipment.	12
Lack of Trained Professionals in the Field	13
Lack of Comprehensive, Integrated Literacy Programs.	13
PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS.	15
Volunteer and ABE Programs	15
Exemplary Components of Literacy Programs in Six States.	17
Coordinated State Structure	17
Staff Training in Literacy.	18
Competency-Based, Integrated Curricula.	18
Incentives for Inmates.	19
Classes Scheduled at Convenient Times	19
Coordination Between Correctional and Community Education Programs.	19
Use of Technology	19
Research and Evaluation	20
The Federal Prison System-Literacy Programs.	24
PROBLEMS IN IMPROVING LITERACY PROGRAM OPERATIONS	26
Disregard for Educational Needs of Inmates	26
Overcrowded and Substandard Conditions	27
Multiple Problems of Illiterate Inmates.	28
Lack of Coordination of Penal Programs	31
REFERENCES	33

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Illiteracy in the United States is a complex problem for which there is no simple solution. While 20 percent of the general population is illiterate, the percentage in penal institutions is substantially greater. The purpose of this paper is to explore literacy training in penal institutions. Four topics are addressed: the need, major issues, current programs and major problems in improving literacy programs.

Overview of the Need

According to statistics from the Bureau of Justice, there were 425,678 inmates in state and federal prisons in August 1983. Of that number, 61 percent had less than a high school education, including 26 percent with eight or less years of education. No statistics are available as to the number receiving literacy training.

A rough estimate of the number of inmates receiving literacy services can be obtained from results of a survey of penal institutions conducted in 1981. In that year, some 30 percent of illiterate inmates received literacy services -- primarily in volunteer or ABE programs. Results of the survey also reveal a great disparity in the provision of literacy services in penal institutions among states. Information from the survey, however, is general and incomplete.

The lack of information regarding illiteracy and literacy programs in penal institutions reflects a major need -- that of a

clearinghouse for data collection and dissemination. The majority of penal programs are under state jurisdiction, yet there is no central monitoring system of these programs. Moreover, there is no standard definition or measure by which to determine the number of illiterates in penal institutions. Current estimates are gleaned from school completion data or a variety of test procedures. Such inconsistency in definition and measurement reflects a major issue -- the lack of federal policy.

Major Issues

The absence of federal policy with respect to literacy programs in penal institutions has resulted in more than just insufficient services and information. There are no program standards or research and evaluation. Moreover, the absence of federal policy allows for inconsistent policy toward rehabilitation programs at the state level.

Policies toward rehabilitation vary considerably among states. Such policies affect the level of inmate participation in work and school programs and the provision of incentives and compensation. But policies and attitudes toward rehabilitation may be changing, as indicated by the formation of state task forces to study rehabilitation programs. The issue is of a magnitude, however, to merit national attention.

Literacy programs suffer from a lack of sufficient funds since no monies are specifically earmarked for them. Facilities

and equipment are inadequate and there is a lack of trained professionals in the field. Existing literacy programs lack the comprehensiveness and integration that would enhance their effectiveness.

Current Programs

Currently, literacy services are provided primarily in volunteer literacy programs or in ABE programs. Methods in these programs vary considerably and little research has been conducted to demonstrate their effectiveness. However, a number of states have programs with exemplary components. Such components include coordinated state structure; staff training in literacy; competency-based, integrated curricula; incentives for inmates; classes scheduled at convenient times; coordination between correctional and community education programs; use of technology; and research and evaluation. In addition, the Federal Prison System coordinates literacy programs in federal facilities throughout the United States, demonstrating that a coordinated national system is viable.

Major Problems in Improving Literacy Programs

The general issues facing literacy programs in penal institutions are translated to specific daily problems. In penal institutions where there is a disregard for the educational need of inmates, there are policies that greatly hamper the delivery of literacy services. Tensions are created when educational and security issues are at odds. The overcrowded

and substandard living conditions found in most penal institutions greatly diminish the delivery and outcome of literacy services. Also, the multiple problems of inmates require referral and support services. Such services are insufficient or unavailable. These problems place a great burden on the limited resources of literacy programs. Another drain on resources is the lack of coordination of penal programs both within and among institutions. Such lack of coordination results in gaps in services in some areas and in duplication of services in other areas. While the lack of coordination goes well beyond literacy programs per se, literacy professionals can provide the leadership and impetus for developing coordinated systems of educational programs in penal institutions. Without such coordinated systems literacy programs will remain fragmented, ineffectual and largely ignored.

It is clear that the picture regarding literacy training in penal institutions is dim and will remain so until adequate attention and resources are brought to bear on the problem.

LITERACY TRAINING IN PENAL INSTITUTIONS

Illiteracy in the United States is a complex problem for which there is no simple solution. While some 20 percent of the general population suffer the effects of illiteracy, the percentage in the penal population is substantially greater. Nowhere is the need for literacy training more critically felt than in the penal institutions, where illiterate inmates, lacking the resources that would be afforded them if they could read and write, cannot cope adequately with the present and have no hope for the future.

The purpose of this paper is to explore literacy training in penal institutions. The paper is divided into four parts: Part One will provide an overview of the need for literacy services in penal institutions; Part Two will delineate major issues in providing literacy programs; Part Three will describe current literacy programs, emphasizing exemplary characteristics; and Part Four will identify major problems in improving the operation of literacy programs in penal institutions.

Literacy Training in Penal Institutions: Overview of the Need

Number of Illiterate Inmates

Statistics from the Bureau of Justice, August 1983, show that there were some 425,678 inmates in state and federal prisons, 58

percent of whom have less than a high school education. Additional information regarding levels of illiteracy and literacy programs for August 1983, is not available (O'Hayre, 1983). For the purposes of this discussion, therefore, statistics from 1981 will be used, since more complete data from public and private sources are available.

In 1981, there were 593,458 persons incarcerated in state, federal, local, and juvenile justice institutions; 26 percent with eight or less years of education and 35 percent with nine to eleven years of education (O'Hayre, 1983). Thus, 61 percent of the inmate population had less than a high school education and those with the lowest levels of education, having the greatest potential need for literacy services, numbered some 154,299.

Number of Inmates Receiving Literacy Training

The number of inmates receiving literacy training in 1981 can be determined roughly using data from a survey of penal institutions conducted by Contact Literacy Center, a private, nonprofit corporation. Respondent to the survey included 29 states, the District of Columbia, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. All respondents indicated that they offered literacy and/or ABE programs: Twenty-one offered literacy programs in which some 14,667 inmates participated and 29 offered ABE classes in which 31,036 inmates participated. Thus, in 1981, some 45,703 inmates were reported to have participated in literacy and/or ABE programs (Contact Inc., 1982). Obviously, the number is only an estimate. On the one hand it is underestimated, since it does not include data from states not responding to the survey; on the other hand it is inflated, since some inmates were counted more than once, i.e., they were counted each time they entered a literacy program. Nonetheless, it does give a rough estimate. Approximately 30 percent of the incarcerated illiterate population received literacy training in 1981. While that level of participation is greater than

the four percent typically served in the general illiterate population (Hunter & Harman, 1979), it clearly falls short of meeting the need.

Scrutiny of the 1981 survey reveals that there were substantial differences among states regarding their provision of literacy services, their record keeping system and the number of inmates they served. While all respondents indicated that they offered literacy services, some provided them in separate literacy programs, some provided them within ABE programs and some made no distinction between the two. Several states responded that they had one or both programs, but offered no statistics as to number of participants. Other states used monthly averages or end of the year enrollment figures to determine number of participants. Number of participants in programs varied considerably from state to state. For example, New Hampshire reported serving a total of 45 inmates in its ABE program, whereas Florida reported serving more than 12,000 inmates: 5,200 in literacy programs and 7,000 in ABE programs (Contact Inc., 1982). Clearly there is a lack of accessible information regarding literacy programs in penal institutions and the information provided by the Contact Literacy Survey is limited. Thus an immediate need is identified.

The Need for a Clearinghouse of Information

The preceding discussion suggests an immediate need -- that of a clearinghouse for data collection and dissemination. Currently, the

majority of literacy programs in penal institutions are under state jurisdiction and there is no central monitoring mechanism. The Department of Justice provides some information regarding numbers of inmates and levels of education, but there is no single office for the collection and dissemination of information. Therefore statistics must be extrapolated from a number of sources. However, lack of information is not the only immediate problem.

The Need for Standard Definitions and Measures

It is apparent that an attempt to estimate the number of illiterate inmates is stymied by the fact that there are no standard definitions or measures. Often high school completion is considered the benchmark of literacy. Those not completing high school are categorized by the number of grades completed, i.e., nine to eleven years or eight or less years of school. Arguments against using grade completion to determine literacy include the fact that the two to thirteen percent of high school graduates estimated to be illiterate are not counted among the illiterate population (Bell, 1982).

Although grade completion often is used to estimate the number of illiterates, it provides little information as to level of functioning. Levels of illiteracy are measured using a variety of tests. The Federal Prison System, for example, uses a standardized test to identify inmates functioning at sixth level or below who are eligible for literacy training (Yusuff, 1983). Recently, competency-based tests have become popular as a result of the Adult

Performance Level (APL) study. Some penal institutions use the APL materials, whereas others develop competency-based tests for their specific curricula.

Some experts, however, reject both grade completion and test scores as appropriate. Hunter and Harman (1979) describe an historical overview of literacy definitions and statistics generated from numerous surveys. They conclude that illiteracy should be defined in terms of the ability to function in society. The four levels posited range from adequate functioning in society to inadequate functioning characterized by the hard-core poor. This schema, however, has not been widely adopted.

The attempts to standardize definitions and measurement have yet to result in a general consensus. The lack of consensus coupled with the lack of accessible information reflect a major issue -- the lack of federal policy regarding illiteracy and literacy training in penal institutions.

Literacy Training in Penal Institutions: Major Issues

Lack of Federal Policy

The preceding discussion reveals that: 1) there are no standards for defining and measuring illiteracy, 2) there is no central mechanism for data collection and dissemination, 3) the current level of literacy services provided does not meet the need, and 4) there is great disparity in the provision of literacy services among states. These conditions reflect the lack of federal policy

1.

regarding the level and type of literacy services to be provided. Currently 93 percent of incarcerated persons are housed in state, local, or juvenile justice institutions -- all of which are under state jurisdiction (Yusuff, 1983). The absence of overall coordination of literacy programs among states not only results in a lack of program standards, research and evaluation, but also allows for the existence of inconsistent policies toward rehabilitation at the state level.

Lack of Consistent State Policy toward Rehabilitation Programs

Policy regarding rehabilitation of inmates varies from state to state. Whereas some states require all inmates to work, others offer inmates a choice of work or school and still others provide flexible schedules so that inmates can participate in both. Some states, however, require neither work nor school attendance by inmates. Such inconsistency extends to the provision of incentives -- offered by some states, but not by others.

The prevailing state philosophy regarding rehabilitation determines the extent to which literacy services are provided. Often security and educational issues are odds, but attitudes may be changing. Renewed attention to the need for rehabilitating prisoners may have been sparked by Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger's 1981 "State of the Judiciary" address to the American Bar Association, in which he stated that no prisoner should be released without being able to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. Such a statement

acknowledges that penal institutions are responsible for meeting the basic human needs of inmates and that literacy is a basic human need. But beyond the humanitarian motive is an economic one. With annual costs of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per inmate and alarming recidivism rates, states no longer can afford to ignore rehabilitation programs (Reffett, 1983).

In Maryland, for example, the Task Force on Correctional Rehabilitation was formed recently because of concerns in the legislature that rehabilitation had been largely ignored since a 1981 crackdown on prison management resulted in tougher prison policies. The Task Force concluded that rehabilitation programs vary from institution to institution and are not available to the degree that they should be. It recommended a broad expansion of rehabilitation efforts in Maryland state prisons, including a mandatory 90-day reading course for illiterate inmates. The Task Force noted that despite its overcrowded conditions, Maryland rates about average relative to rehabilitation programs compared to other states (Struck, 1983). The degree to which states other than Maryland are re-evaluating education programs in their penal institutions is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is clear that the problem deserves national attention.

Lack of Sufficient Funds

Currently, there are no specific funds earmarked for literacy programs in penal institutions. Under the Adult Education Act, funds

for adult basic education are allocated to state education agencies and funneled to penal institution programs. Disbursement of funds to penal institution programs is state discretionary, however the Adult Education Act allows up to 20 percent of the funds to be used for institutionalized individuals. While accurate records are not available as to the monies spent on penal institution literacy programs, it is estimated that they receive only five percent, or one-fourth of those allowed (Parker, 1983).

In fiscal year 1983, a total of \$95 million was allocated to states under the Adult Education Act. Given the five percent figure, an estimated \$4,750,000 was spent on penal institution programs. With 61 percent of the penal population estimated to need such programs, the level of funding is grossly inadequate.

Lack of Adequate Facilities and Equipment

Given the insufficient funds, it is not surprising that literacy programs in penal institutions are lacking the basic facilities and equipment necessary to maintain quality instruction. Space for providing instruction is at a premium and instructional materials are either not available or are inappropriate. Libraries are poorly equipped and often inaccessible. Inmates do not have materials such as high interest, low level adult fiction with which to practice reading skills and they lack a quiet place in which to engage in independent study outside of the classroom setting. Equipment such as tape recorders and computers generally are not available. Such

inadequate facilities and equipment reflect the low priority accorded literacy programs.

Lack of Trained Professionals in the Field

Because the need for literacy programs in penal institutions has been largely ignored, few programs are available to train professionals to work in the field. Some universities and teacher training institutes offer preservice and inservice training in the general area of adult literacy, but do not include courses for teaching the incarcerated illiterate. A few universities offer undergraduate and graduate courses in correctional education, but they require a minimum number of credits in reading instruction. While the inadequate training of literacy professionals is of major concern (Cook, 1977), that concern is even greater in penal institutions.

Lack of Comprehensive, Integrated Literacy Programs

The lack of funds and professionals trained in the field affects the quality and level of instructional programming. Literacy programs vary from state to state and indeed from institution to institution within states. For example, volunteer literacy programs employ methods from one or both major voluntary literacy organizations, or they employ no specific methods at all (Contact Inc., 1982). ABE programs offer an array of instructional organizations: large group instruction for inmates reading in the 0-8 grade level range; small group instruction for inmates reading levels 0-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; individualized instruction for inmates; or any combination of the

aforementioned.

Moreover, methods and materials often are borrowed from the teaching of reading to children, resulting in the provision of instruction in materials ill-suited for adults; or functional materials are used, having appropriate topics, but written at levels too difficult for inmates. Much of the teaching focuses on the practice of isolated skills with little attention to transfer. This is exacerbated by the fact that there is little collaboration with vocational training and work programs. Therefore, inmates learn to read in workbooks and other instructional materials, but are unable to read materials necessary for their vocational or work programs. Success in literacy programs is not transferred to other daily activities. Nor is reading taught as an integrated part of the communicative process. Instead, it is taught in isolation, with no regard for the development of auditing, language, and writing skills. Thus a developmental model of reading largely is ignored.

Other aspects lacking are adequate assessment of inmates' skills, program standards and evaluation. For example, there are no standards as to the amount of time spent in literacy programs. Some inmates receive one-half hour of instruction once a week, whereas others attend school several hours every day. Clearly program standards vis-à-vis organization, assessment, methodology, materials, and evaluation are needed. Moreover, literacy programs

must be coordinated with other prison programs.

With the lack of program evaluation and insufficient information regarding programs, it is difficult to ascertain the "state of the art" of literacy training in penal institutions. The following information regarding programs was garnered from a number of sources and is offered with a caveat. It is not posited as a complete or comprehensive picture, but intended to encapsulate the mosaic of literacy training programs provided in penal institutions.

Literacy Training in Penal Institutions: Program Descriptions

Volunteer and ABE Programs

Results of the Contact Literacy survey show that literacy services in penal institutions are provided primarily in one of two ways: Either in volunteer literacy programs or in ABE programs. In the former, volunteers are trained to provide individual instruction. Twenty-four respondents indicated that they use volunteers to provide literacy instruction: One uses volunteers only from outside of the prison, eight use volunteers only from within the institution and fifteen use volunteers both from outside and within the institution. Volunteers from outside of the institution are comprised of instructors, teachers aides, retired teachers, student teachers, interns and advisory committee members. In a few cases, volunteers within the institution are comprised of staff and the academic principal, but in the majority of cases in-house volunteers are inmates (Contact Inc., 1982).

Of the 24 respondents indicating that they used volunteers, only four indicated that the volunteers received training from one of the major literacy volunteer organizations. Currently, two such major organizations exist: Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) and Laubach Literacy International (LLI). While both organizations train volunteers to provide literacy instruction, their instructional practices differ considerably. LVA subscribes to an analytical model and uses the language experience approach as its primary instructional method. LLI subscribes to a synthetic model and uses phonics as its primary instructional method. The former emphasizes the language and prior experiences of the learner and employs everyday reading materials to build word recognition, whereas the latter focuses on sound-symbol relationships and employs specific material to develop word attack skills. Little solid research has been conducted to determine the effectiveness of either of these methods.

Of singular importance in any volunteer program is that volunteers receive adequate training and ongoing supervision. The extent to which this training and supervision are provided in penal institution programs is questionable. Clearly, more information is needed regarding volunteer literacy programs in penal institutions.

The majority of respondents, 29, indicated that literacy services also are provided within ABE programs. ABE programs in penal institutions vary considerably. The common thread is that they address adults sixteen years and older who have not completed

high school. In most cases, ABE is broken down into categories of reading achievement, e.g., 0-6 or 0-8 grade equivalency, and indicates those students who are not ready for GED classes.

ABE is taught primarily by teachers, most of whom do not have certification in adult education, reading or special education. The majority of ABE classes are offered during the day, however some are offered in the evening. Instructional methods vary from teacher to teacher, ranging from large group instruction to individualized instruction provided with the help of an aide or volunteer. Curriculum goals range from general statements that are not measurable to instructional objectives that are measured on a pre-post basis and predicated on a specially developed curriculum. Program evaluation and accountability are based on standardized tests, informal tests or a combination of the two. However, often accurate records are not maintained. Therefore, the extent to which ABE is effective cannot be ascertained other than in general terms.

Exemplary Components of Literacy Programs in Six States

The Contact Literacy survey of penal institutions revealed only general information about literacy programs. To obtain specific information, therefore, a telephone survey was conducted of individual penal institution programs in six states: California, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas. The results indicate that a number of programs have components which are unique and exemplary.

Coordinated state structure. Some states are providing structure

by which to standardize programs in their penal institutions. In Illinois and Texas, for example, correctional education programs have the status of school districts. This has resulted in standardization of policy and programs and increased eligibility for funding.

Staff training in literacy. Some states are providing professional training in literacy development. In Maryland, the Correctional Education branch of the State Department of Education contracted with the Johns Hopkins University to provide a graduate program in adult literacy for correctional education staff. The program, funded by the Maryland State Department of Education and provided on-site at one of the penal institutions, led to a master's degree and reading specialist certification. Long-term effects of the program included: 1) the establishment of clinics for inmates with severe reading disabilities, 2) the development of integrated vocational curricula, 3) the establishment of peer-tutoring programs, and 4) an improved attitude by staff and administration toward illiterate inmates.

Competency-based, integrated curricula. A number of states, including California, Maryland, New York, and Texas, are developing competency-based, integrated curricula. Such curricula have measurable instructional objectives based on the use of functional materials. Borrowed from the Adult Performance Level model, the curricula offer development of specific literacy skills using materials related to topics such as vocational awareness, personal awareness or a specific

vocational area. Progress is measured via pre-and posttests.

Incentives for inmates. Incentives for school attendance have been adopted in a number of states. States such as Massachusetts and Texas offer an incentive known as "good time." For school attendance or achievement, inmates earn credits against their sentences. In California, a program examining incentive pay for demonstrated academic achievement among inmates scoring below 6.0 grade equivalency has been developed. Initial results show that incentive pay tends to stabilize students in the program, reducing both absenteeism and attrition and increasing interest.

Classes scheduled at convenient times. Recognizing that inmates should not have to forego educational opportunities because they work, some states offer flexible scheduling of classes. Massachusetts, for example, offers evening classes to accommodate inmates who work during the day.

Coordination between correctional and community education programs. Some states consider the needs of inmates who are about to be released. Both Massachusetts and Texas have developed pre-release programs to transition inmates into community education programs. Texas has developed a computer-based program in which inmates to be released are identified and involved in planning for participation in community education programs.

Use of technology. While the use of technology was rarely mentioned, California uses a computer-assisted instructional program

for inmates in need of basic skills. Results show that computer-assisted instruction is an effective way of reaching those inmates who, heretofore, had not been interested in school and had not had success in traditional school settings.

Research and evaluation. Because few research studies had been conducted regarding illiterate inmates, little was known about the nature of their problem and the extent to which instructional practices were effective. However, between 1979 and 1982, the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Academy conducted research and development activities whereby literacy services were provided to some 600 illiterate youths and adults.

The JHU Academy was a tutorial project that trained tutors to provide individual instruction to out-of-school youths and adults reading below fifth grade level. Preliminary research showed that concomitant with low levels of reading were low levels of auding (listening comprehension), verbal language, and a lack of basic information. The general program goal was to improve auding, language, and reading levels while providing basic information important to participants. Tutors were trained to use specific techniques which they applied to the reading materials encountered by participants in their daily lives. The tutoring techniques reflected a developmental model of reading and current theories of adult learning.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the tutoring techniques, a pre-post treatment/control group evaluation was conducted at three sites: the JHU campus site and two penal institutions. The JHU

campus site was located in Baltimore City and served the metropolitan Baltimore area. Of the two penal institutions, one was a maximum security prison and the other was a medium security prison.

Subjects in the study were adult illiterate participants 16 years of age or older, who volunteered to be tutored in the JHU Academy. They were drawn from the general population of Baltimore City and its surrounding counties and the inmate populations at the maximum security and medium security prisons. Upon entry, subjects were individually pretested and assigned alternatively to either the treatment or comparison group on a random basis, i.e., even numbered subjects became participants, odd numbered subjects became comparisons.

In 1981-82, the average participant at the JHU site was a 34 year old unemployed black male who completed 7.4 years of school. At the maximum security prison the average participant was a 23 year old unemployed black male who completed 8.5 years of school whereas at the medium security prison the average participant was a 30 year old unemployed black male who completed 7.7 years of school.

Major aspects of the program operation included recruitment, participant assessment, tutor training and supervision, provision of tutoring and monitoring of progress. In the prisons, inmates served as tutors providing one and one-half hours of individual instruction twice a week for 12 weeks.

In order to analyze the effectiveness of the program, a classical pretest-posttest control group design was used. Standardized tests were chosen in light of the developmental reading model which

theorizes that literacy processes are acquired after considerable language competency has been developed by ausing and speaking. Attainment in five areas (receptive language, expressive language, reading, word recognition, and locus of control) was assessed to determine the effectiveness of the program. Test scores, analyzed by a multiple analysis of variance, demonstrated statistically significant differences on posttest scores between each treatment group and its relative comparison group on all measures except locus of control. In addition, subjects made significant gains in achievement in four of the five areas (Gold & Horn, 1982). Added to the demonstrated effectiveness of the instructional methods employed were other findings, based on analyses of participants' records. Some of the findings were as follows:

.There were no significant differences in entry level skills among the participants at the three sites. Entry ausing, language and reading levels were the same. Moreover, education levels of entering participants were related to age rather than site of instruction, i.e., average years of school completed increased as the average age of the participant decreased. Heretofore, it was believed that the lowest levels of literacy were found in penal institutions, however, in the JHU study, this was not the case.

.Self-esteem and locus of control, as measured by standardized tests, were not significantly different among participants at different sites, nor were they highly correlated with levels of reading ability. In the JHU study, neither of these variables were highly related to entry-level skills or subsequent gains in skills.

- .Low entry levels of reading achievement were concomitant with low verbal language and auditing abilities. In general, entering participants were reading at third to fourth grade level, auditing at fourth to fifth grade level and had verbal language facility at fifth to sixth grade level according to the results of the standardized tests.
- .Significant gains in reading, language and auditing skills shown by participants in the first instructional phase were not matched in subsequent phases. Participants continuing in the program showed smaller, non-significant gains in subsequent phases, a finding which merits further research.
- .Attrition rates of participants in the penal institutions was 26 percent -- much of it due to transfers and paroles rather than lack of interest. This sharply contrasts with both the 45 percent attrition rate that prevailed at the JHU campus site and with the national average.
- .Attrition rates of inmate tutors in the penal institutions was 56 percent -- due to transfer, parole, job interference and lack of interest. When inmates were paid for tutoring the attrition rate decreased.
- .Recreational reading by illiterate inmates was increased by providing high-interest, low-level adult books and sponsoring contests in which reading materials were offered as prizes.
- .Where administration showed strong support and where inmates had been trained to administer the program, literacy tutoring programs were maintained after the JHU project terminated.

The collection and analysis of data under controlled conditions allowed for the effectiveness of the instructional methods to be

demonstrated and for additional knowledge to be added to the field. Additional research is needed greatly.

The preceding discussion highlighted exemplary components of a few individual literacy programs. No doubt, an intensive national study would reveal many more. However, no discussion of literacy programs in penal institutions would be complete without including a description of the Federal Prison System programs.

The Federal Prison System-Literacy Programs

The Federal Prison System coordinates educational activities among some 50 facilities throughout the United States. During fiscal year 1978, the average daily population was 29,347, 12 percent of whom had less than a sixth grade education and over 10,000 of whom were enrolled in educational or occupational training programs. Expenditures were in excess of \$16 million (Federal Prison System, undated).

The Federal Prison System has formulated specific policy vis-à-vis literacy training within the system. Currently, only ten percent of the 30,270 inmates are in need of literacy services, however policy mandates that inmates who score at sixth grade level or below on any subtest of the Stanford Achievement Test receive instruction for 90 days. Once in the program, inmates are interviewed monthly and progress is monitored closely. Policy also mandates that ABE programs employ reading specialists or special education teachers with master's degrees (Yusuff, 1983).

The Federal Prison System has the following components:

- .a fundamental philosophy which recognizes the importance of education and rehabilitation programs
- .stated educational goals which provide for a wide range of educational needs
- .standardized entry-level testing system and educational counseling
- .mandated schedule of hours of school attendance for inmates scoring below sixth level on standardized tests
- .collaboration with community-based programs
- .monitoring of enrollment, performance and funding using a computerized Inmate Programs Reporting system
- .evaluation of programs and guidance in the establishment of uniform course standards by a curriculum review committee
- .attention to the need for staff training

The Federal Prison System has only seven percent of the national penal population and its illiteracy rate is less than half that of the national penal population. Put another way, there are fifteen times more inmates under state jurisdiction and the illiteracy rate is more than double that found in the Federal Prison System. Yet, the Federal Prison System has adopted policies and developed literacy programs worth noting. It demonstrates that a nationally coordinated system of literacy programs in penal institutions is viable.

Literacy Training in Penal Institutions:
Problems in Improving Program Operation

Part Two of this paper included a discussion of six major issues regarding literacy training in penal institutions: 1) lack of federal policy, 2) lack of consistent state policy toward rehabilitation programs, 3) lack of sufficient funds, 4) lack of adequate facilities and equipment, 5) lack of trained professionals in the field, and 6) lack of comprehensive, integrated literacy programs. These general issues translate to problems that interfere with the day to day operation of literacy programs. Specific problems in improving the operation of literacy programs are described below.

Disregard for Educational Needs of Inmates

Administrative policy within individual institutions determines the ease and efficiency with which literacy programs can be developed and implemented. Where the operational and security needs of the facility take precedence over the educational needs, literacy programs are hampered. In such facilities, disregard for the educational needs of inmates by prison administrators and guards results in restrictive policies. For example:

- .Inflexible institution schedules make it difficult to arrange consistent and ample time for literacy instruction.
- .Movement to educational areas by inmates is restricted.
- .Education schedules are disrupted frequently.

- .Inadequate space is provided for instruction.
- .Supplies and materials are insufficient.
- .Supplies and materials are stored in areas that are not secure resulting in stolen or missing materials.
- .Access to other areas, such as the library, is restricted.
- .Space and time for inmates to study independently are limited.
- .Incentives for school attendance are lacking.
- .Inmates must go through administrative "red tape" to obtain security clearance or passes to attend school.

In constrictive and regimented environments, tensions among education staff and administration and guards are great -- further hampering efforts to promote literacy instruction.

Overcrowded and Substandard Conditions

The penal population has increased dramatically in the past ten years, exacerbated by a high recidivism rate. Moreover, the construction of new facilities has not kept pace with the growing population of offenders. This has resulted in severe overcrowding. In Maryland, for example, some 12,355 inmates currently are housed in facilities for 8,500 (Struck, 1983). Responses to the six-state telephone interview, discussed previously, indicate that overcrowding is widespread.

Overcrowding has specific effects on the provision of literacy services. Space that would normally be used for classrooms and shops is occupied by bunks. Inmates are put on waiting lists for literacy

services -- some having to wait many months. Once in the educational system, inmates may receive services as little as one-half hour, once a week and may be limited to only a few months of such services.

Overcrowding is exacerbated by other substandard conditions. Inadequate light, heat and ventilation are found in many of the old correctional facilities. The noisy, dirty, and chaotic conditions that prevail in such facilities are hardly conducive to providing literacy instruction.

Multiple Problems of Illiterate Inmates

Often illiterate inmates have a multiplicity of problems ranging from substance abuse to lack of motivation. In Maryland, for example, it is estimated that over half of the inmates have drug or alcohol problems (Struck, 1983). Many are emotionally disturbed, mildly intellectually limited, neurologically impaired, or have sensory handicaps. The extent to which these problems will hinder subsequent progress in literacy programs can be determined only by individually assessing inmates suspected of having such problems. Referral services for psychiatric, neurological, visual, auditory and psychological tests are needed to screen inmates for whom literacy instruction would be inappropriate. For the most part such referral services are not sufficiently available.

Some inmates may have learning problems which hinder their ability to acquire communicative skills. Since most illiterate adults have low auding and verbal language abilities, the question arises as to whether low levels of auding and verbal language are a

consequence of not learning to read or an indication of specific learning problems in acquiring communicative skills. Studies have shown that language develops very rapidly during the school years and that the vocabulary of most literate adults is acquired through reading (Smith, 1978). Therefore, language development of nonreading adults who have dropped out of school is likely to be low. In addition, many illiterates become outsiders and adapt for survival by forming a subculture of their own. The subculture further isolates and alienates them from the mainstream (Lyman, 1976). Thus, inadequate language skills also reflects general alienation from the mainstream of society. Recognizing that illiterate adults have demonstrated significant gains in language skills as a result of participating in literacy programs (Gold & Horn, 1982), it is likely that low language ability might be a consequence of fewer years of schooling, not being able to read, and alienation from the literate mainstream of society. However, before specific learning problems in acquiring communicative skills can be discounted, individual assessments must be administered.

Motivation is a problem among many illiterate inmates. Most are unskilled and have no employment records. Education, heretofore, has not been a priority, nor has it brought satisfaction or reward. The priority given education while incarcerated will depend, in part, on the social structure within the correctional facility.

Penal institutions can be violent and crime-ridden societies

controlled by gangs of inmates. The extent to which certain groups become associated with literacy programs may affect ultimate participation by other inmates. As a rule, programs that incorporate inmates as tutors, aides, or administrators are strengthened by the internal support. In some cases, however, such support may stigmatize the program if it is perceived as being aligned with one social faction or another. Literacy programs, therefore, must be developed with full cognizance of the social structure of the facility so as to remain as neutral as possible.

Once recruited into literacy programs, inmates need incentives to enhance their motivation. Incentives for inmates who participate in literacy programs should have parity with incentives and compensation in other education and job programs. Institution-wide incentives such as "good time" or pay should be available to students as well as to tutors and aides in literacy programs. In addition, programs that are competency-based or provide specific behavioral objectives should be employed since they allow for the "small successes" so vital for maintaining inmate interest. Issuing certificates of achievement may also be effective for those inmates for whom the GED is an unrealistic goal. Self-help support groups of illiterates often aid in overcoming frustration, particularly frustration associated with plateaus of progress. During such plateaus illiterates are at high risk for dropping out of the literacy programs. The group support can be instrumental in their retention.

The multiplicity of problems presented by illiterate inmates requires a variety of referral and support services to enable their full participation in literacy programs. In most penal institutions these services are inadequate or unavailable.

Lack of Coordination of Penal Programs

Compounding the problem of insufficient referral and support services is the lack of coordination among penal programs within institutions. Without overall coordination, little attention is paid to the entry-level screening and diagnosis, placement in appropriate programs at appropriate levels, monitoring of progress, and transfer to other programs. This problem exists within and among institutions. It is critical particularly in institutions where there is a constant flux of inmates such as in jails and treatment centers. It affects inmates who are transferred from one institution to another and those who are paroled.

In the daily operation of literacy programs, the lack of coordination results in the need to schedule time for the screening and diagnosis of inmates by staff. Assessment instruments vary from institution to institution as does the diagnostic expertise of the staff. This results in lack of services in some cases and duplication of services in others. Only through coordination of programs can efficient use of scarce resources be ensured.

The problems seem formidable. But they can be ameliorated by developing a coordinated system of statewide educational programs in penal institutions.

Such a system would specify screening, diagnostic, and placement procedures. It would establish mechanisms for monitoring student progress and evaluating programs. It would provide transition, pre-release and follow-up components to support inmates who are transferred and paroled. It would provide highly trained professional personnel as well as inservice training to staff and administrators.

Clearly such a system goes beyond the boundaries of literacy training programs. But if literacy programs in penal institutions are to be effective, they must be an integral part of a comprehensive educational system. Literacy professionals can provide the leadership and impetus for the change needed to establish such a system. Without such change, literacy programs in penal institutions will remain fragmented, ineffectual, and largely ignored.

It is apparent that the picture regarding literacy training in penal institutions is dim and will remain so until adequate attention and resources are brought to bear on the problem.

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